

Beyond the Ousting of Mubarak: An Intersectional Analysis of Egyptian Women's Activism
after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution

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Abstract

Egyptian women played an integral and important role in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Egypt witnessed different forms of struggles and fights over power since January 25, 2011. The last decade can be understood as episodes of contention. Women played vital roles in each of these episodes. Both the complexity and dynamics of the different roles played by women problematized the various conceptual frameworks that are usually used in analyzing Egyptian women's various forms of activism. Resultantly, this dissertation suggests a new analytical framework that can be applied to understand Egyptian women's struggles and ways of expressing their agency. The theory of intersectionality by Collins and Bilge was used to analyze six documentaries produced by either female filmmakers or focused on women's struggles and activism after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. The Triple C Model (Context, Contradictions, and Commonalities) analytical framework could fill the analytical gap in understanding the complex discourses surrounding Egyptian women's oppression and activism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On January 24, 2011, Asmaa Mahfouz, a young activist, posted a video urging Egyptian men and women to go out to the streets the next morning to protest. On January 25, hundreds of thousands of people went out to the streets of Cairo and other cities to protest the regime, but mainly against police brutality. These protests became an 18-day sit-in. The sit-in ended in the resignation of then-President Hosni Mubarak. Protests and various deviant activities continued after Mubarak's resignation. "Revolution", "uprising", "Arab Spring", and "turmoil" were some of the terms that were used among scholars, journalists, activists, and commentators to describe the events that took place during those 18 days and afterwards. There is no consensus on a label that can describe the events that took place in Egypt. This lack of consensus reflects the complexity of the situation in Egypt since the outbreak of mass protests that started on January 25, 2011.

A major challenge in analyzing and conceptualizing the political events that took place in Egypt is finding the most accurate term to describe the events. A wide range of terms is used in both scholarly and non-scholarly discourses. Some discourses used the term "revolution" while others used "uprising". Some Western media outlets used "turmoil", while some scholars decided to use "Revolution" with capital R, to refer specifically to the January 25 Revolution. The challenge of having one label to describe the events that took place in Egypt from January 25, 2011, to February 11, 2011, reflects the obstacle of using conceptual frameworks developed in the West to study events that take place in non-Western countries.

It is important to highlight that the Arab revolutions are very unique and different than any of the past revolutions in the region and dramatic system changes in different countries and political systems in the twentieth century. Asef Bayat argues that "the trajectories of the Arab revolutions

resembled none of the pathways for political change about which the literature has informed us: reform, insurrection, or implosion” (Bayat 154). None of these three paths were available for the Arab revolutions. The path of reform requires a strong opposition movement that is able to force “the political elite to reform its laws and institutions, often through some kind of negative impact” (Bayat 155). For example, Brazil and Mexico’s transition to democracy in 1980 happened as changes took place within the framework of existing political arrangements (Bayat). According to Bayat, the insurrectionary path requires three major attributes: a well-established revolutionary movement built over a fairly extended period of time, a recognized leadership, and a “organizational structure along with a blueprint for a new political order” (Bayat 155). In this path, the current regime’s governance ability was challenged by an organized opposition. This leads to “creating a situation of “dual power” between the regime and the opposition, which usually possesses a charismatic leader on the mold of Lenin, Mao, Castro, Khomeini, Walesa, or Havel” (Bayat 155). Therefore, the new organizational structure with charismatic leadership takes power over. Regime implosion takes place when revolutionaries are able to mobilize to create momentum through “strikes and other forms of civil disobedience, or through revolutionary warfare progressively encircling the capital, so that in the end, the regime implodes, collapsing amid disruption, defection, and total disorder” (Bayat 155). However, the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia did not adopt any of these paths but it should be mentioned that they were able to achieve some “remarkably swift results” (Bayat 156).

The problem is that these remarkably swift results did not bring the revolutionaries to power but only to achieve “a remarkable degree of hegemony” (Bayat 156). Consequently, the years following the toppling down of the dictators did not witness change to state’s institutions ruled by the old elites. “Police, army, and judiciary; state-controlled media; business elites and the clientelist

networks of the old ruling parties-had remained more or less intact” (Bayat 153). As a result, Bayat asserts “refolutions” is the best way to conceptualize the trajectory that Egypt followed as “can be characterized neither as Revolution per se or simply in terms of reform measures” (Bayat 159).

The other way to understand the Arab Spring is to use Hamid Dabashi’s lens. Dabashi described the mass protests in the Arab countries as a “delayed defiance” (2). Dabashi argues that Egypt is transitioning to include more democracy and social justice through “a new imaginative geography of liberation in which ideas of freedom, social justice, and human dignity [are] brought forth to the collective imagination of the revolutions-an imagination already cultivated in literary and artistic forms” (Dabashi 226). I argue that in the case of Egypt, the adoption of “delayed defiance” is only appropriate in understanding the breakout of mass protests in late January 2011, and maybe the few months after the ousting of Mubarak, but not in understanding how the events unfolded or how the new political reality was constructed afterwards. However, one can argue that Bayat’s conceptualization of “refolutions” is more adequate in understanding Egypt’s complex reality. The binary of Revolution and non-Revolution is not adequate in describing the events in Egypt (Telmissany).

It is true that the revolutionaries did not claim full power after the departure of Mubarak, but it is important to highlight that the departure of Mubarak and his “apparatuses of coercion opened up an unprecedented free space for citizens, above all for the popular classes to reclaim their sources and assert themselves” (Bayat 158). Bayat identified three major reasons that contributed to the result of “refolutions”: firstly, the lack of intellectual inputs “to articulate a vision of Revolution in the ways they did with respect to their twentieth century counterparts” (Bayat 159). Secondly, protests did not have a vision for new or different modes of governance and more

importantly “seem[ed] to be reluctant or unconcerned about directing change within the state institutions” (Bayat 159). Thirdly, most of the prominent activists separated the realm of the economy from polity.

An important reason for the debate around the best description for what happened in Egypt is the lack of consensus about the beginning and the end of the Revolution. The question of when the Egyptian Revolution started and ended is always in the center of the debate in many activist and academic circles. The question as to when the Revolution started did not create a massive debate like the other question as to when did the Revolution ended. Some argue that the Revolution against Mubarak’s regime with the mass protests that took place on January 25 actually started in September 2004 with the protests lead by the Egyptian Movement for Change, known as the Kefaya movement. The second half of the question is much more problematic: when did the Revolution end? Some might argue that it did not end. Some others might view the toppling of Mubarak as the end of the Revolution or not. Scholars, such as Nermin Allam, argue that adopting “episodes of contention”, conceived by Sidney Tarrow, is the best way to conceptualize the different dissent activities that started to take place on January 25, 2011. On the activist level, the slogan “El Thawra Mostamera” was a dominant slogan after the toppling of Mubarak and was reflected in many documentaries (Telmissany).

It can be argued that there are many factors that contributed to the dominance of this discourse. Firstly, it is easier to identify one specific person to target than targeting a very complex structure of power that has been in place since 1952. Secondly, the lack of intellectual discourse on “revolutionary politics in the region” (Bayat 159) before the outbreak of the revolutions. Bayat argues that Arab intellectuals were mainly “preoccupied more with the questions of authenticity, nativism, cultural nationalism, and Islam” (159) as “if revolutions were an idea whose time had

passed” (159). Therefore, the lack of intellectual discourse, in addition to the complexity of understanding oppression as systemic and structured, contributed to the discourse of simplifying the Revolution against Mubarak and not against a well-embedded political regime. Thirdly, it could be argued that the Western media played an important role in constructing a discourse that the Egyptian Revolution was against Mubarak and not against a systematic structural oppressive system. Iris Young argues that the prominent discourse in the United States is that oppression is not only the actions of tyranny, but it is the “evil perpetrated by the Others” (43).

An assumption can be made that the Western media contributed to the development of that discourse so that the revolutionary actions that took place in Egypt did not inspire young people in the West. However, young people in Canada, the United States, and in Europe, decided to follow Arab youth and create their own Tahrir Square to protest capitalism (Rebick).

The debate over what the Egyptians were revolting against and what the best description is for what happened in Egypt is not a theoretical debate but a debate that had real life implications on the trajectory of the events and the perception of the Egyptians, both in Egypt, and in the diaspora towards the development of the events.

The American political theorist, Jefferey C. Alexander, aptly posits that the 18 days of the Egyptian Revolution “constitutes the most important democratic movement in the history of the Arab world” (Vii). According to Alexander, some scholars argue that that events on January 25 do not constitute a revolution because the economic structure and power hierarchies did not change after the toppling of Mubarak and that it was just a political realignment after “all to be wrong” (Alexander Vii). Alexander concludes his analysis of mainstream media and social media coverage to the different dissent activities that took place in Egypt, asserting that the dissent events changed the Egyptian consciousness. “It is consciousness – internal, subjective, and collective that makes

revolutionary movements move” (Viii). Iranian political scientist, Hamid Dabashi, presented the same argument as Alexander. Dabashi posits that the Egyptian Revolution and all the other revolutions that took place in the Arab countries cannot be simply understood and explained in the same way as the revolutions that took place in the last three centuries in France, Russia, China, Cuba, or Iran. Dabashi argues that the Arab Spring doesn’t follow the “exemplary model” of revolutions. “‘Revolution’ [is seen] in the sense of a radical and sudden shift of political power with an accompanying social and economic restructuring of society — one defiant class violently and conclusively overcoming another” (Dabashi 5). However, this was not case in Egypt because the 18 days of Tahrir encampment only resulted in the removal of Mubarak and his entourage from office, but not in the substitution of the ruling power with the people who occupied the streets demanding freedom and social justice. The events that unfolded after Mubarak’s ousting presented different complexities and contradictions around change in Egypt. “No single angle of vision — economic, social, political, or cultural — would reveal the totality (and yet inconclusive disposition) of these massive social uprisings. Instead of denying these insurgences the term ‘revolution,’ we are now forced to reconsider the concept and understand it anew” (Dabashi 5). Therefore, the slogan of “The Revolution Continues” became the prevalent slogan and chant after Mubarak’s resignation as the protesters realized that Mubarak’s resignation would not be enough and that more reforms would have to take place.

Therefore, other feminist scholars like May Telmissany and Lucia Sorbera decided not to conceptualize “Revolution” in terms of political gains, but to consider other aspects. Telmissany departed from the work of Gilles Deleuze on cinema to conduct a comparison between the films produced by female filmmakers and the Revolution. Telmissany’s definition of the Revolution emphasized the aspect of developing a space that contributes to the people’s liberation. She asserts

that “Revolution is a movement of unpredictable power to open up new spaces for freedom outside the norms of behaviour and to form new territories of contestation beyond established dichotomies of manhood versus womanhood” (7).

While Sorbera used Michael Hardt’s definition of the Revolution in conceptualizing her analysis of the political events that took place in Egypt in 2011, Hardt’s definition of “revolution” focuses on the aspect of the human transformation that happened as the result of the Revolution. He posits that “Revolution is not just about a transformation for democracy. Revolution requires a transformation of human nature so that people are capable of democracy. It is a process that not only destroys habits of servitude and develops capacities for self-rule but also inspires political imagination and expands their desires, which can press far beyond the present political situation” (Hardt 24). The crucial role of Egyptian women before, during, and after January 25, 2011, confirms that the events that took place in Egypt are a “Revolution” in both political and human aspects. Sorbera aptly asserts that Egyptian feminist activism, which started almost 100 years ago, “inspired human transformation which is part of the process leading to 25 January” (63). Sorbera contends:

The ideas of feminism and Revolution are not universal notions which have been stated once and forever, but they are situated in a multitude of specific contexts and, most importantly, their significance changes according to the time. Words, as theories, ‘travel’ and, during their journey, they intersect in a close weave of relationships, which contribute to interlacing a cultural discourse. (63)

The Egyptian Revolution on January 25, 2011, transformed Egyptians in many ways and on different levels. The scholarly literature surrounding women and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution — including that of Shereen Abuelnaga, Nermin Allam, Sherine Hafez, and Sahar Khamis— showed

that the Revolution transformed women's daily life experiences in both public and private spheres. The absence of a consensus around what terms/language should be used when discussing the events that took place in Egypt in early 2011, confirms the complex reality of Egyptian politics and the hardship of developing analytical framework to analyze the complex political and social realities in the global South. The contemporary nature of social movements taking place both virtually, and on the streets, added another layer of complexity.

1. The Hybrid Social Movements Framework

The complexity of the political situation in Egypt presents one layer of understanding of what happened in Egypt but the contemporary nature of social movements adds another layer of complexity. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) transformed the nature of the dissent activities. Many Western media outlets framed the 18 days of the Egyptian Revolution as the "Facebook Revolution". Merlyna Lim refuted this claim, arguing that this is an inaccurate framing and oversimplification of the Egyptian Revolution. "It is misleading to frame the Arab revolts exclusively as either a social media Revolution or a people's revolution, as people and social media are not detached from one another" (232). Various political theorists and sociologists (e.g. Castells, Chadwick, Lim) described contemporary social movements as "Hybrid Social Movements" because online and offline activism are inseparable in contemporary activism and dissents. Andrew Chadwick asserts that "new organizational forms are emerging that exist only in hybrid form and that could not function in the ways that they do without the Internet and the complex spatial and temporal interactions it facilitates" (274). Chadwick posits that the harmonizing between online and offline activism is a major attribute of the contemporary political mobilization. Castells posits that hybrid social movements are fueled by the ubiquitous myriad of practices because of the high engagement of ICTs. Therefore, Castells argues that "participatory

culture” is the major attribute of hybrid social movement. Participatory culture has five major attributes:

1. low barriers to participation
2. strong support for sharing
3. the presence of informal mentorship
4. a general sense among members that their contributions matter
5. a concern and care for the participation of others (Boler et al.; Castells).

Therefore, social media must be perceived as both a technology and space that contributes to the expansion and sustainability of various networks that constitute social movements (Lim).

There is an important gender aspect to the function of the internet as a space for activism. The internet allowed various women to participate in political organizations and mobilizations online (Allam). Women found the internet to be a safe space in which they could be politically involved. This is in contrast to the option of physically contributing to street mobilizations that might expose them to different kinds of harassment and/or arrests. The other important aspect is that women, especially young women, decided to create a strong presence on the internet as a way to challenge the patriarchy since many families refused to let their daughters/wives leave the house (Allam). Online activism allowed women, especially young girls, to challenge the patriarchy without directly confronting it. Women and girls could be politically active without leaving their homes.

The other important contribution of the internet, and the other forms of ICTs, like satellite television stations, was the way it helped educate people in Arab countries about the standard of living in developed countries and the civil rights and freedom in those countries (Fukayama). The

Revolution on January 25 was the result of years of political mobilization both online and offline. “The Arab revolts exemplify how online social networks facilitated by social media have become a key ingredient of contemporary populist movements” (Lim 234). Lim tracks the explicit activism against Mubarak back to 2004. In 2004, 300 Egyptian intellectuals established “The Egyptian Movement for Change. The slogan of the movement was “Kefaya”, which means “enough”. The Kefaya movement was able to attract many young people who are internet savvy. These young people were able to maintain a strong virtual presence through blogging. On April 6, 2008, a group of youths created a Facebook page in solidarity with a strike organized by the labourers working at the textile factory in the city of El Mahla El Kobra. Then, in 2010, Khaled Said, a young middleclass man was tortured and killed by the police because of video footage showing a police officer sharing the spoils of a drug bust (Chick).

Another way to conceptualize the years that led to the 2011 Revolution is to analyze the decade prior to the Revolution through adopting Habermas’ theory of the “public sphere”. Habermas’ notion of the public sphere comes from his research on the bourgeoisie in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, in the 17th and 18th centuries. Habermas focused his research on the bourgeois men, mainly from England, France, and Germany, who met daily in coffee-houses, in these three countries, discussing matters of public importance. He concluded, in part, that common people, as opposed to experts, engaged in rational, critical debates surrounding issues of public concern. Therefore, Habermas’ public sphere represented the realm of social life where rational, critical discussions took place regarding issues important to the public. The term “public sphere” is commonly used in the same way the term “bureaucracy” is used. It is not used to refer to a specific bureaucracy, but the general meaning of the term. The public sphere doesn’t refer to

the actual meeting in French/British/German coffeehouses, but rather the collective discussion and consensus reached by these various meetings and exchanges.

Universality, rational-critical discourse, and accessibility are the main attributes of Habermas' public sphere. Universality means that the public sphere should be inclusive. Everyone should have equal access and no one should be excluded. However, a major critique to the work of Habermas is that his public sphere excluded many people, mainly women (Fraser), people of color, blue-collar workers, the working poor, people with disabilities, queer people, etc. It was mainly white, bourgeois men who were involved in discussions in these coffeehouses. In the public sphere (ideatype), arguments would trump titles. Therefore, it doesn't matter who is constructing the argument as the arguments should stand on their own merit. The social status or the political title of the argument's owner must not matter. Habermas' ideal public sphere is constructed through arguments that are both critical to the status quo and provide rational meaning, based on facts, not emotions. A major prevalent critique to Habermas's public sphere is that in reality, there is no monolithic public sphere in any society, but instead each society has competing public spheres. Habermas' work asserts that the presence of an ideal public sphere will create a pressure on the ruling power for better governance.

One can argue that the ability to construct "an ideatype" public sphere is one of the major reasons for the Egyptians' success in ending Mubarak's 30-year ruling. As mentioned above, it is very complex to accurately grasp the various political, social, and economic reasons that lead to the Revolution in 2011 and the reasons that lead the public to shake a strong, well-established police state.

In the next section, a historical account is given regarding the ten years prior to the 2011 Revolution and argues that there were three spheres: the political, the virtual, and the social justice

sphere, constructing independently, which then merged together to form an “idealtypic” public sphere. One can argue that understanding the various nuances of the numerous forms of activism that took place in Egypt in the decade preceding the 2011 Revolution, is an important key to understanding the different factors that lead to the 2011 Revolution. It is also crucial to use the feminist scholarship in both defining and contextualizing oppression to better understand the core elements that led Egyptians to revolt.

2. Contextualizing the Revolution and Oppression

In the year 2000, The Palestinian Second Intifada (uprising) broke out in occupied Palestine. Palestinians organized massive protests against the Israeli occupation and mainly against a visit led by the late member of Knesset, Ariel Sharon (who later became the prime minister of Israel in February 2001) with other members of Knesset to the Temple Mount while under the protection of the Israeli military. He and his fellow members entered the al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest place in Islam. This visit provoked the enraged feeling of Muslims, not only in Jerusalem, but also in the occupied West Bank, Gaza, and in all the Arab countries, as well as among the Muslim diaspora in Europe, Canada, and United States. The French press published a picture (that become the icon of the Intifada) for an unarmed Palestinian father who was trying to protect his son from Israeli soldiers that were trying to kill him. However, the Israeli soldiers killed the child, Mohamed El Dorra, and his father. The picture of the murdered Palestinian father hugging his son fueled the emotions of the already angry Arabs against the Israeli occupation. In Egypt, mass protests broke out, and the streets of Cairo, and many other Egyptian cities, witnessed massive protests for the first time in a very long time.

On March 20, 2003, the military coalition led by the United States of America entered

Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. The American-led occupation of Iraq resulted in mass amounts of Egyptians choosing to occupy Tahrir Square, expressing their refusal to the occupation. Protests, along with many other activities, were done in solidarity with the people of Iraq. Activities were mainly organized by students from the American University in Cairo. These students are known to come from very rich families and belong to an elitist social class in Egypt. The protesters were brutally attacked by the Egyptian police. However, the police's excessive use of violence couldn't stop masses of angry protesters, from all types of socio-economic classes and political ideologies, from occupying Tahrir Square.

In 2004, political mobilization and street protests witnessed the emergence of two important factors that shaped Egyptian civic activism until the ousting of Mubarak in 2011. The first factor is the political cause; activists and protesters shifted their focus from regional issues to domestic politics. The second factor is the braiding of online and offline activism. 2004 witnessed two crucial events: the establishment of the Egyptian Movement for Change (known as the Kefaya movement) and the establishment of the virtual sphere. In mid-2004, a small number of Egyptian intellectuals came together and established the first political movement in the history of Egypt that was created mainly around the opposition of the head of state. By September 2004, the movement was able to recruit 300 signatures from political activists, scholars, intellectuals, artists, and others, on the founding statement and organized the first peaceful protest against Mubarak in front of the office of the Attorney General. Since that date, Kefaya started to organize different events of political dissent against Mubarak. However, the movement was not able to recruit many people. As labour scholar Nadine Abdalla asserts, "despite the movement's inspiring and innovative appearance, it was largely elitist and therefore failed to acquire a significant social base" (1). The same year begot the creation of the virtual sphere.

In 2004, Egypt started to witness online activism and usage of the internet as a sphere for political activism and a mobilization space. The Kefaya movement launched their own website. The website was used to “announce its positions, mobilize support and announce the dates and places for its organized demonstrations since 2004” (Mehanna 203). At the same time, different young activists started to use the free Google service to create their own personal blogs. Farmanfarmaian asserted that the Egyptian blogosphere passed through three phases of growth. Firstly, an experimentation phase. This phase was characterized by early adaptors who mainly belonged to middle-class, well-educated, young people. The free Google service still required a computer, internet access, and more importantly, the ability to read, write, and communicate in English as the Google blogging operating system was only available in English. Secondly, there was an activist phase. Young adult activists mainly belonged to the Kefaya movement, but also other leftist and Islamist political groups (mainly the Muslim Brotherhood). They were primarily using it to express their political dissent against Mubarak’s regime. Lastly, a diversification and fragmentation phase. This phase consisted of bloggers from across the political, social, and religious spectra. At that point, bloggers were able to create their own blogs on different platforms, not only Google. Some of these platforms were created by Arab-speaking developers. It is worth mentioning that this phase encouraged numerous young women who were not politically active to create widely-read blogs raising many social issues related to women’s oppression and agency.

A very famous blog during that time was a titled “Ayeza Atgawez” (I Want to Get Married). It was created by a single, female blogger in her mid-thirties named Ghada Abdel Aal who chronicled her personal experiences with her mother who was really upset that Ghada was unmarried. The mother used her personal network to organize dates for her daughter. The blogger narrated all these dates in a very light-hearted, funny way. She implicitly criticized the perverse

sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy within her family and the society at large. The blog was so wellread that Dar El Sharouk, one of Egypt's most popular publishing houses, converted the blog posts to a book under the same title. A production company converted the blog/book into a 30-episode TV-series featuring the famous actress, Hend Sabry. This was the first time in the history of Egypt that the personal experiences of a non-famous person was converted into a book and TV series.

The blogosphere not only served as a tool for political mobilization and as a safe place for women to express their frustration from imposed societal rules, but also as an alternative source of news. There are two famous incidents that weigh the impact of blogs authored and managed mainly by young activists. The first incident was the posting of videos for the torture of Emad El Kebeir. Emad was the owner and driver of a minivan that was used to transport people in one of the poor neighborhoods in Cairo. He had a confrontation with a low-ranking police officer. The police officer decided to illegally arrest Emad and brutally torture and sexually assault him. The officer filmed the torture and leaked the video to scare the people in the neighborhood. The famous Egyptian blogger, Wael Abbas, posted the video on his personal blog and was able to post other videos of Egyptian police officers torturing women and men in different detention centers. The posts created a wide range of societal conversation surrounding police brutality. The second important blog-related incident was the coverage of the mass sexual harassment during Eid El Adha (The most important Islamic feast) in 2006. Girls, mainly very young girls between the age of 14-19, were sexually harassed by mobs in downtown Cairo. Multiple blogs covered the mass harassment for a couple of days. The official media kept denying that these mass sexual harassments took place. However, the blog's coverage allowed for a wider societal debate to take place around sexual harassment and forced the mainstream media to admit the occurrence of that

incident. These two events led people to trust the coverage of these citizen journalists and follow the analysis published by them. The other important aspect is that the blogs succeeded in imposing certain topics on the agendas of both the people and the media.

In 2005, Egypt started to witness protests among different labour sectors, demanding wage increases and better working conditions. These protests were not directly organized for political reasons, but “were strictly related to certain sectors or categories within Egyptian society, such as workers, civil servants, teachers, bus drivers, etc” (Abdalla 86). The most important issue to Mubarak was that both the political and social justice sphere would not integrate with each other. “The Mubarak regime established a clear separation between what could be described as the social and political spheres” (Abdalla). Mubarak’s regime, through the security apparatus and the stateowned media, were always trying to develop a public discourse that did not link both spheres together.

Following the events from April 6, 2008, the three spheres started to merge and compliment each other. Leaders of labour unions in the city of El Mahla El Kobra, Egypt’s largest and oldest industrial city, announced on April 6, 2008, that they were going to organize a citywide strike as the ruling regime rejected their demands. They also called for other workers in other cities in Egypt, to follow them in their decision to strike. A few days before April 6, a young female activist, Esraa Abdel Fattah, created a Facebook page supporting the workers’ strike and calling for a nationwide strike. She also argued that labour rights cannot take place within a corrupt political regime. Therefore, according to Abdel Fattah, political and labour reforms are not separate issues. Labour movements scholar, Nadine Abdallah, confirmed Abdel Fattah’s assertion: “This was proved by the strike on 6 April 2008, when for the first time, young,

Egyptian cyber activists called for a nationwide strike in solidarity with the labour strikes in Mahalla, expressing outrage over economic grievances alongside the core political demand: ending authoritarian repression of opposition groups. However, this propaganda not only led to involvement of the state-security apparatus, who transformed the city into military barracks, but also urged the ETUF chairman to force leaders to sign the document in which they agreed to dissolve the strike” (Abdalla 88). Security forces arrested Esraa Abdel Fattah and put her in jail for two weeks. Her mother had to publish an apology to President Mubarak and the government, in state-owned newspapers, and begged the government to release her. Abdel Fattah was released and also apologized to President Mubarak. The strike did not achieve its objectives, but it did highly contribute to the amalgamation of the three spheres together.

One can argue that there were three major obstacles stopping the nationwide Revolution from taking place. Firstly, the fear of the regime, as the police’s brutality had no limits when punishing political opponents. Secondly, there was pervasive questioning among Egyptians regarding possible alternatives to Mubarak, or a lack thereof. Thirdly, the movement against Mubarak was missing a clear, rational demand and a platform, which is essential for an “idealtpe” public sphere. 2010 came with solutions to these challenges. The Former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, returned to Egypt after he finished his mandate leading an important international agency. A wide range of different political parties and activists organized a popular reception for ElBaradei at the airport upon his arrival to Cairo on February 9, 2010. Representatives from all the political parties and movements met with ElBaradei a few weeks after his arrival. These meetings led to the release of a political announcement that had seven demands for the regime. One can argue this political manifesto satisfied the requirements of rationality and accessibility determined by Habermas. The manifesto provided rational reasons

for Mubarak's removal and had the participation of representatives from all political powers. Therefore, the return of ElBaradei served two purposes: an answer to the question of who could replace Mubarak, and contributed to the development of a rational discourse surrounding the change.

The other important event that helped strengthen the amalgamation of the three spheres was the murder of a young, middle-class man by the name of Khaled Said. His murder played a huge role in breaking the circle of fear that prevented Egyptians from revolting against the regime. In late 2010, the Egyptian police brutally tortured and killed Khaled Said because he leaked video footage showing a police officer sharing the spoils of a drug bust (Chick). The picture of his beaten face spread widely on social media. Said's picture enraged Egyptians, especially young, middleclass adults. One can argue that Khaled Said's case gained massive sympathy and solidarity, unlike the case of the 2006 torture of Emad El Kebir, because Khaled Said belonged to the middle-class. Members of the Egyptian middle-class always believed they were protected from police brutality by their wealth, personal connections, access to education, and various resources, etc. However, the murder of Khaled Said posited that nothing can protect you from police brutality.

The murder of Said motivated the former Google marketing manager, Wael Ghonim, to create a Facebook page called, "We Are All Khaled Said". The page was used to achieve different objectives. Firstly, to share alternative information than that spread by mainstream media, which was controlled by the state. Secondly, to mobilize people for various silent marches in different cities in Egypt (Khamis). Thirdly, the page played an important role in building a sense of community and belonging among its fans. The page helped masses of young people recognize that they shared the same grievances and encouraged them to identify themselves and their grievances in new way. This function played an extremely important role in the mobilization against Mubarak.

Lim argues that “for angry, unemployed youth to participate in an oppositional movement against Mubarak, she or he first needed to recognize that many other individuals shared the same grievances, the same goals, and a common identity in opposition to Mubarak” (234). Notwithstanding, the social and economic grievances alone don’t create social movements (Buechler; Lim). However, Wright argues that individuals join social movements and become part of collective actions when they recognize their membership in the relevant collective. Stekelenburg and Klandermans concluded their research by positing that the degree of group identification appears to be a strong predictor of collective action participation. Therefore, social media can be considered as incredibly effective instruments. They are not “simply neutral tools to be used or adopted by social movements, but rather influence how activists form and shape the social movements” (Lim 234). The participation of youth in big numbers in the Egyptian Revolution must be conceptualized and analyzed beyond the online activism.

There are two important elements related to the participation of youth in the Revolution. Firstly, the youthful demographic —defined as under the age of 30— made up one-third of the Egypt’s population in 2011. Secondly, Lim asserts that it is very important to use the concept of “biographical availability” to conceptualize the participation of youth in big numbers.

Biographical availability can be defined as “the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities” (McAdam 70). Other social movement scholars posit that it is easier for youth to identify with social movements than it is for older generations. Thus, youth are likely to participate in higher cost activism than older people. However, Lim asserts that “the majority of the Egyptian youth could be judged to have high biographical availability to participate in protests” (235). However, youth availability cannot be the sole reason for the participation of youth in the protests

as “mobilization depends on contact as well and this is where social media played their greatest role in the Egyptian uprising” (Lim 235). Therefore, the intertwining of all these elements together within a repressive regime, guarded by a brutal security apparatus, contributed to the mass Egyptian youth participation in the protests.

The protests organized by the “Khaled Said” Facebook page were done through a very creative and innovative way. Protesters were asked to go to the shore at their city (almost all of Egyptian cities are either located on the Nile River, Mediterranean Sea, or the Red Sea) wearing black t-shirt and bring a religious praying book, like a Quran, the Bible, or any book with a sacred scripture. Protesters were asked not to gather in the same place, but to stand beside each other silently. This innovative strategy of dissenting created mass confusion among the security apparatus for two main reasons: the space and the religious books. Egyptian riot police usually send a number of police soldiers to suppress the number of protesters who are focused in one area and control it. However, in this case, protesters were spread over a wide range of space, which challenged the police’s usual strategy. Protesters carried a religious book in their hand and were reading from it. Thus, attacking peaceful people holding a sacred text in a religious, conservative country, like Egypt, would have been hard to justify. Many protests took place following the same format in 2010. These protests contributed to the building of the public sphere in two ways. Firstly, it broke the barrier of fear as many people, especially for ones with no history of political activism. Secondly, more men and women, especially young women, became politically active in both street protests and online activism. Online activism also allowed numerous people with disabilities to be politically active without requiring them to be physically present on the streets.

In late 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian street merchant self-immolated after he was treated badly by an official who worked for the municipality. Bouazizi’s self-immolation sparked a revolution in Tunisia. On December 18, 2010, hundreds of thousands of people went to

the streets, protesting against the late President Ben Ali. On January 14, 2011, Ben Ali and his family members fled to Saudi Arabia seeking refuge. The success of the Tunisian revolution inspired Egyptians to start their own revolution. The Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said” and other active pages mobilized for mass protests mainly against the police on January 25, which is a national holiday. January 25 is the day when the Egyptian government celebrates the police achievements. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians went down to participate in the protests that transformed into a sit-in that lasted for 18 days until President Mubarak resigned.

“El Thawara Mostamera” (“The Revolution Continues”) was the dominant chant after Mubarak left the office on February 11, 2011. The protesters in the streets continued fighting for social justice, freedom, human dignity, and even bread. Researchers and intellectuals continued challenging modes of knowledge production with the aim of constructing novel modes that could truly explain and analyze the complexities and contradictions in the daily life of Egyptians and Arabs.

Simplifying the 2011 Egyptian Revolution as an uprising against tyranny is an inaccurate and unjust reading. Most of the protesters (especially female protesters) were fully aware that they were occupying Tahrir Square and other public places in Egypt to dismantle an oppressive regime. These protesters kept chanting “El Shab Yurid Iskat El Neziham” (“The people demand the fall of the regime”) as they were aware that their Revolution was not only against the tyranny of Mubarak, but against a well-structured unjust regime that oppressed people on various levels. Mubarak and the ruling class might be the most visible contributors to this oppressive structure, but the blame for Egypt’s oppressive political and social regime is not on them alone.

To contextualize the Revolution, one must also contextualize oppression. Oppression is understood in this dissertation through the lens of Young. Young asserts that traditionally in United States of America, oppression is understood as “exercise of tyranny by a ruling group” (40). Therefore, dominant political discourses in the United States adopt this way of understanding in order to describe other societies “because oppression is the evil perpetrated by the Others” (Young 40). However, the new, left social movements that broke out in the United States challenged this way of understanding oppression and shifted that understanding into a more structural definition. “In its new usage, oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a wellintentioned liberal society” (Young 41). One can argue that Obama’s administration understood the protests in Egypt in the traditional way of understanding oppression. Obama announced that “Mubarak Must Go” (Koring). Thus, the situation in Egypt was understood in a way that made it seem like a Revolution against a tyranny oppressor (Mubarak) and not against an oppressive patriarchal regime that oppresses most Egyptians on daily basis at different levels, politically and otherwise.

Young’s definition of oppression has to be complicated in order to be properly applied to the Egyptian case. There are two extra layers of complexities that have to be added to this context. The problem with Egypt is that either the society or the political regime can be described as liberal. Unlike the United States, different social groups can negotiate with the regime and with themselves. There are different ways to define liberalism, which is beyond the focus of this research. However, a liberal society means that citizens can challenge state power peacefully through various democratic institutions and that there are available mechanisms that citizens can

utilize to hold those in power accountable. This does not mean that political systems in liberal societies are perfect, but that liberalism offers citizens have the opportunity to bargain (Sa'ar). But in a country like Egypt, these institutions and mechanisms are not present. Therefore, streets become the institutions and protests become the only mechanisms for people to claim their political rights as all the other political channels are blocked (Bayat). Gilbert Achcar asserts that what happened in Egypt can be described as less than “a political Revolution [because] the emergence of the people freed from the shackles of servitude, the assertion of collective will in public squares, and success in overthrowing tyrannical oppressors are the unmistakable works of a political revolution” (Achcar 4). Achcar posits that the major problem is that the revolutions in Egypt, Libiya, and Tunisa “left the state apparatuses of the fallen regime intact” (Achcar 153). Therefore, “El Thawra Mostamera” (“The Revolution Continues”) became the most prevalent chant after the toppling of Mubarak, as protesters became aware that they need change the entire regime and not only the head of the regime. Women were more conscious as they went to the streets to not only topple Mubarak -the face of the patriarchal regime-, but to dismantle the entire patriarchal structure that shaped their daily life experience (Allam; Hafez; Khamis).

Some scholars and analysts assert that the economy played a crucial role in pushing Egyptians to revolt against the regime. Costello et al. conducted a comprehensive comparative study on various Arab countries where uprisings took place. They concluded in their systematic analysis, regarding the protests, that economic problems were less of a factor than that of political grievances or the surge of accessibility to various ICTs. Fukuyama concluded the same results asserting that the Arab countries, especially Egypt, witnessed economic growth and the development of strong infrastructure for ICTs. These factors led to the rise of a middle-class that fostered a demand for political participation. Gladstone analyzed the political regime of Egypt and

Tunisia (calling them sultanistic regimes) and the respective revolutions. He asserts that “as the economy grows and education expands under a sultanistic dictator, the number of people with higher aspirations and a keener sensitivity to the intrusions of police surveillance and abuse increases” (Gladstone 3). However, Rapanos highlighted the high rates of unemployment and the huge gap between the different social classes in Egypt as important factors in understanding what led to the protests in addition to the growth of the middle-class, the improvement in health and education, and the expansion of ICTs.

Other studies (Fukayama; Rapanos) emphasized the idea that Egypt witnessed economic development a few years prior to the Revolution. As a result, the middle-class expanded. Therefore, this larger middle-class fostered demands for political participation (Fukuyama). The economic gains and reforms did not accompany political reforms. As a result, people in Egypt do not have any venue to claim their political rights but the street. All the other political channels are blocked (Bayat). Mubarak and his security apparatuses were controlling all the political organizations, like political parties, labour unions, syndicates, etc. Therefore, the only option to fight for political reform for Egyptians was to go out to the streets.

“El Shab Yurid Iskat El Neziam” (The People Demand the Fall of the Regime) can also be understood from the epistemological perspective. Hamid Dabashi asserts that this particular chant did not merely mean the political regime, but “even more radically, to the mode of knowledge production about ‘the Middle East,’ ‘North Africa,’ ‘the Arab and Muslim World,’ ‘The West and the Rest,’ or any other categorical remnant of a colonial imagination (Orientalism) that still pre-empt the liberation of these societies in an open-ended dynamic” (3). As a result, the Egyptian Revolution is understood in this dissertation, not as a Revolution against Mubarak’s tyranny, but against an oppressive social and political structure constructed by Mubarak, his security

apparatuses, and many other contributors, (e.g., religious conservatives, both Christians and Muslims, followers of political Islam, and colonial powers, etc). This dissertation also adopts Dabashi's understanding of the chant "El Shab Yurid Iskat El Neziam", seeing it as a part of the Revolution against the mode of knowledge production, specifically about Arab women, Muslim women, and Egyptian women.

Egyptians were not only able to end the power of Mubarak, but to inspire other people all over the globe to protest against contemporary oppressive neoliberal policies. The Egyptian Revolution inspired young people, mainly in Europe and North America, to develop their version of the Revolution. Telmissany asserts that "the Egyptian Revolution catalyzes and empowers different forms of nomadic utopianism, in and out of Tahrir Square, physically and virtually, asserting through constant movement a living form of revolutionary will to power" (45). In other words, Tahrir Square transformed into a symbol of fighting global oppression and a "new way to learn and practice dissidence" (Telmissany 44). In Spain, young people occupied many squares and protested against capitalism. The Spanish movement/protests were known as 15-M (Beas). In early fall 2011, the Vancouver-based magazine, *Ad Buster*, called its readers to occupy Wall Street in New York. A full-size hashtag #OccupyWallStreet was published with a tagline "Are you ready for a Tahrir moment? On September 17, flood into lower Manhattan, get up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades, and occupy Wall Street". Thousands of people responded to the call and occupied Wall Street. People in other American and Canadian cities were inspired as well and occupied major different squares in their cities and established their own encampments. Canadian feminist activist, Judy Rebick, asserts that "the Arab Spring protests inspired a generation of young people to rally against less brutal but no less soul-destroying oppression" (45). However, Rebick focused her analysis on how young Americans were inspired by young Egyptians, especially

young, Egyptian women. Rebick highlighted the important role played by Egyptian young women, not only in encouraging Egyptians to go out in masses to protest against Mubarak, but also to inspire young people in the United States to protest for social justice and neoliberal policies.

Rebick asserts that Asmaa Mahfouz's "courage and heart were an important spark for the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. She and her comrades came to visit the Occupy Wall Street site in October 2011 to urge the occupiers to believe in themselves" (625). Egyptian women in Europe and North America not only inspired young protesters to develop their own dissenting activism, but also organized different activities to support and educate people about the Revolution in Egypt.

3. Why Women and Gender?

Asmaa Mahfouz's short video went viral on the Internet. In the video, which was watched by millions of Egyptians, Asmaa filmed herself in Tahrir Square, saying that she was going to the protest the following day, and that it would be shameful if Egyptian men did not go to the protest to protect female protesters from any violence that might occur. This video created a huge debate among Egyptian feminists as some of them criticized the message as a confirmation of gender roles and stereotypes (Kadry 201). (The full discussion around the content of Asmaa's video will be discussed in chapter six of this dissertation.) While the validity of Asmaa's message may be subject to debate, the fact that the video was produced by a young girl wearing a hijab was major motivation for Egyptians to occupy Tahrir Square for 18 days until the resignation of former President Mubarak. Egyptian women and men went down to the streets of Cairo and other Egyptian cities to protest against the regime. Women did not go into the streets in order to follow men but to lead protests and participated, fully and equally, like their male peers. Female protesters participated in the violent actions that took place between the protesters and the police during the

first three days of the sit-in; also, in the violent confrontations that took place between the protesters and the military during the transition period following Mubarak's resignation.

According to Bier, revolutions attempt to act upon people's hope and aspirations by bringing "newness" into the world. But Bier concludes her analysis of the scholarly literature on gender and revolutions by asserting that when it comes to gender, "revolutions simply bring old wine in new bottles" (57). In this research, however, I argue that Egyptian women participated equally in the 18 days of the Revolution and the events that followed brought new wine in new bottles. The scholarly literature on women and the 2011 Revolution asserts that women did not revolt against Mubarak, but against the entire patriarchal values of the society.

For a very long time, Egyptian women have been struggling with "reactionary social forces; the rise of political Islam, the imposition of a top-down cosmetic feminism, which only serves those in power; and an unsafe public sphere, which poses increased risks of rape, humiliation, and harassment" (Khamis 149). Even though gender was not a direct cause for the outbreak of mass protests against Mubarak (Assaad; Malek & Mousa; Sholokamy), female protesters were fully aware that they were protesting not only against Mubarak, but against an oppressive social and political power structure. "[U]nlike men, women face two battles: the first for political change and the second to obtain a real change of their societal status to become fully equal to their male counterparts" (Allam 14). Therefore, scholars (Hafez; Khamis; Sholokamy) assert that unlike men, women were fighting two battles at the same time in Tahrir Square: a battle for political change and a battle against social patriarchy to create a new egalitarian society. However, the 18-day Tahrir sit-ins were unique as they witnessed a complete removal of the socially-constructed barriers between people. Gender, class, religion, sexuality, or other identifying factors did not act as barriers for protesters to interact and work together. Shereen

Abuelnaga aptly asserts that the outbreak of the Revolution marked the appearance of “real diversity on several levels: ideological, cultural, religious, educational, class-based, gender oriented” (37). Tahrir Square was not only an inclusive place but also a safe place for women to protest. Thus, some feminist scholars and commentators (Abuelnaga; Eltahawy; Telmissany) have described those 18 days as a “utopia”. However, this “utopia” did not last long after Mubarak’s resignation, as women continued to experience violence and harassment in public spaces and limitations on their freedom to practice politics in public spaces.

The inclusivity of Tahrir Square did not last long after Mubarak’s resignation. Systematic violence towards women and publicly violating their bodies became the norm in Tahrir Square and lasted for years after 2011. On March 8, 2011, different women’s rights organizations called for marches to take place on streets throughout Cairo, finally converging in Tahrir Square. The main objective of these marches was to celebrate International Women’s Day and to increase awareness about women’s issues that almost disappeared from the political agenda post-February 11, 2011.

The organizers of the Women’s Day marches were expecting a huge number of women to participate; however, only around 500 women showed up (Hafez). Female protesters printed pictures of pioneering Egyptian, female figures in different fields and disciplines on huge banners, including female cinematic characters. Reprehensibly, once the march reached Tahrir Square, which was supposed to be the end point, the women were violently attacked and silenced both by male protesters, mainly belonging to Islamic political groups, and by the military police. Some male protesters shouted at the female protesters that it was not the right time for sectarian demands. Egyptian journalist, Samia Sadek, said in her report of the events: “This march, which was supposed to attract a million women to rally for women’s rights, only managed to get five hundred

women out to the square. They were shouted at by some men, who told them to go back to the kitchen” (Hafez 38).

The following day, March 9, 2011, men and women organized a sit-in at Tahrir Square to express their disapproval of the attacks that had taken place the day before. In the early morning of the second day, the army attacked the sit-in and arrested the protesters. The army tortured the male protesters and sexually humiliated the female protesters by performing “virginity tests” on young women. The attacks on the women’s march on March 9 from both the military and Islamists marked a new chapter in the history of Egyptian women and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Violence against female protesters around Tahrir Square has escalated since then.

The question remains: was Tahrir really an inclusive place? After the toppling of Mubarak, women were severely attacked, and Tahrir Square transformed from a safe space for women to protest to a dangerous space where women were sexually harassed and raped. On the legislation side, women lost some of the legal gains from Mubarak’s regime (Dawoud; Sholokamy). The postMubarak legislative body repealed various laws that were supporting women, claiming that these laws were issued under Mubarak’s regime. Only women-related laws were the ones that were repealed and not any other laws issued under the rule of Mubarak. History tends to repeat itself as women’s experiences in 1919 protests were similar to women’s experiences in 2011 (The parallels between 2011 Revolution and 1919 revolution are discussed within the entirety of Chapter 4). Egyptian feminist groups, lead by Hoda Shawrawi, contributed to the release of the political leader, Saad Zaghloul, from British arrest. However, after Zaghloul won the elections and became the prime minister, he did not grant women suffrage (Allam). Therefore, Abuelnaga asserts that the “New Egypt” [that] was waiting to embrace the “new women’ that emerged from the square turned out to be a mirage” (42).

This paradox requires unfolding and conceptualization; otherwise, it could imply an Orientalist analytical framework that Egyptian women are passive without any agency. Telmissany and Allam offered two analytical frames to conceptualize and understand this paradox. Telmissany mainly developed her conceptual framework by using Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work on utopia/dystopia. Allam developed her conceptual framework by borrowing the concept of "episodes of contention" conceived by Sidney Tarrow, political framing by William Gamson, as well as David Snow and Robert Benford. I argue that the analytical framework of both Telmissany and Allam need to be combined together to provide a nuanced analysis and a clear understanding of the conflicts that took place in Tahrir Square after Mubarak's resignation and the brutality that female protesters experienced. The other important element that needs to be contextualized is that the "misunderstood aspect of women's experience in the uprising is the absence of gender from collective action frame" (Allam 23). The combination of Allam's analysis and Telmissany's analysis is that it will avoid orientalizing Egyptian women. Social movements go through many phases. Tarrow asserts that these phases are characterized by "rapid diffusion of collective action frames; innovations in collective action; and cumulative effect regardless of the cycle's immediate outcome" (142-4). Allam argues that the Egyptian Revolution went through the same phases. "The 2011 episode of contention, protestors were the first to engage in innovative collective actions, salient among which is virtual dissidence, as they sensed an opportunity to advance their position through novel means" (5). The Revolution, according to both Allam and Telmissany, among other scholars, did not develop a major transformation in political power structures nor "social schisms-including those that are gender-based" (Allam 6). Telmissany constitutes a similar argument by arguing that Tahrir Square should be viewed as "as the site of an ongoing confrontation between revolutionary groups invested with a utopian sensibility or impulse, and anti-revolutionary forces

that push for the restoration of a dystopian order” (36). After the toppling of Mubarak, the military, and their supporters, members of different Islamic groups and protesters who support secular state, along with people who belonged to the old regime were fighting against each other to dominate the public sphere and to occupy the largest territory possible in the post-Mubarak era. The activism and various protests that took place for three years after the Revolution can be considered as “an ongoing movement of deterritorialization, resistance and contestation that deploys an oppositional set of popular and civilian tactics against strategies of dominance and politics of despair” (Telmissany 38).

Therefore, the Egyptian Revolution should be both perceived and analyzed as a process and not as an event that has a specific beginning and end. In taking the analysis to another level, there are two important questions commonly raised in both scholarly and non-activist spheres. The first question is regarding the absence of gender-based demands during the 18 days of the Revolution. The second question is regarding the escalation of violence and conflicts in Tahrir Square and the transformation of Tahrir Square from a very inclusive place where everyone was able to participate to a violent, exclusionary place. To address both questions, a combination of both analyses by Telmissany and Allam are needed. Allam borrowed anthropologist Victor Turner’s term “liminal” to describe the first 18 days of the Revolution that were characterized by solidarity and equality between everyone. Turner asserts that the times of change, like the time periods of revolutions, can be described as “liminal phases”. In these phases, social differences almost vanish and disappear temporally, and also spatially, while participants experience “communities,” fellowship, and an unexpected joy in sharing common experiences (Turner 37–41). Allam argues that describing the first 18 days of the Revolution as “liminal phases” can explain the inclusivity of Tahrir and the reason why women were able to fully participate and even

lead different dissenting activities. Women were also on the front lines during violent clashes with the police, during the first few protests during the Revolution, and then the resurgence of inequalities and harassment followed the toppling of Mubarak.

Other scholars (Abuelnaga; Telmissany) describe the first 18 days as a “utopia”. Telmissany went beyond labeling the 18 days as a “utopia” and developed a comparative framework for analyzing the inclusivity of Tahrir Square and the escalation of violence after the toppling of Mubarak. Telmissany adopted Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower’s definition of utopia as modes of culture production. In this process of production, “good and bad imagined worlds are variants of utopian thinking” (Telmissany 36). However, Telmissany reminds us that Majid Yar refutes this way of understanding by arguing that there are two methods of understanding utopia. One way is to recall the past and construct it as better than the present or the future. The other way of constructing utopia “imagines utopia as the intentional product of rational action, the outcome of ‘human contrivance’ or social ‘engineering’ through which the good society might be realized in the future” (Yar 8). Thus, Telmissany asserts that applying the latter way of constructing the utopia should be utilized to understand that the “clash over the meaning of the Egyptian Revolution, its goals and its outcomes, is caught within this utopian dilemma” (36). This dilemma was created because Islamists were trying to impose certain radical, Islamic, utopia ideals that were mainly anchored in the past and imposed upon the future.

At the same time, secular revolutionaries were trying to impose secular utopia. Therefore, Telmissany argues that the confrontations between the secular revolutionaries on one side and the different Islamist groups, supported by the military on the other side, can be conceptualized by the utopian/dystopian dichotomy, inspired by the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In their famous book, *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari reflect on the obstruction between

authoritarian utopia and revolutionary utopia. “In utopia (as in philosophy), there is always the risk of a restoration, and sometimes a proud affirmation of transcendence, so that we need to distinguish between authoritarian utopias, or utopias of transcendence, and immanent revolutionary, libertarian utopias” (100). Telmissany capitalized on Deleuze and Guattari and developed a “utopian/dystopian” concept for Tahrir square. Telmissany named three utopian and three dystopian functions for Tahrir Square. Contesting authoritarian regime and the call for democratization is the first utopian function. This utopian function is unfolding into two major aspects. Firstly, the ability of Tahrir Square to be inclusive and embraced the totality of the population and sought perfection and reconciliation as a basic component of the revolutionary vision” (Telmissany 40).

Secondly, resistance tactics is a major characteristic in this utopian function. There are two folds for the resistance aspect. Firstly, the revolutionaries decided to adopt pacifist resistance strategies preaching no or very little violence in retaliation to police brutality” (Telmissany 40). Deterritorialization is the other fold. Tahrir Square was the center of the Revolution, however, revolutionaries were moving from the center to the peripheries. The revolutionary movement traveled to other Egyptian cities and neighborhoods, in both Cairo and other cities in Egypt, and reached millions of members of the Egyptian diaspora living around the globe.

The dissent activities also moved to the cyberspace through the various ICTs. The second utopian function determined by Telmissany focuses on the communal/communicational aspect of Tahrir. Telmissany posits that communities were created both physically in Tahrir Square, and other squares where protests took place, and virtually on various social media platforms. The strong presence of those sub-active communities, like the soccer fan community (known as the Ultras), and their full integration with the wider protest community is a major attribute for the physical

community. The third utopian function is education. “The square had an educational function; it educated the people on both the moral and political levels and changed the social stigma of, or panic from, acts of resistance” (Telmissany 40). ICTs played an important role in this function as well.

There is another important aspect related to the function of education. Male and female university professors of Egyptian origin, who teach in Europe and North America, decided to teach their students about Tahrir Square and the Egyptians fighting for freedom and social justice. Sherine Hafez, a professor at the University of California, wrote about her personal experience teaching students about Tahrir Square in her recently published book, *Women of the Midan*. May Telmissany, a professor at the University of Ottawa, presented a key-note speech at the University of Sydney, Australia. Thus, the utopian educational function was implemented in three different ways: in-person in Tahrir and other squares in Egypt, virtually through ICTs, and through Egyptian intellectual diaspora in both Europe and North America. The last utopian function is secularization. Telmissany asserts that “the square strove to build a secular utopian space where class-based, gender-based as well as religious-based relationships were briefly discarded in favor of the call for national unity and the much-needed separation between political activism and religious institutions” (Telmissany 41).

The unity between the different groups in Tahrir does not mean that “the Revolution did not reject religiously inscribed groups and agendas; to the contrary, it embraced all those who supported the demands for real justice and the necessity of true change” (Telmissany 41). Allam adopts the sociological conceptualization onto the unity of Egyptians during the 18 days and absence of this unity after toppling of Mubarak. Allam’s conceptualization capitalizes on Erving Goffman’s framing theory. Goffman asserts that collective action frames construct meaning for

action. The importance of developing frames at times of collective action is that frames define the motivations, grievances, and demands of the movement's members as well as their identity (Gamson; Givan et al.; Snow and Benford). Thus, Allam asserts that protesters during the 18 days were able to develop a unified frame for their demands: social justice, freedom, and dignity. Allam named this frame "the citizen frame". Protesters neglected all the differences between them, in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, political orientation, etc., and only focused on the fact that they are all citizens of Egypt who are gathered around the same demands. Thus, any action to break this frame might produce negative consequences on the entire Revolution. "Introducing group-based demands, whether by women, religious and/or sexual minorities, would ostensibly put this unified image and consequently the movement at large at risk" (Allam 80). Protesters were fully aware that because of the adoption of the citizen frame, the protests mobilized masses to the different squares in Egypt. While Allam asserts that the success of mobilization is that "the frame tapped deep-rooted and widely shared grievances in its diagnostic framing of the problems" (75). James Scott explains that the diagnostic nature of some frames explains how a "revolt spreads like 'wildfire' looking like a very organized, coordinated uprising, when in fact, it was not" (224).

However, this citizen frame did not last after the toppling of Mubarak and Tahrir Square lost the quality of inclusivity. A new chapter of the Revolution started after the toppling of Mubarak. The new chapter, according to Telmissany, is the beginning of the "dystopia". "The Citizen Frame" vanished immediately after Mubarak left the office. New frames start to be formed and constituted. Allam reminds us that "framing is therefore a dynamic process tied to not only a particular socio-historical context but also to the immediate context of collective action and to the participants' subjective experience in it. Hegemonic ideological packages and dominant public

discourses have an influence on how participants frame their engagement” (Allam 97). The unification of Egyptians (either among the protesters in Tahrir Square or citizens who were not politically active) vanished. Temissany says:

“From the standpoint of many revolutionary groups, the square is the perfect place to express discontent as well as the site where different groups from different ideological backgrounds sought freedom of expression. The dystopian functions of the square were elaborated to assert the domination of one particular group, seeking to achieve total control over the society” (32).

In January 2012, various Islamist groups, like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, decided to transform the square into a big prayer space and recite the Quran using giant speakers. They attacked women celebrating International Women’s Day on March 8, 2011. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the interim governing authority after Mubarak, also tried to impose specific frames by either manipulating the media or using excessive force against the protesters, especially female protesters. The civilians (non-Islamists, anti-SCAF) were also divided between some groups who believed in formal politics via elections and political parties and others who still believed that protests and various dissent activities should continue. Therefore, various dystopian functions existed. Telmissany identified three dystopian functions.

A dystopian society is by definition “a would-be perfect society that is, in fact, a very bad, unfavorable, or faulty place” (Morris & Kross 83). Telmissany argues that the first dystopian function happened after the various Islamist groups won the majority of the seats of the first parliamentary elections held in November 2011. Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood (the major Islamist group in Egypt), with the support of SCAF, depicted protesting “as ‘unworkable in practice’ and developed a discourse that portrayed the protesters as betrayers to the country and

serving a foreign agenda. This led to the second dystopian function, which “relates to the perception of revolutionary practices as a threat” (Telmissany 43). SCAF developed many tools to claim that protests and dissent activities are a threat to the National security. The Muslim Brotherhood (after winning the majority of the seats) depicted protest activities as immoral activities. At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood “positioned themselves as the sole guarantor of morality and the unique forces capable of protecting the square and mobilizing large numbers against the remnants of the old regime” (Telmissany 43). Un-learning how to revolt and wiping down one’s memory is the third dystopian function identified by Telmissany. Both the Muslim Brotherhood and SCAF worked together to delete and remove anything artistic (like wiping the graffiti from the walls) or any material that might have educated people on various dissent activities.

Other scholars, like Reem Wael, developed a different framework based on mainly political science scholarship regarding revolutions. Wael argues that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution reflected a “nationalist stance, calling for the overthrow of tyrants for ‘national liberation’” (478). Nationalism in general, and nationalist movements, always adopt masculine notions and are inspired by masculine hopes (Encloe; Yuval- Davis). Therefore, Wael asserts that it is very important to distinguish between nationalist revolutions and gender revolutions. In the case of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, Wael argues that it “adopted a ‘national’ agenda characterized by patriotism and called for a set of mainstream goals; bread, freedom and human dignity. Women wholeheartedly participated in the uprising, but they were betrayed as soon as the movement left the streets and went into formal politics” (479). The major paradox is that there is a common argument within the nationalist doctrine that “women’s emancipation automatically follows national liberation as colonialism, capitalism and other ideologies are blamed for gender

inequalities” (Suneri 45). However, the history of liberation movements and revolutions indicates that this liberation will be unlikely to happen (Wael). The reason for this paradox is that “gender inequalities are rooted in unequal gendered powers that are embedded in most political and social ideologies that remain untouched with a regime change” (Wael 450). Adopting Wael’s framework will facilitate the understanding of the radical change toward women in general and gender issues after the toppling of Mubarak. The history demonstrates that “nationalist movements do not only fail to recognize women’s interests, but they deny women’s efforts. After achieving their primary goals (usually a regime change), women’s contributions are only considered in relation to the success accrued by men” (Wael 451). In conclusion, this research project understands the 2011 Egyptian Revolution not as an event with a specific start date and end date, but within the context of “continued politics” (Allam). The Revolution started on January 25, 2011, but it is still taking place.

4. Which Feminism? Whose Feminism?

The most important question is: Whose feminism? Different scholars (Al-Oraimi; El Sadda; Makdisi) determined many obstacles and challenges for producing an Arab, feminist line of thinking and the utilization of “feminist” as a label in activism. Therefore, it is very important to critically differentiate between the use of “feminism”, “feminist activism”, and “women’s rights” in the Arab world, but mainly in the Egyptian context. This section will provide an overview of the different uses. The lack of a clear definition of the concept of feminism is one of the major obstacles in the study of Egyptian feminism. The term “feminism” was used for the first time in Egypt in 1923 when two pioneers of Egyptian women’s movements, Hoda Shawrawi and Siza Nabrawi, established the Egyptian Feminist Union (Badran). Margot Badran, a feminism historian, states:

“We define Egyptian feminism within the context of the Egyptian experience. In this paper, we use a broad working definition of feminism that includes an awareness of constraints placed upon women because of their gender. It attempts to remove these constraints and evolve a more equitable gender system involving new roles for women and improved relations between women and men.” (132)

Scholars who analyze the women’s movement in Egypt take the term “feminism” for granted and fail to provide a clear definition. For example, Lucia Sorbera analyzes the Egyptian feminist history from the establishment of the first feminist to the 2011 Revolution. Early in her article, she provides a definition of “revolution”. However, she does not do the same for the term “feminism”. I argue that the lack of a clear definition has two major effects. Firstly, many Egyptian female activists do not label themselves as feminists. Consequently, Nadjé Al-Ali used the term “women’s activism” instead of “feminism” in her research, as many of the leaders of the women’s movement in Egypt reject the “feminist” label for “pragmatic and ideological reasons”. Al-Ali says:

“The English term ‘feminist’ evokes antagonism and animosity, and sometimes even anxiety, among a great number of women activists, who seem to have internalized the way feminists are being portrayed in prevailing Egyptian discourse: men-hating, aggressive, possibly lesbian (but not likely to be obsessed with sex), and certainly Westernized women.” (127)

Other scholars (El Sadda) also assert that a huge challenge for women’s activism in Egypt is that numerous members of society accuse female activists or feminists of trying to export Western ideology to their own culture. In other words, women’s activists who labeled themselves as feminists are accused of contributing to culture imperialism and welcoming

colonialism because of their type of activism. Therefore, most of Egyptian women's activists decided to develop the framework of "women's rights" instead of "feminism" to be present and active in more spaces.

Arab feminist scholar, Hoda Elsadda, asserts that "for historical and political reasons, Arab feminism is in a highly volatile in-between space that impacts directly and indirectly on how matters develop, including questions on language, identity, strategies of confrontation and resistance" (28). Therefore, "feminism" in the Arab countries faces multi-faceted challenges: Firstly, feminist movements are not supported by grassroots organizations (Makdisi). The power of the state is stronger than any popular movement (Al-Oraimi). Secondly, the contemporary economic and political situation is extremely dependent and subordinate to Western political powers. Al-Oraimi asserts that "political and economic subordination have prevented Arab intellectuals from rebuilding social systems and norms and finding alternative outside the parameters of international hegemony" (138). Arab feminism is no different than any other intellectual project. Arab feminists are also suffering from this political and economic status.

Secondly, contrary to the previous point, Al-Oraimi asserts that the Arab intellectual suffers from isolation and retreats in response to Western culture hegemony and imperialism. The rejections are not made by one choice, but imposed by the poor conditions of the Arab world. Al-Oraimi argues that "the ossification of modern intellectual visions has led those Arab intellectuals who reject subordination to Western dictates to retreat and find shelter in their past, and thus fail to seek enlightenment from contemporary visions of modernity" (138). Religious fundamentalists amplified the rejection and worked hard to impose their radical retroactive ideas. A huge part of those ideas is against women's liberation and empowerment. Thus, feminism is considered as a Western-developed thought, so it is faced with huge rejection.

Thirdly, the prevalence of poverty and illiteracy among men and women but more among women. Al-Oraimi asserts that Arab women are “busy ensuring their daily livelihoods; illiterate women do not fully comprehend feminist thought because they had no part in developing it; and sick women are looking for free medicine” (139). Arab feminism, according to Al-Oraimi, is a bourgeois concept that is very far from the lives of many Arab women who belong to lower socioeconomic classes. Arabs are not hegemonic and there is no one Arab nation, and therefore, no Arab feminism.

Fourthly, Arab universities are known, in part, for their scarcity of well-established gender studies. Ben Hadid asserts that this because of the absence of political will. Fadia Hoteit suggests that the rejection of gender studies originated the lack of presence of a clear translation for the term “gender” in Arabic. The rejection can be considered as a “vocal dissonance with the Arabic language” (El Satta 29) and the “resistance of prevailing to the introduction of Western concept, which ends up being treated as a form of intellectual colonialism” (El Satta 28). The lack of consent among Arab feminist scholars and intellectuals on how “gender” should be translated to Arabic is very problematic on different fronts. There is division among Arab scholars on the implications of the lack of translation. Some scholars, like Samia Mehrez, argue that feminist scholars should agree on one translation to “gender”. Mehrez posits that the lack of consent on translation reflects the inability of Arab scholars to construct a new meaning that allows for the integration of gender studies into Arabic studies and culture. On the other hand, other scholars, like Hoda Elsadda, argue that there is no need to have consent on one translation and that the presence of multiple translations reflects a diversity of methods and agendas (23). El Satta uses Edward Said’s “traveling theories” to constitute her argument that the “representation and

institutionalization of particular concept once it comes into contact with a new environment and interacts with a different set of challenges” (22).

Gender as a concept has evolved and developed in Arab countries throughout the years and gained different meanings and understandings. Arab culture, like any other culture, is not monolithic and homogenous, but different from one geographic location to another, from one social class to another, and the dynamic changes over time. El Sadda says:

“The definition of a certain concept is based entirely on its meaning in the culture produced it, and on a rigid and static understanding of that culture, ignoring its continuous and renewed exposure to and interaction with other cultures and the new forms it might take after it moves to new a new place, with different factors and agendas.” (23)

Therefore, it is impossible to establish one translation for “gender” as the translation would evolve and change with time. The meaning of gender evolved in the West. In the 1970s, gender was mainly meant to foreground socially and culturally constructed sex roles. Then, this understanding was evolved and developed thanks to the work of Judith Butler on “Gender performativity”, which confirmed that gender is a performative process propagated through repetition and imitation. More importantly, this process is not necessarily linked to people’s biological sex (El Sadda 24). The meaning of concepts evolves and develops, not only from one place to another, but also over time.

Fifthly, El Sadda posits that there were “polemic surroundings [of] the translation of feminist terms and concepts, such as the term concept ‘gender’” (20). In the same context, Arab feminist scholars and teachers suffer from the low production of specialized educational material in Arabic. El Sadda asserts that translating concepts from English to Arabic is very problematic on

different fronts. However, despite all these challenges, there are a few Arab feminist scholars who challenge all these obstacles and power structures to produce feminist scholarship.

El Satta confirms that “knowledge produced in the margins of power is often more in touch with specific realities and therefore a ‘situated knowledge’, that can potentially create new possibilities and ‘new epistemologies’, can work toward changing existing power relations” (28). Some feminist scholars, like Nadjie Al-Ali and Nermin Allam, documented their experience in conducting interviews with Egyptian women who were active in politics in general and the women’s rights movement. Both Al-Ali and Allam assert that many women who advocate for women’s rights in Egypt refuse to be identified as feminists. Al-Ali asserts in her seminal book, *Secularism, Gender, and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement*, that the majority of women she interviewed for her research asserted that female activists tend to distinguish between al-haraka al-nissaiyya (the women’s movement) and al-haraka al-nasswiyya (the feminist movement). Al-Ali posits that the majority of these activists perceive the women’s movement (al-haraka al-nissaiyya) as a more inclusive term that entails the concern with national independence, class struggle, and other social and political issues (5). But the concept of nassawiyya (feminism) is only concerned with abawiyah (patriarchy) (5). On the other hand, Al-Ali posits that a small but growing group of women “consider themselves self-proclaimed feminists, or nassawiyat, and cautiously stress that their feminism does include the struggle against all forms of social injustice. They are not, they also emphasize, “men-haters” (5).

In another of Allam’s books, *Women and the Egyptian Revolution: Engagement and Activism During the 2011 Arab Uprisings*, Allam notes that she received the same reaction from women she interviewed for her research. Allam conducted interviews with women who

participated in the 18 days of the protests against Mubarak and the three years that followed. With expectation, most of the women Allam interviewed preferred to be labelled as “women’s rights activists” and not “feminists”. Allam asserts that this position “illustrate[s] particularly well the effect of colonial history, identity politics, and simplistic culture readings of religion on the framing of women’s rights and feminist activists” (12). However, both Al-Ali and Allam posit that there are a few female activists who do label themselves as feminists. These women are mainly young female activists. The most prominent group of these young women are the founders of

Nazra for Feminist Studies. Nazra identifies itself as “a group that aims at contributing to the continuity and development of the Egyptian and regional feminist movement in the Middle East and North Africa, where the group believes that feminism and gender are political and social issues affecting freedom and development in all societies”.¹ Other active groups were established after the Revolution who also labeled themselves as “feminists” as well.

However, the implementation of women’s rights discourse (human rights discourse) and not feminist discourse has repercussions on the status of women of different social and political fronts. Arab feminist, Zeina Zaatari, argues that the prevalence of women’s rights discourse has negative implications on women’s bodies and sex in Arab countries. Zaatari asserts that women’s rights activities are not taking radical positions against discourses related to marriage and sex outside “legal marriage”. Therefore, women’s activists did “not destabilize social power structures. They fail to address the historical plurality of marriage institutions...They fail to question why marriage is necessary to regulate sexual and reproductive relations; they do not propose alternative arrangements to regulate them or explain why they need to be regulated at all” (61). Therefore,

¹ <https://nazra.org/en>

women do not have full control over their sexuality and bodies. Zaatari criticized the Arab women's movement arguing that it only focused its activism and strife on the economic and political rights and neglected the sexual and bodily rights. As a result, the rights of sexual minorities are neglected as the discrimination against gay and lesbians is increasing (2014).

Sherine Hafez in her seminal book, *Women of The Midan: The Untold stories of Egypt's Revolutionaries*, critiqued the scholarly literature on Arab and Northern African women. Hafez asserts that "the scholarly record on societies of the Middle East and North Africa has tended to

fall short in theorizing the gendered body than to focus on its victimization" (13). The scholarly literature is really missing studying "body within contexts of protest and Revolution in relation to the wider sociopolitical structures of power that discursively engage the corporeal form" (Hafez 13). However, the pivotal involvement of women in the 2011 Revolution led different scholars like Sherine Hafez, Shereen Abuelnaga, Karina Eileraas, and Katherine van den Bogert focus their research on the intersection of body and revolution.

Feminist scholar, Jean Said Makdisi, asserts that the term "huquouq almara", "the rights of women", or more accurately, 'the woman', has evolved in the Arab world from being an offensive, unacceptable term to a poorly defined term. Makdisi posits that the same thing happened to the phrase "tahrir alma'a" (the liberation of woman). "The phrases today evoke neither a thrill in the breasts of women aspiring real change, nor the slightest bother to the powers that be, both public and private, and certainly no great interest in society at large" (Makdisi 80). The term "woman's rights" is very problematic as it neglects differences (economic class, religion, education, etc.) between women (Makdisi 80). The second issue with these phrases is what

“huquouq” (rights) and “tahrir” (liberation) mean. Makdisi questions who constitutes rights. Is it the national constitution, the human rights declaration, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), or religious law? In taking this argument to another level, Makdisi is asking: “why should we accept the boundaries set by these pre-ordained rights, and not push different, more radical demands far beyond these boundaries?” (Makdisi 81). Makdisi posits that member of women’s movement in Arab countries adopt the rights framework as sort of tactful insinuation (81). Women’s movements in Arab countries realize “their own weakness” (81). Thus, women’s rights activists “try not to offend, but on the contrary to remain in the good books of the political forces that they regard as too strong for them to challenge directly, but from whom they must accept whatever gains they may hope to require” (81). Makdisi determines that these forces are emanate from Islamic and Christian religious institutions, in addition to big businesses, rich families, and political parties. In most of the Arab countries, including Egypt, women’s rights are determined by two discourses; secular feminism, and Islamic Feminism (Badran). (A detailed discussion between the different feminist discourses follows in the next chapter).

The scholarly literature on the activism of black women in the United States of America and women of the global south posit the same position toward the “feminist label” (Collins). In the United Kingdom, between 1978 and 1983, women of African and Asian descent founded an organization called the Organization of Women and Asian Descent (OWAAD) to defend their rights. They deliberately chose to label themselves as black, and despite their commitments to women’s issues, they rejected the term “feminism” (Collins and Bilge 62). The founders of the organization asserted that “when we use the term ‘Black’, we use it as a political term. It doesn’t describe the skin color; it defines our situation here in Britain. We’re here as a result of British

imperialism, and our continued oppression in Britain is the result of British racism” (Bryan et al. 43). The reason for rejecting colonialism and imperialism is the same for deciding not to label themselves feminists. “We are not feminists – we reject that label because we feel that it represents a white ideology. In our culture, the term is associated with an ideology and practice, which is antimen. We don’t alienate men because they put down Black women, because we recognize that the source of that is white imperialist culture” (Bryan et al. 43). The women’s activism group’s decision to be labeled as “feminist” or not reflects their own agency, but also the interlocking systems of oppression that shape their daily life experience.

In summary, this research project adopts a feminist framework and not a women’s rights framework. Of course, feminism is not monolithic. Neroni defines feminism as the following: The confrontation with the contradictions that surround women, contradictions that stem from the structure of patriarchal society. Though many believe that social progress- women as heads of state, women as corporate executives, women as major intellectual figures- has obviated the need for feminism in the contemporary world, the fact is that the contradictions surrounding women have become even more pronounced. (2)

Contradictions is the major aspect in Neroni’s definition of feminism. Generally, the literature on women and revolutions demonstrates that women are always present at the front line in revolutions. Then, women’s rights and gains in terms of equality retreat post-revolutionary regimes. Allam asserts that women’s participation in revolutions in Egypt and Islamic majority countries are always encouraged by all political parties, including Islamists and nationalists. “Yet, with the end of political struggles, the new regimes often ignored women’s demands” (Allam 29). The literature on Latin American women indicates that women’s rights in new political regimes were not delivered and new power worked on the re-assertion of traditional women roles

(Jaquette). The history of women's activism in Egypt and the global south demonstrates that women are always in a paradox as they are welcome to contribute to dissent actions, but then they are not welcome to engage in politics post-Revolution. Allam asserts that sometimes the status of women under dictatorship is better than their post-Revolution status. This paradox is one of the many paradoxes that shape the Egyptian woman experience.

This thesis contends that Egyptian women are trapped in various discourses of knowledge production. The three major ones are: The Orientalism discourse, the state-feminism discourse, and the Islamic discourse. I argue that these three discourses are not sufficient anymore in analyzing women's issues in post-revolutionary Egypt and are not able to effectively analyze the complexity of both women's identity and the system of oppressions in which they are living.

In the 2011 Revolution, women rebelled against the hegemony² that different power structures were trying to impose on them. I argue that Egyptian women went down to the streets to rebel against these imposed discourses. I also argue that there is a counter discourse for each of these discourses: post-colonial discourse (as a counter to the colonial/Orientalism discourse), civic activism (as a counter to the state-feminism discourse), and Islamic feminism (as a counter to the Islamic discourse).

However, these counter discourses are not sufficient to understand and analyze women's diverse contributions to the 2011 Revolution, the interlocking systems of oppression they experienced (and still are), and the novel identification strategies developed by women. I base my argument on four important considerations: Firstly, the range of diversity of women who participated in the Revolution, whether during the 18 days of occupying Tahrir Square or in the

² Macleod asserts that “[h]egemony can be understood as a symbolic struggle, a negotiation over meaning that involves constraints on imagination, whereby ideology is not so much a tool in the hands of a dominant class as an enveloping version of reality in which all social encounters are necessarily conducted” (405).

different protests and events that followed the removal of Mubarak from office. Secondly, the artistic and literary works produced by female writers/artists/filmmakers that has destabilized the dominant knowledge about Egyptian women. Egyptian feminist scholar, Shereen Abuelnaga, labeled these works as a “new language” that represented the authentic diversified identity of Egyptian women.

Thirdly, the content and strategies of the various campaigns developed by women during and after the 18 days of the Revolution. Female activists (with the help of men) decided not to report the perpetrators of sexual harassment to the police, but to deal with them directly in the

streets, as they did not trust the police, perceiving the police as part of the problem and not as part of the solution (Sorbera). In other words, female activists, especially the younger ones, decided to establish a new rapport with the state institutions.

Fourthly, young, Muslim girls wearing the hijab, who belonged to various socio-economic classes, led the crowds in different events during the uprising. This challenged the stereotype that “women in the Middle East are often pitied as the victims of an especially oppressive culture generally equated with the Islamic religion. Women are depicted as bound to the harem, downtrodden and constrained; the ultimate symbol of their oppression and their acceptance of inferiority is the veil” (Macleod et al. 388). These women challenged the generally received knowledge about the different elements that constitute their identity, including gender, religion, class, etc. All the above indicates that Egyptian protesters were able to develop an intersectional understanding of the various social and political problems they were rebelling against. A new identification and conceptualization process needs to take place in order to create tools for a new discourse that truly reflects Egyptian women’s identity in this post-Revolution era.

For the sake of this research, I define conceptualization as “an intellectual process that explores the history of naming things and ideas, places these names in research contexts, establishes the dimensions of naming and sets out the processes for locating empirical observations that stand for concepts” (McBride & Mazur 27). As for the concept of identification, I adopt Stuart Hall’s definition:

“Identification is process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always ‘too much’ or ‘too little’—an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the ‘play’, of difference. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of ‘frontier- effects. It requires what is left outside, to consolidate the process.” (Hall 4).

Hall emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of discourse and power relations that constitute the discourse.

Identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse; we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking difference and exclusion, than they are sign of an identical naturally-constituted unity—an ‘identity’ in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless without internal differentiation). (Hall 4)

Consequently, it is important to see that the power relations responsible for creating discourses are not innocent (Hall). Foucault asserts that “we should admit that power produces

knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute...power relations” (27). However, in Foucault’s views, power is not possessed, and each power domination is faced by resistance and the production of counterknowledge. Therefore, feminist scholars and intellectuals developed a counter discourse to each dominant discourse on women, which we will discuss in detail in the next section. Defining feminism and determining the elements, both internal and external, that shape the discussion of Egyptian women, is very important and needs clarification before dealing with the discussion on different discourses in detail. The contradictions Egyptian women experienced within the context of the Revolution were not novel.

The status of Egyptian women, since the first feminist organization in Egypt was established in 1923, by Hoda Shawrawi, has always been full of contradictions. Bier (2011) argues that in order to get beyond binaries -between complicity and resistance, patriarchy and feminism, the traditional and modern-Egyptian feminism must be historicized as a cultural or discursive project and not just a political movement (11). Thus, Neroni’s definition remains in my opinion the most adequate definition to conceptualize women’s activism and status in Egypt. Haddad argues that there are both internal and external factors that shape the discussion around women and family in Muslim-majority countries during the second half of the last century:

Internal factors include: 1) the consequences of economic, political, and cultural policies implemented by various nation states 2) legislation adopted by governments regarding personal status that affects women’s lives; 3) the availability of opportunities for women and education; and 4) the dominant belief that national liberation should take precedence over liberation of women, since the latter would lead both to subservience to the West

through consumerism and to the degradation of women. External factors include 1) the awareness of Western distaste for and criticism of Islamic family institutions; 2) international pressure, through agencies such as the United Nations, the Agency for International Development, and the International Monetary Fund; 3) the reality transforming the lives of Western women; 4) a backlash against radical feminism in the West, identified as the wearing of miniskirts, bra burning, and free sex. (3)

Although Haddad named these factors for Muslim-majority countries in general (which include Arab and non-Arab countries), they also apply aptly to Egypt. Thus, understanding the 2011 Revolution through a feminist analysis will lead to a nuanced understanding of the various transformations that Egypt witnessed from January 25, 2011, to the present.

In summary, the outbreak of mass protests in various Arab countries in late 2010 and early 2011 encouraged many academic institutions and publishers to organize various scholarly events and issue academic journals, monographs, and edited volumes on what became famous as the Arab Spring. A massive number of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary papers and books were published. Production focused on the contribution of women or the impact of these protests on women's life is very little compared to the general literature (Hafez). However, as one can argue, there are major elements that stimulated the scholars who researched women-related issues in the context of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Firstly, the massive amounts of women who participated in every aspect of the Revolution, including on the front lines during the confrontations that took place between the protesters and the military in the months following Mubarak's resignation. Secondly, women found themselves in a paradoxical situation after the toppling of Mubarak. The square that used to be an inclusive and safe space for women to actively participate in within the public sphere became a dangerous place for women. On the legal and legislative levels, Islamists

dominated the majority of the seats in the first parliament, in 2012, and the first constitution committee had a majority of male members. Both the Islamist majority in parliament and in the constitution committee repealed several legal rights that women gained under Mubarak's regime (Kamal). Thirdly, protesters both men and women, but especially women, used arts and social media extensively in their activism. Various forms of artistic expressions and representations were inspired by the Revolution. The new artistic productions came in various forms: songs, novels, personal memories, fictional films, documentaries, theatrical performances, etc. Many of these artistic expressions were created by women. The personal memoirs, *Cairo My City My Revolution*, by famous fictional writer, Ahdaf Soueif, and *Askal Men Radwa (Heavier than Radwa)*, by the late literary scholar and fictional writer, Radwa Ashour, are very good examples of the artistic expression created by women to document their experience in the Revolution.

The scholarly literature published so far on Egyptian women and the Revolution reflects these elements. Some scholars (Haghani; Kadry) compare the participation of women in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and their participation in the 1919 revolution against the British occupation. Other papers (Dawoud; Sika and Khodery) compare the policy changes improving the status of women after the 2011 Revolution to those implemented after the 1952 revolution that ended the Egyptian monarchy system. Other scholars, like Al-Natour, Assaad, Elmarasafy, Galan, Malek & Mousa, Mazloun, Rooney, Shalaby, and Telmissany analyzed and compared the representation of female protesters in Western newspapers, documentary films, and fictional literature produced after the uprising, as well as in biographies and memoirs written by famous Egyptian feminists, and even in songs and music videos related to the uprising. Others, like Farag, Kamal, Mostafa, Morsy, and Sika, focus on discussing and comparing the legal gains women achieved after the Revolution. Other scholars focused on how women used their bodies in the protests and how they

were able to develop various forms of resistance to protect their bodies from sexual violence (Den Bogert; Eileraas; Hafez; Karkus; Sorbera).

The objective of this dissertation is to build on the available literature related to film and the Egyptian Revolution and fill two specific gaps. First, documentaries made on the Egyptian Revolution were under-studied. Telmissany focused on how documentaries documented defiance through a nuanced analysis of the role of transnational female filmmakers and how they proposed a crucial epistemological shift in knowledge about women through film. This research includes some of the documentaries studied by Telmissany and other ones that she did not include in order to expand the analysis on how filmmakers, either men or women, contributed to the construction of a new epistemological and activist discourses around non-white and non-Western women.

My methodology is inspired by the work of Abuelnaga. Abuelnaga dealt with the fictional film, *Nawara*, as a cultural text as she was concerned “with the inherent epistemological significance of the film itself since it delineates an obscured version of the revolutionary experience as well as the way it reflects a specific point of view that has been marginalized by the “winning” side” (18). The same strategy is applied in this dissertation as documentaries are used as a cultural text that includes various voices and reflects authentic emotions of women and men, with a focus on women, who have been part of the Revolution either directly or indirectly. The application dealing with documentaries as a text will provide a new nuanced understanding to the Egyptian’s new identity pre, during, and post-Revolution. Abuelnaga comments on identity by saying:

Identity depends mainly upon narrative; it is always constructed through stories that individuals and communities tell about themselves. At the same time, the production of identities and the reformation of subjectivities constitute stories in themselves,

psychological and cultural processes that are located in and move through time and space.

(18)

Therefore, I decided to only analyze documentaries as documentaries are more apt than fictional films for showcasing the various ways women contributed to the Revolution. The objective is to understand the various ways the Revolution contributed to women's identities and subjectivities at various stages. This dissertation is also concerned with analyzing the ways women imposed their subjectivities on the various political actions that took place in Egypt starting in January 2011.

The second major critique to the available scholarly literature on women and the Egyptian Revolution is that it did not develop strong connections between women's issues for liberation within the private and public spheres. There are some scholars (Allam; Hafez) who partially developed some connections between women's issues in both the public and private spheres. Exceptionally, Hafez's seminal book, *Women in the Midan*, paid more attention to the development of strong connections between women's struggles and activism in both spheres.

Consequently, this dissertation aims to both build on the existing scholarship and to fill some gaps at the same time. This dissertation will focus on analyzing documentaries either made by women or in which women's issues were the focus. Thus, the documentaries will be analyzed to understand the new identities Egyptian women attempted to construct following the Revolution especially in (1) creating novel relationships between women's issues in private and public spheres; (2) destabilizing the perception that women bodies are docile bodies that can easily be controlled; and (3) establishing new associations between the activist and representation discourses.

An inductive content analysis to six documentaries will take place to achieve this objective. These six documentaries are chosen based on the following criteria: 1. The documentary is either

directed by a female filmmaker or focuses solely on women-related issues. 2. The documentary must cover a time span that is longer than the first 18 days of the Revolution. 3. The documentary should not only focus on activism that took place in Tahrir Square, but also different forms of activism beyond Tahrir Square, and especially inside activists' homes among other private spaces. 4. The characters in the film must reflect the diversity of Tahrir Square in terms of political ideology, gender, religion, etc. Thus, the six documentaries that meet the criteria are: *Words of Witness* by Mai Iskander, *The Square* by Jehane Noujaim, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* by Pierre Toury, *Nefertiti's Daughters* by Mark Nickolas, *I Am the People* by Anna Roussillon, and *The Trials of Spring* by Gini Reticker. *Five Faces of Oppression*, by feminist political scientist, Iris Marion Young, and the work of feminist theorists, Patricia Hill Collins and Simra Bilge, on intersectionality are the two major sources that informed both the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Arab Spring, in general, and the Egyptian Revolution in particular, did not only oust tyrants, but allowed the “transformation of consciousness” (Dabashi) about what is known as Arab and Middle Eastern.

‘People Demand the Overthrow of the Regime.’ This demand for the dominant ‘regime’ to be brought down is a reference not only to political action but, even more radically, to the mode of knowledge production about ‘the Middle East,’ ‘North Africa,’ ‘the Arab and Muslim World,’ ‘The West and the Rest,’ or any other categorical remnant of a colonial imagination (Orientalism) that still pre-empts the liberation of these societies in an openended dynamic. (Dabashi 2)

Dabashi argues that the current modes of knowledge on what is mainly known as Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim is not valid anymore and that the Arab Spring revolted against these binary discourses. The Arab revolutionaries’ deeds were able to “prove every theory of modernization, Westernization, Eurocentricity, the West as the measure of the Rest, the End of History, the Clash of Civilizations, ad absurdum, wrong” (Dabashi 15). Egyptian protesters. Especially women were able to use their political activism and various culture production to develop new forms of knowledge production. In Dabashi’s book, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, he focused on specific discourses of knowledge production, specifically “orientalism” and

“postcolonialism”. This research adopts Dabashi’s position in understanding that the chant “People Demand the Overthrow of the Regime” is against the modes of knowledge production, related to Egypt, and especially Egyptian women. Dabashi focused his research and critiques to mainly orientalism and postcolonialism, but this research expanded the critique to include other dominant discourses that contributed to both knowledge production and political activism around women and women’s issues in Egypt. I argue that there are three dominant discourses that not only constitute knowledge around Egyptian women, but also shape their daily life experience on various fronts. These discourses are the Orientalist discourse, the Islamist (political Islam) discourse, and the state “feminism” discourse. However, there is a counter discourse for each of these discourses: post-colonial feminist discourse, Islamic Feminism, and civic engagement discourse.

1. Orientalist vs. Post-colonial/Feminist Discourses

Edward Said defines Orientalism as a system of knowledge about the Orient, “an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture” (6). In the 18th and 19th centuries, European colonizers produced this systemic knowledge about the Orient through paintings, travel books, and different artistic representation. “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (Said 2). In the Orientalist discourse, the non-white European culture was not represented as simply different, but rather as negative. Said asserts that men of the Orient are portrayed as lazy, passive, and barbaric while Europeans (British and French in particular) are civilized and hard workers. Women in Orientalism are represented as passive, exotic, and obedient. Their only job is to seduce men and they are not allowed to leave the harem.

A major attribute of the Orientalist discourse is that the relationship between the dominant and the dominated (colonizer and colonized) is not monolithic. Said asserts that “Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the West in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing the relative upper hand” (7).

The same applies to the state feminist and Islamic discourses. Later on in this proposal, I will discuss that, despite the mutability of the relationship between state power and women and the Islamists movements and women, both power structures maintain the upper hand over women. Another important aspect of Orientalism is that it is multifaceted.

Said asserts that “because Orientalism is a cultural and a political face, then, it does not exist in some archival vacuum; quite the contrary, I think it can be shown that what is thought, said or even done about the Orient follows (perhaps occurs within) certain distinct and intellectually knowable lines” (13). A system of knowledge production needs institutions in order to continue production. These institutions not only produce the discourse but are also able to make it true. Hall argues that “those who produce the discourse also have the power to make it true to enforce its validity, its scientific status” (25).

It seems that the Revolution was able to oust Mubarak but failed to convince American and European media to stop adopting Orientalism as the only valid discourse covering Arabs and Muslims. Various researchers (Allam; El Mahdi; Sjoberg and Whooley) concluded in their analysis of the coverage of Western media, political speeches, and other various forms of knowledge production, produced by American and European personnel of 2011’s Egyptian Revolution, that they adopted Orientalist discourse.

Rabab El Mahdi asserts that Western media, scholars, and politicians maintained Orientalism in their narratives on the January 25 Revolution. The Revolution shifted the label for

Arabs from the “Arab Exceptionalism” narrative to “Arab Awakening”. The former narrative was the prevalent narrative for decades. The narrative of Arab Exceptionalism asserts that “Arabs because of sociological and cultural reasons are ‘immune’ to democracy and democratization” (El Mahdi). El Mahdi argues that the new narrative of “Arab Awakening” is also constructed based on “the same pillars of othering and, romanticization, while casting universalist-Eurocentric judgments” (El Mahdi). El Mahdi and Dabashi criticized both Western media and Western academia in continuing to analyze the Arab revolutions within Orientalist discourses.

Sjoberg and Whooley assert that Western media seems to be conflicted in its portrayal of the uprising’s impact on women in Egypt. Sjoberg and Whooley analyzed the coverage of the most influential news sources in Europe and the United States. They assert that the coverage done by Western media is divided into two main camps: “one which characterizes the Arab Spring as a time of gender emancipation, and other which casts it as a time of gender oppression” (15). Sjoberg and Whooley’s analysis of this dichotomy in media coverage states that during the 18 days of the uprising, male protesters were working to show that Egyptian women had leadership roles and challenged the Orientalist, Western gaze. Therefore, women attempted to construct a new liberation discourse that had its roots in Western liberal ideology. “One perspective understands the Arab Spring as a moment of successful protest that led to the implementation of Western liberal democracy in the States in which these (formerly oppressed) women lived” (Sjoberg & Whooley 17).

Some Western countries and Western women’s organizations decided to support the Tahrir Square protesters because they thought that Egyptians—and especially Egyptian women—wanted to be liberated and more active in the society. “In fact, many of the stories explicitly addressed pre-

existing notions that the women in the protests were nothing like the prevalent Western stereotypes: doe-eyed, veiled and submissive, exotically silent” (Sjoberg & Whooley 19).

However, after Mubarak was toppled, the Egyptian women’s voices were silenced in different ways, but mainly by the military council and the members of various Islamic political groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists (Sholokamy; Sika). The regression of women’s presence in society made Western media suggest that “after the Arab Spring, as before, Arab women are almost universally grievously oppressed by Arab men” (Sjoberg & Whooley 17). The notion of challenging the Orientalist gaze towards Egyptian women is present, whether implicitly or explicitly, in most of the scholarly and non-scholarly texts related to women and the Egyptian uprising.

Different post-colonial feminist scholars criticized feminist scholarship produced arguing that Western white feminists either ignored problems of women of color (the work of Betty Friedan as an example) or dealt with women of color as a homogenous group. The works of Mohanty and Abdo provide a critical account of how non-white women were presented as a “singular monolithic subject”. Both authors critique the work of Western feminists for portraying women in the Third World/South as homogeneous, passive, and obedient. Abdo focused more particularly on Arab women, stating that Western feminists do not analyze the role of Arab women in either challenging patriarchal ideas in their societies or fighting for the liberation of their land against Western occupation, mainly the Palestine /Israel conflict.

Scholars of color, such as bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill Collins have criticized the early work of white feminist scholars arguing that it excludes non-white women. Also, that the works of white feminists are Eurocentric and essentializing knowledge on gender. Jahppan provides a seminal review of the different academic issues regarding post-modern

conceptions of race. She observes that while the Western feminist's assault on "patriarchy and the production of masculinist knowledge is all very well, the entire discourse between the two is fundamentally white and Eurocentric. White feminists have exposed male essentialism, only to replace it with another essentialism based on the notion of an essential woman" (Jahppan 59). She provides a detailed account of the seminal work done by black feminists like bell hooks, who were able to debunk the idea that there "can be objective knowledge, expertise and scholarship that is not intimately fashioned by the race, gender, class, sexuality and disability identities of the writer or speaker" (Jahppan 59). However, she also critiqued feminists of colour who focus only on racism and neglect other important variables and reasons for oppression, like patriarchy. Other feminist scholars, like Mohanty and Abdo, produced seminal work on developing feminist frameworks that can be used to understand the struggles of racialized women who are not living in the West. The primary issue when analyzing this category of women is to describe them as "women of the Third World." This label is not well accepted in modern times, according to some scholars, including Mohanty, who used this label in her popular article "Under Western Eyes" published in the late 1980s. Mohanty published another article for various reasons for the invalidity of the description of First/Third Worlds. Firstly, "the terms Western and Third World retain a political and explanatory value in a world that appropriates and assimilates multiculturalism and difference through commodification and consumption" (505). Secondly, while the U.S., Europe, and Japan are the nodes of capitalist powers in the current century, there is "increasing proliferation of Third and Fourth Worlds within the national borders of these very countries as well as rising visibility and struggles for sovereignty by First Nations/Indigenous people" (505). Mohanty discusses in detail the limitations of other alternatives, like "North/South" and "Western/non-Western." However, she decided to use the terminology of "First World/North and Third

World/South” (506). The women who are from the “Third World/South,” areas are suffering great injustice with regard to the scholarly and non-scholarly analysis of their status and experiences.

Mohanty and Abdo assert that Arab/Muslim women should be considered when analyzing women from the Third World/South, especially with their history of activism against different levels of oppression and patriarchy. Mohanty highlights the fact that a huge number of women are actively involved in international movements that fight against anti-globalization and the negative effects of neoliberal policies. Abdo, for example, provides different examples of women who fight against the multiple levels of patriarchy, whether on a domestic level or on a political level. Consequently, the second important factor to consider when studying women who live in Arab countries is the impact of the radical, political, religious movements on their lives. Mohanty studies general religious movements all over the world, whereas Abdo focuses on the importance of studying movements of political Islam in Arab countries. “The rise of religious fundamentalism with its deeply masculinist and often racist rhetoric poses a huge challenge for feminist struggles around the world” (Mohanty 506). Abdo asserts that it is crucial when studying Arab women to study the role of the state interfering in their personal lives. However, Sherine Hafez asserts that one of the main challenges that researchers who study Arab/Muslim women face is the lack of feminist theoretical frameworks on different issues related to women, and especially issues related to women’s bodies. Hafez concludes her seminal literature review by positing that “few studies...have theoretically problematized the gendered body in Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and the Arab and North African regions” (176).

A major common attribute to women living in countries that were colonized by Western European countries are being depicted in national discourses; according to which, women are not only expected to biologically reproduce members of the ethnic collectivity but to produce and

reproduce collective identity as they are held responsible for the transition of the nation's culture (Anthias & Yuval-Davis). Thus, Ivekovic and Mostove assert that women in the national discourse became symbolic and spatial boundaries of the nation. This depiction made the members of the nation perceive women of the nation as “mothers, wives, and daughters [who] designate the space of the nation and are, at the same time the property of the nation” (Ivekovic & Mostove 10).

Therefore, women in this discourse don't have full control over their bodies serves as “symbols of the fecundity of the nation and vessels for its reproduction, as well as territorial markers” (Ivekovic and Mostove 10). Egypt represented as a woman that needs to be protected was a common discourse before and after the British occupation.

2. Political Islam vs. Islamic Feminism Discourses

It is important to distinguish Islam from Islamism. Islam is a religion that originally came from the Arab Peninsula around 1400 years ago, while Islamism is mainly a political movement. “[The] Islamist movement incorporates into its ideology a combination of religious commitment, moral indignation, and political participation” (Haddad 19). Islam, like any religion, has various interpretations and Egyptians don't have a monolithic understanding of it. Saba Mahmoud posits that some Egyptians “understand Islam as a doctrinal system with a strong political and juridical implications for the organization of state and society” while other Egyptians “see Islam first and foremost as individual and collective practices of pious living” (35). The same applies to Islamists, as Egypt has various movements that can be grouped under the umbrella of the Islamist movements. However, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by schoolteacher, Hassan AlBanna, is considered to be the major Islamist group, not only in Egypt, but in most Arabic-speaking countries with international chapters worldwide. “Islam is the solution” is their slogan.

Haddad posits that the issue of gender is the most “integral and perhaps most visible” (10) in their platform.

This slogan is very problematic for various reasons as first, it excludes non-Muslims and also Muslims who disagree with the Muslim Brotherhood’s interpretation to Islam. Secondly, it makes it almost impossible to disagree or challenge any discussion made by Islamists as only very few people in this conservative society can challenge a topic that is portrayed as a divine issue.

There are many groups who are considered under the umbrella of Islamists, like the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists, the Ghadaites, etc. There are differences between these Islamist groups in both their interpretation to Islam and their political agenda. However, this research focuses mainly on the Muslim Brotherhood for various reasons. Firstly, they are the oldest Islamist group in Egypt. Secondly, they are the only Islamist group that was able to gain seats in the Egyptian parliament for different consecutive rounds. They are the only Islamist and even civil group who won the presidential elections in Egypt (late Mohamed Morsi, a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood, won the 2013 presidential elections and remained in power for one year).

There are three important factors that inform my conceptualization of the role played by the Islamists: their attempt to challenge Western influence, their desire to establish an alternative form of modernization, and the role they played in transforming the middle-class in Egypt. They did that by framing themselves as the protectors of authenticity and religion from Western influences and by imposing constraints on women. More specifically, Haddad posits that “for Europeans who sought to Westernize the Arab world, the expectation was that Muslims should abandon their tradition and religious teachings about women in order to become modern” (4).

There are various reasons that contributed to the dominance of Islamism starting from the 1970s onward. Islamism introduces an alternate version of modernization through the middleclass.

Abu-Lughod asserts that actions by either European colonizers or the new elites in postcolonial era, identified as “modern” or “progressive” were merely meant to impose various new forms of social control and coercive norms, not to empower and emancipate women. Abu-Lughod terms this practice “the politics of modernity” (244). Consequently, in postcolonial Egypt, the politics of gender and modernity overlapped and intersected within the state feminist and the Islamist discourses. Global protests and social movements in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the strengthening of Islamists not only in Egypt but more broadly in Arabic-speaking and Muslimmajority countries (Haddad). Haddad asserts that:

Islamists wonder, if these systems do not work in their own contexts, why should they be imported? Islamic values concerning the role of women, the family, and the social order are increasingly being portrayed not only as divine prescription for humanity, but also as the last vestiges of resistance to total anarchy in the world. (5)

For example, the Islamists’ vision of modernity interestingly encourages women to go to school provided they remain separated from males (Hatem).

Islamists also encouraged women to be present in the public sphere mainly in workplaces but under very strict conditions. Women are allowed to work in certain jobs only if there was an economic necessity for the family (meaning that women can work if the income of the male figure in the family is not enough and that women can build her own career). According to Hatem, the Islamists “encouraged women’s education, they...frowned on women’s participation in the economy outside the home, arguing that it contravenes their primary role as homemakers and mothers” (Hatem 232). Consequently, Islamists allowed women to be in the public sphere because of economic necessity or political necessity. But at same time, Islamists emphasized on the superiority of men over women in the private sphere. Thus, the Islamists share almost the same

position toward women's issues as state feminism. The major difference between both of them is that Islamism uses a radical interpretation of Islam as a justification where state feminism uses nationalism.

Another important aspect is the role of the middle-class in strengthening the Islamist discourse. Various scholars, such as Haddad, Hatem, and Badran, assert that the middle-class played a crucial role in maintaining the Islamist discourse. Hatem argues that the Islamists "succeeded in persuading a majority of middle-class women and working women to adopt the Islamic mode of dress as a visible sign of this attempted synthesis of Islam and modernity" (92). However, many activists and scholars have developed a framework that combines both Islam and feminism together in a counter discourse to Islamism.

There is always a tension between the state and Islamists since the establishment of the post-colonial state in 1952. The state's political ideology is the major reason for conflict. Hatem asserts that:

the Islamists suggested that the choice that Egypt is asked to make is not between a civil and religious state, but between an Islamic and un-Islamic state. The goal of an Islamic state will be to expand cultural representation of the Islamic nation (umma) in the operation of the political (legislative and bureaucratic) and legal system. (85)

Consequently women, especially their bodies, become an easy target for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups to impose their ideology upon. Haddid posits that: For the Islamists, women are maintainers of tradition and relegated to the task of being the last bastion against foreign penetration. Their role is to safeguard the Umma from annihilation, by upholding the faith in the face of what is perceived as a long-standing Western design to destroy Islam by converting its people. (21)

Women, in Islamist ideology, not only represented culture bearers but also a recognisable materialistic proof of the dominance of political Islam. In the 1950s and the 1960s, there was huge tension between President Gamal Abd El Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood to the extent that Nasser dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood and put most of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in prison until his death in 1970. President Anwar El-Sadat took office after Nasser. Sadat was tolerant of different Islamist groups and the major Islamist organizations; he made space for the followers of political Islam to spread their teachings and ideas in schools, universities, mosques, and other public platforms. Sadat himself was very religious and wanted to create a new group of supporters who were not inclined to Nasser's liberal version of Islam.

The Muslim Brotherhood were released from jail and were allowed to re-establish themselves and practice their regular activities. There are two other important elements in addition to the official tolerance toward the Islamists groups: the societal and economic factors. Starting in 1970, Egyptian society as a whole became more conservative and more religious. Many people believed that Egypt's loss in the 1967 Six-Day War against Israel was caused in part by the society not being religious enough. On October 6, 1973, the Egyptian army was able to achieve some victory over the Israeli military in Sinai Peninsula. "God is Great" or "Allah Akbar," was almost the slogan of the Egyptian soldiers in this war. However, there was resistance to the Islamization of the society from some modernists, "who focused their efforts on a reinterpretation of Islam in order to modernize its teachings and traditions." (Haddad 7). Women (their bodies in particular) were also a battlefield for the tension between these forces. Haddad posits that "both groups have used the religious traditions in order to buttress their arguments, and both focus on women as one of the key elements in their respective platforms." (7) Another important factor in the Islamization of the Egyptian society was the financial support Islamic groups received from different Wahabi

groups in Saudi Arabia. Millions of Egyptians also traveled to Gulf countries, in late 1970s and early 1980s, to work because Egypt's economy was suffering. These millions of Egyptians came back to Egypt either during summer or permanently and spread conservative Wahabi ideas. These ideas mainly prescribed that women should stay home and be present in the public sphere. Due to Egypt's economic situation at the time, Sadat supported this position; he and his government were not able to provide jobs, so encouraging women to stay at home was a partial solution to the economic problem. The official tolerance did not last long as in the late 1970s, especially after Sadat signed the peace treaty with Israel. The relationship between Sadat and Islamist groups started to become contentious. Therefore, Sadat decided to move this tension to women's bodies and did some amendments to the personal rights laws in order to give women legal benefits, such as the ability to divorce themselves and that men can not get married to a second wife without the approval of his current wife. In addition to protection from domestic abuse. The tension grew until October 1981, when Islamists assassinated Sadat.

State power then moved to Vice-President Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak decreased the tension between the state and the Islamists by repealing Sadat's amendments to personal laws. The tension between Mubarak's state and the Muslim Brotherhood continues. Mubarak was not aggressive in dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood like Nasser, but he was neither tolerant with them, like the early days of Sadat. However, women's bodies continue to be a battlefield between these powers. In sum, Islamists were trying to build their own nationalist discourse, based not on national identity, but on religious identity. Henceforth, women's bodies became the most discernible space for the application of Islamism.

In parallel, the birth of what is known as "Islamic feminism" is very complex and paradoxical. According to feminist scholarship, the term "Islamic feminism" was developed and

“coined” by Iranian feminist scholars and activists immediately after the success of the Iranian Revolution (Also known as the Islamic Revolution) in 1979. The Islamist Shia militants were able to overthrow the last Monarch of Iran, Mohammad Raza Pahlavi, and replace him with the Grand Ayatollah, Ruhollah Khomeini, who transformed Iran from a monarchy to an Islamic Republic, and imposed Sharia Law.

The imposition of Sharia Law did strip Iranian women from their rights, domestically and in public life. In response, Iranian women decided to use the same laws to maintain their rights and to gain more rights through developing their own interpretation to the Quranic verses and Islamic Sharia. Well-known Iranian feminist scholar, Ziba Mir Hosseini, argues that the creation of Islamic feminism is “a real paradox because it was precisely the rise of political Islam that created the space necessary for an indigenous feminism to grow representing “the unwanted child” of the Islamic Revolution” (642). There are two major critiques that should be done here. Firstly, Collins and Bilge’s critique of language used to describe the early work of Kimberlé Crenshaw. “The language that is used to describe her work, namely, that Crenshaw “coined” the term, fits within academic norms of ownership of cultural capital” (Collins & Bilge 64). The work of Iranian feminists, post-Islamic Revolution, highly contributed to the development of Islamic feminism, but it should be said that there are various feminist activists who did apply the same methodology of interpreting the Quran and Islamic Sharia to empower women and challenge sexist, misogynist, Qur’anic interpretations way before the Iranian Revolution.

The well-known leftist, feminist activist and writer, Doria Shafiq, published a book in 1955, titled *Egyptian Women from the Pharaohs until Today*. The book not only focused on narrating the history of women in Egypt but focused on discussing the importance of interpreting the holy book of Quran and Hadith (the saying of the prophet Mohamed) from the woman’s perspective.

The response of the Iranian feminists to the 1979 Islamic Revolution definitely contributed to the development of Islamic feminism and its popularity, but it should be made clear that the language and the methodology of Islamic feminism have been developed by other feminist scholars and activists years ago.

Secondly, some feminist scholars (Abou-Bakr; Mir Hosseini), described the fact that Islamic feminism was developed from the womb of the Islamic Revolution as a “real paradox”.

The women’s response by raising up the “the unwanted child” the way they want it in order to kill him is a very dominant way for Middle Eastern and Muslim women to express their agency. Most of the time, the dominant Western discourse is pushing women to choose more of a secular approach and completely get rid of any connection with religion in general but particularly Islam. However, women in Muslim-majority countries, like Egypt, would choose to stick with their religion, but at the same time provide their own interpretation and to empower themselves with and through religion.

Islamic feminism, as both an intellectual project and a praxis, started to flourish in the middle of the 1980s, not only to counter radical political Islam, but Western feminism as well. Scholars, such as Leila Ahmed, Fatema Mernissi, Margot Badran, among others developed a new scholarship: “Islamic feminism.” It sought to counter Western feminism and also to raise women’s voices within the ongoing resurgence of Islamist ideologies. By the mid 1990s, Islamic feminism had become popular (Moghissi). Moghissi posits that the concept of Islamic feminism is used to “to distinguish a brand of feminism or the activities of Muslim women seeking to reform, in women’s favor, social practices and legal provisions that rule Muslim societies” (38). While there are multiple definitions and interpretations of Islamic feminism, the use of Islam as the primary point of reference and the rebuttal of Western feminism are the two common elements. Badran

asserts that Islamic feminism was created and developed by “women and men for whom religion is important in their daily lives and who are troubled by inequalities and pretreated in the name of religion” (2). In the same context, Salah defines Islamic feminism as “the intellectual, academic, and movement-based effort that seeks to empower women by drawing on Islamic frames of reference from which intellectual and movement-based norms, concepts, methodologies, as well other related matters can be conjointly employed” (11).

Eyadat emphasizes the element of human rights in their definition. He argues that “true Islamic feminist scholarship emerged, with women exerting their own exegesis on the Qur’an, reinterpreting the holy texts through rationale and historical context, and finding that human rights and egalitarian principles exist in the core of Islam’s teachings” (346). Rhouni defines Islamic feminism within the same parameters by asserting that Islamic feminists may write either from a position of faith, reflecting a deep conviction in the egalitarian global ethics of the Quran, or from a strategic or scholarly position that often seeks to contextualize what has been considered ‘Islamic gender norms’ in order to reveal the historical contingency and the culture contractedness of these norms” (72). Countering Western definitions of agency is the other important framework in the construction of Islamic feminism. Markus Holdo argues that “women’s groups in the Arab World may often not seek to construct their claims within a Western discourse of feminism, but instead within a more familiar cultural framework that is also, at the same time, the relevant environment they act upon to change” (1802).

The discourse of Islamic feminism, however, is very problematic and highly criticized. Amani Saleh argues that “Islamic feminism is the result of a series of fragmented efforts, incomparable to the comprehensive and continuous body of literature designed to monitor and comment on these efforts” (11). Critiques of Islamic feminism revolve around three main

questions: Which Islam? who are Muslim women? How we can define agency? Many scholars, like Moghissi, who criticize Islamic feminism, question what exactly is meant by Islam in this concept. “Do we mean “Islam” as a medium, uniting woman and the supposed cosmic power, in response to personal, gender-specific needs, or does the term instead entail a prescribed set of ideas, teachings, and texts as applied to women, indeed an entire pre-established moral and legal order?” (Moghissi 38). Eyadat refutes this position by arguing that opponents of Islamic feminism, especially from the secular position, claim that Islam is not calling for an egalitarian society and that Islam is a hierarchical religion that imposes structures, which oppresses women.

The other element in Eyadat’s argument is the assertion that most scholars who reject Islamic feminism “tend to view Islamic Feminism as a monolithic entity and thus misrepresent its underpinnings” (363). Saleh argues that Islamic feminists’ major task is to fight the fundamentalists’ reading of Quran and Sunna (the teachings of Prophet Mohamed) especially when it comes to women’s issues. The Quran and Prophetic tradition are considered invariable, while the jurisprudence is variable and can be criticized and revisited. Saleh stresses that the Quran goes beyond equality between men and women:

by not even using the expression “both sexes” or “gender” to denote male and female sexes, which would imply division and opposition; it uses the word “couple,” which carries completely different connotations. The term “couple” implies the existential, physical, functional, and social integration of males and females. It also implies a sort of leveling and egalitarianism in human social structures. (14)

Moghissi, however, critiques Islamic feminism’s supporters who “neglect the crucial distinction between Islam as a legal and political system and Islam as spiritual and moral guidance.

By focusing only on the latter, they unwittingly soften the sharp edges of the former” (35). The second major critique to Islamic feminism is that it attempts to homogenize Muslim women (Moghissi). Moghissi asserts the term “Muslim women” is very problematic for two major reasons. Firstly, this label not only clouds class, age, and culture differences between very diverse Muslim women; it also denies the existence of secular women who are not practicing Islam anymore. Secondly, portraying Islam as “the only constituent ingredient in the culture of a region as diverse as the Middle East” is very problematic as “Islamic feminism seems not only workable but desirable as the only culturally viable alternative to West-initiated feminism” (37). As a result, Moghissi argues that this might silence non-Islamic feminist voices and portray feminists using Islamic frameworks as the only “authentic and representative of women’s agency in Muslim culture” (38). Moghissi wonders if Western scholars who see “Muslim women” as the only identifier and Islamic feminism as the only representative for women in the Middle East would accept a similar view of Christian women and Christian feminism as the only label for women in the Western world or as the sole representative for the agency of Western women.

The definition of women’s agency is a major debate among both supporters and opponents of Islamic feminism. Islamic feminist, Saba Mahmood, calls scholars to “think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (50). Mahmood argues that “a series of analytical questions open up that are crucial to understanding neoliberal projects, subjects, and desires whose logic exceeds the entelechy of liberatory politics” (57) once we detach agency from the trope of resistance. On the other hand, Moghissi, determines three important elements that should be retained while defining agency. These are “the element of conscious reaction forces of domination”, “the intent” and “content should matter”. Moghissi emphasizes these elements as

some supporters of Islamic feminism refer to the large numbers of women in schools and workplaces in Iran under Islamic rule as a victory for “Muslim women’s” agency. Moghissi confirms that it’s important to understand the specific historical contexts. But understanding agency without these three elements will be “positively damaging to feminists’ struggles for gender equity, dignity, and basic human rights” (37).

In Egypt, the rise of Islamism in the early 1970s and its peak in the 1980s also gave rise to huge divisions among Egyptian women, as the majority of middle and working-class Egyptian women adopted an Islamist’ interpretation of the role of women in society, including its culture and habits (e.g., wearing the hijab). Consequently, many activists and scholars started to adopt and/or defend Islamic feminism: Zainab al-Ghazali, Amna Nosseir, Omailma Abou-Bakr, Margot Badran, Safinaz Kassam, among many others. These practices were perceived as a way of challenging Westernization and affirming Egyptian culture. As a result, the middle-class and upper-class women who adopted a secular framework in their daily life or in their feminism began to “evoke suspicion and doubt about their place within the indigenous landscape of ‘traditions’ and ‘authenticity’” (Al-Ali 154).

One can claim that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution added a layer of complexity to the discussions of the effectiveness of Islamic feminism. Both “Western -influenced feminists and Islamic feminists alike joined the masses to demand dignity” (Eyadat 359). The Muslim Sisters (the female branch of the Muslim Brotherhood) played a pivotal role in the Revolution. Farag asserts that “the toppling of the old government had given a way to a more public and transparent role for the Muslim sisters within the society and its political part” (230). However, the violence practiced by Islamists towards female protesters and the laws (characterized by more restrictions on women’s personal freedoms), enacted by the first-elected parliament in 2012 (in which the

Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists had the majority of seats) after the Revolution, were completely contrary to their political and religious statements on the importance of protecting women. These contradicting actions communicated paradoxical messages regarding the discourse of Islamic feminism.

3. State Patriarchy/ Political Motherhood/ State-Sponsored Feminism vs. Women's Civic Engagement

The official position and governmental structures in Egypt towards women and women's issues is very complex and paradoxical. In 1952, a group of military officers under the leadership of President Gamal Abd El Nassar ousted the King of Egypt and ended the monarchy to start a new chapter in Egypt's history. New Egypt, under the power of the military, witnessed the birth of new power dynamics, especially on the social and cultural fronts. The relationship between women in general and political and social organizations, especially with the state, dramatically changed with the 1952 military coup.

In 1956, Nasser consolidated power and suppressed all independent political groups and expressions, including those related to women's issues (Badran). The last British soldier left Egypt to end the occupation that had lasted since 1882. In the same year, Nasser gave women the right to vote in national elections. Women gained suffrage, but at the same time, all independent feminist and women's organizations were dissolved. Many prominent feminists were jailed as well (Badran). Nasser also issued new laws and policies to encourage women to work. This law for example obliged employers to have nurseries where women could leave their children while working. Bier posits that "the state championing of gender issues, however, coincided with the suppression of dissenting voices and alternative visions" (98). But it was Hatem who suggested that this novel relationship between women and the state should be labeled as "state feminism".

Nasser's state feminism was very problematic and created many challenges to women's issues in terms of both activism and knowledge production.

“State feminism” as a concept was originally developed in Scandinavian countries. The objective of state feminism was to make democratic states more democratic through establishing links and bridges between grassroots women's movements, civil society organizations, and state institutions (McBride & Mazur). In Egypt, both the structure of the state and the absence of strong political organizations, especially grassroots feminist organizations banned this objective to be achieved. As a result, Hatem asserts that what Nasser established is “state patriarchy” and not “state feminism”. Egyptian feminist scholar, Badran, takes the same position towards Nasser's state feminism. Badran asserts that “feminists have made most gains in the public sphere, where the grip of family patriarchy was weakened by the rising state itself, albeit a new but different patriarchal formation. In building a modern state and society, the patriarchal state required the labor of all citizens; some of the needs and goals of the state and of women coincided, typically in education and work” (Hatem 54). From the outside, Nasser's state feminism looked like that of the Scandinavian states, but at the core, its policies disguised a patriarchal state.

Bier and Hatem criticized the scholarly literature on Nasser's “state feminism”. Hatem argues that scholars who focus on how Nasser's new measures contributed to Egypt's modernization often neglect that “universal rights were also associated with the development of new forms of discipline and social regulation that produced a subordinate gender consciousness” (87). Bier criticized the scholarly literature on women's issues under Nasser's era, positing that the studies “have mainly focused quantitatively on such issues as entry into the labor force and the participation of women in the public sector but have largely failed to consider the regime's attempts to restructure gender relations as significant to its vision of development” (4). The studies lacked

a conversation about to what extent the reforms from Nasser did to empower women in the private sphere.

Women's bodies were at the center of the conflict between Nasser and conservative Islamists groups (mainly the Muslim Brotherhood). Bier draws parallels between postcolonial nationalism in India while analyzing Nasser's "state feminism". Postcolonial writers focused on India suggest that the following:

[The] nationalist resolution to the woman question resolved a fundamental tension within nationalist thought among the colonized peoples: the desire to modernize the nation and its subjects (including women) and thus to demonstrate worthiness for independence and the desire to preserve an "inner sphere" of cultural sovereignty (located discursively within the domestic realm) that remained ostensibly untouched by foreign habits, mores and practices. (Bier 13)

Women are identified as the bearers of culture and the preservers of a nation's history and authenticity. Thus the "Egyptian Woman", as a category, came to mark the uneasy, shifting boundary between being modern and being authentic" (Bier 13). Consequently, women in general and women's bodies in particular during this postcolonial era can be seen as a battlefield between nationalism (representing modernization) and Islamism (representing authenticity).

Nasser wanted to present himself as the creator of a modern nation while the Muslim Brotherhood portrayed themselves as the symbol of cultural authenticity. Therefore, women and gender issues were a topic of conflict between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood. Haddad adds another level of complexity to this tension by asserting that "for both Nasser's national discourse and the Islamist ideologies, women are a crucial component for the preservation of the nation.

Both, however, have placed increasingly contradictory demands on women.” (21) Thus, both the nationalist (state feminist) and Islamist discourses contributed to women’s oppression. Nasser’s position towards women’s issues and new policies are very paradoxical. A very clear example to Nasser’s paradox is the policies granting free university education to all citizens (women and men) in urban and rural areas, and guaranteed jobs to all university graduates (Hatem). In 1956, Nasser issued an electoral law granting women the right to vote. The new regime also encouraged women to leave the house and work in factories and offices. While Nasser was keen to create space in the workplace suitable for women, which involved such measures as building nurseries in each factory and workplace, women did not receive payment that was equal to that of their male peers. Women also did not get promoted to managerial levels until they reached their early fifties; even then, they did not get a salary increase, but they were able to work fewer hours (Hatem).

Consequently, Hatem asserts that Nasser’s modernization “offered women liberation from the traditional patriarchal family, but not gender equality” (64). Economic and political policies under Nasser were based on the French legal system and without any reference to Islamic concepts and perspectives (Hatem). The only exception was the personal status law (covering marriage, divorce, heritage), which was based on the Islamic Sharia law. Hatem highlighted “there was a recognition that the public domain was not a particularly safe place for some women professionals” (88). Nasser died in 1970s, but the paradoxes and contradictions within the state feminist discourse continued under the two following presidents, Anwar El-Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. Women’s bodies also continued to be the source of tension between the state’s “modernization project” and Islamism’s “culture authenticity”.

“Anwar El-Sadat did not abandon Nasser’s definition of the relationship between religious and cultural difference and the operation of the nation state” (Hatem 92). However, there are three

major attributes to the Sadat era: the rise and empowerment of Islamists, the emphasis on state patriarchy, and the efforts to reinterpret Islam. “The Head of the Family”, or “Kabir El Ella”, was Sadat’s favorite title. He wanted all Egyptians to be perceived as one big family, with himself as father. Thus, state patriarchy was maintained through this iconic role of the president. In the same era, Sadat introduced the system of multiple political parties to Egypt. Nasser had banned political parties after the 1952 military coup, but Sadat allowed politicians to establish parties. Sadat appointed women to the ruling party and as members of parliament; he encouraged women to run for parliamentary elections. However, unlike the democrats in Scandinavian countries, these women were loyal to the state power and did not focus on representing the women’s movement so they could maintain their status (Badran).

The role of the president’s wife is the major difference between Nasser’s era and the era of Sadat and Mubarak’s. Nasser’s wife was not involved in the public sphere, except for attending some official visits under the capacity of being the president’s wife. On the other hand, Jehan Sadat and Suzanne Mubarak played a crucial role in women’s issues. However, it is very important to conceptualize the different strategies developed by both Jehan Sadat and Suzanne Mubarak in advancing women’s issues. Jehan Sadat decided to mobilize the state through using the power of her husband. The Egyptian constitution gave the president the right to issue laws when the parliament is in prorogation. Thus, benefiting from this right, President Sadat under the pressure and advocacy of his wife, Jehan Sadat, made some amendments to the personal rights law. The new amendments gave women some extra rights, related to divorce and child custody. Islamists movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, strongly opposed these amendments and called the new law “Jehan’s law”. They were mainly trying to mock Sadat and humiliate him. Naming a law after a woman in a very conservative culture, like Egypt’s, and with a very patriarchal

president, like Sadat, who was always portraying himself as the father of Egyptian, served two purposes. Firstly, it served the purpose of mobilizing citizens, mainly male citizens, against the law. Secondly, it tried to prevent men from identifying themselves with the Islamists and not with the family (the state) that is headed by a “weak” man who follows his wife. The Egyptian parliament repealed the law shortly after Mubarak came to power.

Suzanne Mubarak developed completely different strategies than Jehan Sadat. Firstly, she adopted what Carreon and Moghadam called “political motherhood” and secondly, she institutionalized her political actions by establishing the Women’s National Council (WNC) in November 2000. Carreon and Moghadam assert that in some context, women develop a maternal framework to frame their political activism. Political motherhood is “a typology of maternalismfrom-above and maternalism-from-below to demonstrate how maternalistic frames may serve patriarchal or emancipatory purposes with implications for gender justice and the expansion of citizenship rights” (1). Maternalism from above can serve emancipatory role by empowering women’s thorough state resources and through putting women’s issues on the legislative agenda (Carreon and Moghadam). Thus, it serves to emancipate and empower women.

Suzanne Mubarak was always portrayed in the media and in various discourses as “Mama Suzanne”. Unlike Sadat, Hosni Mubarak never tried to frame himself, or was portrayed by the media, as Kebir El Allah (the head of the family). Thus, one can argue that Suzanne might have learned from what happened to Jehan, so she decided to challenge embedded patriarchy by developing this motherhood frame. It is obvious that women experience motherhood in various ways, but as Carreon and Moghadam argue that “‘motherhood’ – that is the act of giving birth and caring for children – is a universal experience, as well as cultural trope, meanings and practices of mothering are versatile. Framing motherhood as a universal experience has useful qualities and

can have positive effects, such as legitimizing welfare claims” (3). Therefore, Suzanne Mubarak’s framing strategy might have contributed to how mild the criticism against her was as many women would identify themselves with her not on the basis of a power difference but on the basis of the commonality of being a mother. The frame of motherhood is very crucial in Egypt for religious reasons (Mhajne and Whetstone). Both the holy book of Quran and the Hadith (the sayings and deed of Prophet) honour and give mothers a very special status. The religious belief that heaven is located under the foot of mothers is pervasive in Egypt. The Virgin Mary is very important motherhood figure among Egyptian Christians and the majority of Christians (and some Muslims) believe that praying to Mama El A’dra (Mama Virgin Mary) will grant them special blessings. All these elements facilitated the development of Suzanne Mubarak’s political motherhood frame (Mhajne and Whetstone).

The other important factor when conceptualizing Suzanne Mubarak’s strategy is to understand the role of global politics and globalization from above. The United Nations initiated the UN decade for women from 1975-1985. The various conferences and meetings held during that decade witnessed huge tension between the global south and global north for various reasons. The lack of consensus between women from the global south and global north was one of the major reasons for the tension (Desai). Women from the north focused on civil and political rights while women from the south focused on arguing that women’s major priorities were both local and material (the need of potable drinking water, firewood for fuel, and more employment opportunities) (Desai). The second decade (1985-1995) was also dedicated for women, but it was completely different from the previous decade in terms of issues, priorities, and even the locations of the conferences. The conferences took place in non-Western countries (Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995). The second decade witnessed a two-tier conference system. This structure

allowed meetings on the official levels and also created a space for women activists and representatives of different social movements.

The 1995 Beijing conference ended with The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted unanimously by 189 countries (uNwomen.org). The declaration can be considered as an agenda for women's empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality (uNwomen.org). As a result, governments around the world, including the Egyptian government, adopted and incorporated women's human rights languages in these policies and discourses, to different degrees. Global and local governments and international organizations shifted their analysis beyond single-issue policies or identity-based organizations and enhanced women's capacity to build alliances based on collective political goals and a common agenda. The second UN decade contributed to the way the ruling elite in Egypt began to get involved in women's issues.

Another important international event that played a crucial role in shaping the role of state in women's issues is the 1994 UN conference on population and development held in Cairo. Government officials, representatives of nonprofit organizations, and religious leaders representing different religions participated in that conference. The conference issued various recommendations related to various issues on family planning, women's reproduction health, etc. Two days before the launch of the conference in Cairo, parliamentarians from all the world met in Cairo as well. On the eve of the UN's international conference, the parliamentarians issued the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development³. The declaration covered many aspects related to population, development, and health. Gender equality and female empowerment were also

³ (<https://www.unfpa.org/pcm/node/13920>)

covered in the declaration. The declaration emphasized that they “further believe[d] that human development cannot be sustained unless women are guaranteed equal rights and equal status with men. In this process women should be seen not merely as the beneficiaries of change but as the agents of change as well. This entails an enhancement of their own gender awareness.”⁴. The declaration

emphasized the importance of education for girls and women and empowering them to achieve gender equality.

The United Nations⁹³haractus conferences and multiple funding programs encouraged governments to develop various programs to empower women and to collaborate more with different, local, civil society organizations on issues related to women. The UN’s recommendations and programs mainly focused on social and health issues, like women’s education, reproduction health, employment, etc. For Mubarak’s regime, all these issues were not representing a threat, but could be used to frame Mubarak and his family as champions. The international atmosphere encouraged Suzanne Mubarak to play more pivotal official role in issues related to women empowerment and gender equality.

In November 2000, the late, ousted President Mubarak issued a presidential decree establishing the National Council for Women⁵. The new council was given its autonomy and their budget. Suzanne Mubarak became the first president of the newly established council (2000-2010). Through WNC, women were granted more rights, especially personal rights, like the right to divorce. More importantly, WNC was able to force Al-Azhar, the major Islamic authority in Egypt,

⁴ <https://www.unfpa.org/pcm/node/13920>

⁵ <http://ncw.gov.eg>

to issue a fatwa (religious decree) that female genital mutilation was against Islam. This fatwa had a huge impact in Egypt as the number of girls who experience female genital mutilation decreased afterwards.

Some might argue that Mubarak's regime allowed these achievements as a sort of public relations ploy for the regime and to continue the tradition of framing the president as an icon of modernization. However, women gained a lot through the Women's National Council, a semigovernmental organization headed by Egypt's first lady. The WNC implemented important

amendments to various laws, especially those related to personal rights, such as child custody and divorce. The WNC also changed the parliamentary system by introducing a quota. It made advances toward the emancipation of women, especially in the private sphere, for the first time in the history of Egypt, but was widely criticized by a range of political activists that reviled the fact that these steps were being taken by an organization headed by the wife of their dictator. A wide range of social and political activists considered these improvements to be Mubarak's public relations tactics aimed at Western governments.

Another major contribution of the WNC is that they were able to make Al-Azhar, the supreme religious institution, issue fatwas (religious decrees) to support their policies and laws (Sika and Khoudry). The founding of a feminist civil society and women's rights organizations was majorly attributed to Mubarak's era. Controlling the production of knowledge related to women's issues and the history of women's activism in Egypt was a major concern of state feminism. Abuelnaga asserts that "state feminism was not about to tolerate any revival of memory or construction of the collective memory outside its power zone" (110). The state, by controlling media, textbooks, culture institutions, and all means of knowledge production, imposed its own

narrative of women's issues. This state narrative is characterized by "denying diversity and dealing with women as the culture makers of the nation, the state represented itself as the main scribe of official (correct) history that should not be tarnished by other stories, including of course, herstory" (Abuelnaga 110). However, women achieved some legal gains through state feminism during the 10 years before the 2011 Revolution. Thus, different female activists challenged state power through organizing themselves in various civic groups and non-governmental organizations.

In summary, the hegemonic conservative culture and the dominated patriarchy that is very pervasive among Egyptians and state institutions lead Suzanne Mubarak to develop these two strategies to overcome the obstacles imposed by both popular culture and the state structures. The efforts of Suzanne Mubarak did provide women with some gains on different levels, but one can argue that the intention did not completely transform the society and did not further support democracy as social movements were squashed immediately. Suzanne Mubarak was trying to be recognized internationally and maintain her husband's power by implementing various international agendas related to women's issues. However, despite all the power she had, she had to negotiate and bargain with the patriarchy (Kandiyoti) by adopting the frame of political motherhood in order to be able to gain popular support for her work.

Most of the feminist historians and activists depart from the massive participation of women in the 1919 revolution when historicizing women's civil engagement and activism. However, Egyptian women have been very active on various social and political fronts much before the 1919 revolution (Kamal). Historians (Baron; El Sadda and Abou Gazi; El Sadda) recorded Egyptian women actively participating in an armed struggle against the French in 1798. Shortly after, women organized a feminist conference in the city of Rachid to discuss gender roles within the family. Women were also very active in the political activism against the Ottoman ruler

because of the raise of living cost and new taxes (Kamal). Kamal argues that there are two reasons behind picking 1919 as the starting point for Egyptian women's civic engagement: the institutionalization of women's movement through the establishment of various feminist organizations and committee, as well as the creation of different feminist newspapers.

Kamal argues that the history of feminist activism in Egypt can be divided into four waves. Each wave has its own attributes in terms of women's demands and tactics. However, Kamal posits that "the history of feminist Egyptian movement has to be considered as a continuous fight for justice and equality in both the private and public sphere" (6). The first wave (end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century) was mainly categorized by women's fight for the right of education and suffrage. Early in this wave, the first woman's magazine was published (Baron). The magazine was published in 1892 and titled *The Girl*. More magazines for women have been published since then. These magazines played an important role in raising feminist consciousness and making more women and men aware of various gender issues (Kamal). There were public lectures taking places in different places discussing various women's issues. The women's branch in the Egyptian university organized lectures covering various women's issues on a regular basis from 1909-1912 (Kamal). Aristocratic women organized culture salons in their home where famous intellectual men and women would gather to discuss various intellectual issues, including issues related to the role of women in the society.

On the praxis level, women in these years were active in establishing various charities. Kamal argues that despite the fact that the women's contributions and presence in the public sphere was restricted to acts that were socially considered as women's duties, like cooking, taking care of kids, etc., (as most of these charities were either community health centers or orphanages), they allowed women to be present in the public sphere and develop various leadership and soft skills,

like community mobilization, management skills, communication skills, etc. All these actions on both the intellectual and praxis level enabled women to play an extremely important role in 1919 revolution.

In 1919, the British occupation exiled Saad Zaghloul, one of Egypt's most important politicians. Mass protests formed in the streets to protest Saad's exile. Women were at the front of the line on the streets. The presence of women in masses, protesting and confronting the British soldiers, was unprecedented. (Badran; Baron). The British soldiers brutally attacked the protests and the first two protesters to be killed were two poor women (Abuelnaga). Women went to these streets with both feminist and nationalist consciousness (Badran; Baron; Russell). Feminist consciousness reflected in women's belief to be present in the public sphere. Nationalist consciousness reflected in their confrontations with the British occupation. The masses of women were mainly led by the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC). The prominent Egyptian, feminist activist, Hoda Shar'awi, was elected as the president of WWCC (Badran). The British released Saad Zaghloul and returned him to Egypt. Zaghloul became the prime minister of Egypt. On February 28, 1922, England took a unilateral decision to end the formal protectorate.

On the contrary, Egyptian women did not get liberated but get attacked by national male figures attempting to nudge women away from the public and political sphere (Allam). Saad Zaghloul organized a ceremony to celebrate Egypt's independence. Women were not invited, not even prominent feminists, like Hoda Shar'awi, or any members of the WWCC. The wives of foreign diplomats were only the ones who were invited (Allam). Before Zaghloul's speech, Shar'awi and the feminist activists created a list of demands. Suffrage was the first demand. However, the British ended the protectorate, but Egyptian male politicians decided not to end their protectorate over women's political rights. This attack on women's rights lead Shar'awi to be very

critical to the Egyptian elite. Shar'awi posits that "in moments of danger when women emerge by their side, men utter no protest. Yet, women's great acts and endless sacrifice do not change men's views of women" (Shar'awi 131). Famous women's activist, Malak Hefny Nassef, redacted 10 demands for women. The 1923 new Egyptian constitution granted women the rights of education but still did not grant women suffrage. In response to this, numerous women, and female leaders like Hoda Shawrawi, quit from the WWCC and founded the Egyptian Feminist Union. The EFU was very active in various political parties on the wide spectrum of politics and also social justice issues. Women, in that era, were also able to develop strong connections with various international women's groups outside Egypt. Hoda Shawrawi lead a delegation in the conference of the International Women Suffrage Alliance in Rome (Kamal).

Egyptian women continued to develop similar patterns when working on national liberation and challenging social and political patriarchy but adopting different strategies. The paradox being that women were called to be present in the public sphere and be active in political dissent but then after protests achieved their purposes, women were attacked and forced to go back to the private sphere. (3)

Kamal argues that the second wave started from the early 1950s and lasted until the 1970s. The main attribute to this wave is the establishment of state feminism and the participation of women in the labour market in massive numbers. The 1950s started by military coup under the leadership of Gamal Abd El Nasser. In 1956, Nasser dissolved all the political parties and suspended the work of all civil society organizations, including the Egyptian Feminist Union, and all the civic women's groups. However, Nasser granted women their suffrage. Nasser changed different laws related to labour rights and education to empower women. However, laws related

women's issues in the private sphere, like marriage, divorce, inheritance, domestic violence, etc. remained unchanged (Kamal).

On February 6, 1957, the prominent Egyptian, feminist activist and writer, Doria Shafic, entered the embassy of India, in Cairo, and decided to organize a sit-in hunger strike. She sent a message to the Egyptian president, Nasser, saying that:

The difficult times that we are currently experiencing motivated me to decide to organize a hunger strike until I die. As an Egyptian and Arab woman, I demand the international authorities to oblige the Israeli forces to withdraw completely from all the Egyptian lands. I also ask the Egyptian authorities give back Egyptian men and women their complete freedom and to put an end to the dictatorship that is leading our country to bankruptcy and chaos. I chose the embassy of India because India is an unbiased country and I will not be accused that I preferred certain camp. (Magdi)

Both the state and feminist leaders in the leftist movement attacked Shafic very severely. Leaders of the feminist movement, like Sezia Nabarawi and Inji Aflatun, issued a statement commending Shafic's action and claiming that Shafic's action was just a "theatrical play" that the international news agencies used as a justification to attack Egypt. They also claimed that Egyptian women were against the Revolution and the national government. Fellow feminists did not join Doria Shafic's battle for freedom, but they joined the state attacking her because she did not follow a specifically nationalist script.

Doria Shafic's anecdote reflect the complexity of women's activism. Female activists are not only oppressed by certain discourses from outside the women's movement but also from within the movement. It is very important to mention that the dynamics and structures imposed by

statesponsored feminism played a crucial role in shaping the third wave of women's civic engagement.

Kamal posits that the third wave of feminist activism in Egypt start in the early 1980s and lasted until the 2011 Revolution. Kamal called this phase "the civil society feminism" because this era witnessed the establishment of many feminist and women's rights organizations and also the establishment of committees that focus on women's issues in various political parties. It is worth noting that the late ousted Hosni Mubarak took over power after the assassination of President Sadat on October 6, 1981. This new era witnessed the establishment of different civil society organizations and various political parties. This era also marked with involvement of Egypt on an official level in various international projects and signed agreements related to human rights issues.

In 1981, the government of Egypt signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Focusing on women's issues, Kamal argues that there were three major attributes for this wave. Firstly, the creation of women's committees in political parties. These committees focused their work and efforts on family issues and not women's rights in particular. The mandate of these committees was formulated in a way that supports the party interests and not feminist interests. Secondly, feminist activism in this phase was organized around various initiatives. Some of these initiatives were organized by individuals or part of local or international organizations. Thirdly, the establishment of independent, specialized, feminist organizations is one of the major attributes of that era. For example, feminist scholars, such as Hoda Elsadda and Omaima Abou-Bakr, founded the Women and Memory Forum, in 1995, a specialized organization that focused on documenting and analyzing the history of women. Some feminist lawyers established a center to provide legal aid to women, like the Egyptian Women Legal Assistance Center, and so on.

Women's activism and feminist activism faced many obstacles on various fronts that shaped their experience during that wave. However, it is important to contextualize "civil society" in a country like Egypt to better understand the various obstacles the feminist/ women's movement faced in Egypt.

Rai asserts that the civil society in "third world" countries was "fractured, oppressive, threatening, and also providing spaces for struggle and negotiation" (Rai 32). More importantly, Rai claims that the state is completely embedded in civil society in the "third world", meaning "both the state and civil society form the boundaries within which women act and are acted upon" (Rai 32). Scholarship on the feminist movement in Egypt asserts that women in Egypt had to struggle in different fronts and in continued negotiations with various forms of oppressive powers.

One major prominent obstacle that activists for women's issues face is that they are often accused of being colonialist and inspired by imperial powers, because of the use of the word "feminism" in elite social classes and academic circles. The lack of an Arabic word for "gender" and the absence of a consensus on a translation for it supports this accusation. However, this paper is not suggesting the development of one essential definition or understanding of feminism within the Arab world. This paper is trying to define the obstacles against producing knowledge within the context of Arab feminism. Hoda Elsadda asserts that within Arab feminist scholars, there are "several Arab Feminist languages, several tools, and several circles of dialogue that are not necessarily compatible" (28). Elsadda argues that these circles of knowledge production operate alone and even if they "intersect and coincide", they lack any "stringent rule defining the relationship between the intersecting circles" (28). Numerous opponents for women's rights in Egypt will cover their misogyny by accusing feminists of trying to import a Western, colonial agenda.

The second important obstacle is that Egyptian society is a conservative society. Islamists played a crucial and important role in the maintenance of this social conservatism, but they are not the only ones who contributed to it. The history of the left and groups that introduced themselves as progressive did not really empower women, but again, like Islamists and Nasser's feminism, women were used to serve a political agenda mainly set by men. Therefore, women were (and still are) not able to collect the fruits of radical political change the way they want and have always had to develop various bargaining strategies but never allowed the change. The history of leftist and liberal wings reflects the challenges women faced within the civic movements. The leftist movement since the mid-1950s until early 1980s did not prioritize women's issues justifying that the focus of the national movements should be on the liberation of the Sinai Peninsula from the Israeli occupation. In 1973, Egypt attacked the Israeli troops and the Sinai was able to gain part of the land by war. President Sadat entered negotiations with Israel while sponsored by the United States of America. The negotiations ended with the signature of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel on September 17, 1978. During the year 1973, and even few years after 1978, leaders of the Egyptian left movement did not prioritize women's issues on their political agenda, justifying that the priority should be fighting Sadat's peace with Israel and the political normalization with Israel (Gervasio). The official political parties established in the late 1970s/early 1980s did not have women in their leadership, including the parties adopting liberal or progressive platforms. All these parties did not have any women as the president of the party (Kamal). The situation changed after the 2011 Revolution as women started to occupy leadership positions in political parties. Hala Shukrullah became the president of El Dostour party and was the first Egyptian woman in history to lead a political party (Kamal). However, these spaces were not safe for women as many women who became politically active after the 2011 Revolution experienced sexual harassment and some

of them were assaulted by their colleagues and human rights organizations and leftist political parties, like the Bread and Freedom Party, lead by the famous leftist lawyer, Khaled Aly (Magdi). Despite the fact that many women spoke up, their complaints were not taken seriously enough (Magdi). Women are objectified not only in Islamist leftist and Muslim-majority circles, but also within the Christian community as well. The experience of women in the Coptic church is a huge blind spot in the feminist scholarship. Little is known on the history of the church's official position towards women's issues in the public sphere. However, Hatem briefly discussed the efforts made by Pope Kyrillos VI to make Nasser use religion more in political discourses, and especially use the appearance of the Virgin Mary in Zatoun, a neighbourhood located in the west of Cairo, for political mobilizations. "The pope suggested [to Nasser that] the state use the appearance of the Virgin for the political mobilization of demoralized population" (Hatem 91). This exchange between Nasser and Pope Kyrillos VI posits that there is some agreement between the Christian institution and Islamic organizations in perceiving the population as demoralized and that the state must interfere by using religion to "moralize" the population, in general, and women in particular.

The other important factor in this wave is the role that the international funding agencies and international policies play toward civil society and women's organizations. The international interference played a paradoxical role as it opened windows of opportunities, but at the same time developed some challenges.

In the mid-1980s, the International Monetary Fund forced Mubarak to apply structural adjustments, including a reduction of state support for social programs. Women's support programs faced major cuts as a result of these structural adjustments. As a result, international development organizations, especially those with ties to the United Nations and to foreign

governments, stepped in to fund and support some programs related to women's health, education, and vocational training. These international organizations implemented their projects through partnerships with government and civil organizations with links to Suzanne Mubarak, the then President's wife (Al-Ali). The conditions imposed by the international funding agency weakened independent women's civil organizations and increased the dominance of the state over them. At same time, this strengthened the position of state feminism, convincing many feminists and women's rights activists that working with the state was the only way to achieve any gains with regard to the status of women (Sika & Khoury).

The other important obstacle that all civil society organizations face, including women's and feminist organizations, is the laws and the legal framework by which their activists are organized (Kamal). Civil society organizations became very active and influential in Egypt by the late 1990s. In 1999, the government made some amendments to the law to have more power over civil society organizations. The amendments were faced with huge resistance from various civil society organizations. In response to the resistance, the government issued a completely new law in 2002 with more restrictions. Then again in 2014, the government issued a new law that made it very hard for civil society organizations to function (Kamal). The 2014 law led to the restriction of the activities of many civil society organizations, including several women's and feminist organizations, like Nazra, and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

The fourth wave, according to Kamal, started with the 2011 Revolution and onwards. Kamal called this wave "Women Bodies and Women Rights". It is too early to provide a nuance to this wave as it still happening. However, women's activism for their rights to be protected by the new constitution and for their bodies to be protected from public brutal attacks in public places was prominent, especially in places of dissent. Women and feminist activists developed many

independent initiatives to protect their right to be present in the public sphere and protect women's bodies from various forms of sexual harassment and assault (Kamal). These initiatives developed many protective strategies that involved confronting the perpetrators. Women's activists in these initiatives also made sure to provide the victims/survivors of sexual violence with psychological support.

Women and feminist activists developed a coalition called "women and constitution". The coalition's main objective was to make sure that women's demands were well-represented in the new constitution. Women activists organized various, political mobilization activities to make sure that women were represented in parliament, government, and political parties.

Kamal asserts that there are six important aspects related to the long history of Egyptian women's civic engagement. Firstly, female activists have always developed strong connections with national politics, and at same time, actively participated in global feminist activism. Secondly, the history of women's activism reflects a deep consciousness to the importance of the legal and constitutional reforms that are needed for social change in relation to discrimination against women. Thirdly, female activists were fully aware of the importance of political representation in order to improve women's living conditions. Fourthly, women developed various frameworks and mobilization strategies in tackling issues related to women's bodies and sexuality. Female activists focused on various issues, like female genital mutilations, virginity tests, domestic violence, etc. Fifthly, the Egyptian feminist movement accompanied critical intellectual inquires and praxis. Women and feminist activists were always keen to organize various, intellectual activities parallel to the wide form of praxis and activism. Sixthly, and finally, the feminist activists in Egypt are always conscious of the importance of intersectionality and that their activism should be tackling the interlocking systems of oppression that Egyptian women face in their daily lives.

In conclusion to this chapter, I claim that firstly, the six discourses discussed are not separate. They contribute to and feed into one another. Sometimes, these discourses contribute to the liberation of women and other times, they are used to suppress women. Sometimes women combine two discourses in their fight against oppression. Thus, analyzing the context of each discourse is extremely important in order to understand its entire contribution and the relationship of antagonism or solidarity it builds with other discourses.

Secondly, nationalism and colonialism are two major factors in the development of the six discourses with some important variations on the meaning of nationalism. In both the Islamist discourse and the Islamic feminism discourse, nationalism does not necessarily refer to a specific country, but rather to Islam as a dogma and the broader Islamic Umma (nation) as a supra-national entity. In the case of Islamism, women's bodies are being used as an embodiment of the Muslim Nation and as a way to subvert colonialism (in both its direct military format and its cultural imperialism format). Islamic feminism is a manifestation of feminism developed mainly by white women and a confirmation of a certain perception of authenticity and celebration of indigeneity. The other discourses understand nationalism in the form of a nation state. Despite the fact that various discourses define nationalism differently, religion, especially Islam, plays a crucial role in the formation of these discourses. The anti-Muslim sentiments embedded in the white supremacist colonial ideologies leads to the development of Orientalism. On the other hand, the misogynist ideology adopted by Islamism and Islamist actions (either through violence or through cultural imperialism) played an important role in the development of all the other discourses.

Thirdly, the question of identity and the connections between modernity and identity is common between all the six discourses. All six discourses are built around the question of: Who defines identity and how? The six discourses are developing identification processes that reflect

complex, and sometimes paradoxical, power relations and dynamics. In the heart of these identification processes, there is the question of modernism. Again, the same process is repeating itself: Who defines modernism and how? The processes of questioning the meaning of identity and modernism sometimes intersect and are sometimes parallel each other. but in the end, the six discourses are constructed around these identification processes.

Fourthly, the historical review of women's activism in Egypt confirms that women express their agency in very dynamic and interactive ways. The analysis of the various discourses illustrates that women develop different bargaining strategies that enable them to subvert oppression. Understanding cultural specificities is extremely important in developing a nuanced understanding to the way Egyptian women express their agency.

Finally, the last important discursive attribute I was able to discuss and highlight in this chapter is that the interaction and dynamics between different discourses raises the question of the constructed dichotomy of the East and West. The global neo-liberal policies are causing women to suffer everywhere while a new intersectional discourse is needed to empower women and people using non-heterogenous, non-binary, sexual expressions, and strategies to dismantle the patriarchal system rather than negotiating a space of freedom within this system.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Theoretical Frameworks

Six documentary films constitute the main corpus of this dissertation. There are personal and scholarly reasons behind the decision of selecting these particular films. The political environment in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era and my own concerns over my personal safety are the two major factors that constituted the personal reasons referenced. The security apparatus in Egypt targeted researchers, both foreign and of Egyptian origin, who were associated with universities located in both Europe and North America (Nader). Researchers are being arrested and accused of being spies. Many reports documented the torture of these researchers in different detention sites. In some cases, the torture led to the death of the researcher, as in the case of the Italian researcher and scholar, Giulio Regeni (Nader). My concerns over my personal safety and the safety of the research participants led me to decide to analyze documents contrary to other research methodologies that involve human subjects. As a result, conducting content analysis was the most appropriate and practical method.

Documentaries analyzed in this dissertation are treated as social, cultural, and historical documents. As a result, this dissertation does not focus on analyzing the film's aesthetics and technicalities, like analyzing camera angles or framing. The focus is on the content and on analyzing the various discourses related to women fighting for their liberation in both the private and public sphere, claiming ownership over their bodies and the various ways that art was used in activism. My methodology is inspired by the work of Collins and Bilge, and Abuelnaga. Intersectionality, as theorized by Collins and Bilge, offers both a theoretical and methodological framework to this dissertation. It also provides a nuanced analysis and contributes to filling the

gaps in knowledge regarding non-Western women. On the other hand, Abuelnaga dealt with the fictional film, *Nawara*, as a cultural text as she was concerned “with the inherent epistemological significance of the film itself since it delineates an obscured version of the revolutionary experience as well as the way it reflects a specific point of view that has been marginalized by the “winning” side (18). The same strategy is applied in this dissertation as documentaries are used as a cultural text that includes various voices and reflects authentic emotions of real people who have been part of the Revolution, either directly through participating in different dissent activities or indirectly through interacting with the Revolution without being part of any publicly-defined political actions. The decision of selecting documentaries as the corpus has to do as well with my position of conducting this research while located in the Western hemisphere. The documentaries are very accessible to different people in the Western hemisphere. These documentaries were either screened at different film festivals in Europe or North America and/or screened at different Western TV stations. These documentaries are also available in public libraries and in the libraires of post-secondary institutions. Before I delve into the discussion of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological framework, I will explain why it is important to theorize oppression in the context of the Egyptian Revolution and how, from a feminist standpoint, one can understand the reasons behind protesting oppression.

1. Theorizing Oppression

The work of feminist political theorist, Iris Young, is extremely important, not only in conceptualizing the Egyptians’ fight against oppression, but also for detailing the experience of women, especially female activists. The activists of the new left movements that took place in United States in the 1960s informed the work of Young and contributed to her definition of oppression. Young argues that in the West, oppression was understood as an outcome of tyrannical

power. Thus, the official political discourse was that oppression is happening elsewhere but not in United States or in the West, as they don't have any tyranny. The protest leading the civil rights movement and the feminist movement among other active groups shifted the understanding of oppression. Young argues that these dissent activities understood oppression as structural and that people were not suffering because of a tyrannical power, "but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society" (42). Young posits that "we cannot eliminate this structural oppression by getting rid of the rulers or making some new laws, because oppressions are systematically reproduced in major economic, political, and cultural institutions" (43). In the case of Egypt, one can argue that Egyptians suffered from both Mubarak's tyrannical power and the structural oppression imposed by the neoliberal policies applied by the Egyptian government in early 1990s.

Being part of a social group is the other important aspect in the new understanding of oppression. Young argues that oppressed individuals are oppressed because they belong to a certain social group. According to Young, a social group is "a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. Members of a group have a specific affinity with one another because of their similar experience or way of life, which prompts them to associate with one another more than with those not identified with the group, or in a different way" (43).

Young identified various important attributes to social groups. Firstly, "Group identification arises, that is, in the encounter and interaction between social collectives that experience some differences in their way of life and forms of association, even if they also regard themselves as belonging to the same society" (44). Secondly, a sense of identity is the predominant source of defining a social group and not shared attributes. Young gave the example of

AfricanAmerican as they are considered as a social group not because they share the same skin color, but because of an “identification with a certain social status, the common history that social status produces, and self-identification that define the group as a group” (44). Thirdly, “groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group” (43). This is a very important attribute to the notion of a social group. Young argues that in some cases, because groups are developed in relation to other, “a group may be identified by outsiders without those so identified having any specific consciousness of themselves as a group” (44). Therefore, some groups are not formed because they went through a process of self-identification, but because they were identified as outsiders. Young explains that “Sometimes a group comes to exist only because one group excludes and labels a category of persons, and those labeled come to understand themselves as group members only slowly, on the basis of their shared oppression” (Young 44). A good example would be the Jewish people of Vichy France. Jewish people there were fully assimilated and did not have a specific Jewish identity. However, they were identified by outsiders as Jews and given a specific social status (Young). Therefore, they developed a sort of common identity and affinity with one other and identified themselves as a social group. On a personal level, Young asserts that “a person’s group identities may be for the most part only a background or horizon to his or her life, becoming salient only in a specific interactive contexts” (Young 46). The last important attribute for a social group is that “social groups are not themselves homogenous groups, but mirror in their own differentiations many of the other groups in the wider society” (Young 48). Differences exist within each social group. Any of these differences in a “given context may become a salient group identity” (Young 48).

The work of Young can be used to argue that Egyptian women who were politically active during the 18 days of the Revolution and the following days can be considered as a social

group. All the attributes identified by Young are applicable for Egyptian women who participated in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution at its different stages and its different events. These women are not a social group because of their common attribute as women but because they share a common history of experiencing interlocking systems of oppression. These women start to recognize that they are a social group because they are marked by outsiders, mainly by Islamists, the military, and the counter-revolution; they are seen as deviant women who are acting against Egypt's national interest and well-embedded religious beliefs about gender roles. The marking by the outsiders and the violence practiced by outsiders made these women more conscious of themselves as a social group and helped them develop an affinity for each other. Young emphasized the importance of context in understanding the construction of these social groups. Therefore, the development and evolution of women who were politically active has to be understood within the interactive context of the Revolution. The understanding and the implications of active women as a social group changed with the shift in the path of the Revolution. The experience of women as a social group changed in each phase of the Revolution. Their experience during the early 18 days of the Revolution was different than during the transition period under the SCAF and definitely different when Islamists reached the power.

Young named five specific applications of oppression or as she called them, "five faces of oppression". These are exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Although Young developed these faces based on the experience of different social groups in the United States and with more focus on economic disparity, they are still valid for understanding oppression for social groups in various contexts and geographical locations.

Exploitation is the first face of oppression identified by Young. "The central insight expressed in the concept of exploitation, then, is that this oppression occurs through a steady

process of the transfer of the results of the labor of one social group to benefit another” (Young 49). Young expands her definition of exploitation when it comes to the exploitation of women.

Young asserts:

Women's oppression consists not merely in an inequality of status, power, and wealth resulting from men's excluding them from privileged activities. The freedom, power, status, and self-realization of men is possible precisely because women work for them. Gender exploitation has two aspects, transfer of the fruits of material labor to men and transfer of nurturing and sexual energies to men. (50)

Young's definition of exploitation is important to understand the experience of women's activists after the toppling of Mubarak. Women were welcomed and encouraged to participate in the early 18 days of protests against Mubarak but then they were excluded from privileged activities, like the constitutional committee and different leadership positions at the state level. They were even removed from Tahrir Square and sexually assaulted to be reminded that they can't use their bodies unless it is serving a purpose determined by men.

Marginalization is the second face of oppression, according to Young. Young's definition of oppression focused on the ability to join the marketplace. “In most Western capitalist societies, there is a growing underclass of people permanently confined to lives of social marginality” (54). It can be argued that this definition is applied to women who were politically active during the Revolution, not in terms of joining the marketplace, but in terms of having their voices heard in the post-Mubarak area. Women were systematically excluded and marginalized from places of power in the post-Mubarak era (Sholokamy).

Powerlessness is the third face of oppression. “The powerless are those who lack authority or power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising

it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them” (34). Young was mainly speaking about the class division in the society and power discrepancy between “professionals” and working class. However, Egyptian women in general, as the various discourses discussed in the 114th chapter suggest, are always suffering from being powerless. The tyrannical power in addition to the applied neoliberal policies have always made sure that women are powerless in both the shaping of public policies or the control over bodies in private spheres.

Cultural imperialism is the fourth face of oppression. Young argues that “to experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one’s own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it out as the Other” (59). Telmissany asserts that both the government-owned media and media supported by Islamists and the counter Revolution, which transformed the 2011 Revolution from a utopia to dystopia by accusing the revolutionaries of stopping the country from advancing and negatively impacting the wheel of the production. Young determines two negative consequences of cultural imperialism: 1. “Often without noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity as such” (59). 2. “Cultural products also express the dominant group’s perspective on and interpretation of events and elements in the society, including other groups in the society, insofar as they attain cultural status at all” (60).

Therefore, Young asserts that the result of these elements led the oppressed social group to “find themselves defined from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them” (61). By applying the women’s activist discourse within the context of the

2011 Egyptian Revolution, one can argue that this led to two important questions. Firstly, how did the various cultural and media productions created by the dominated groups (mainly the military and Islamists) contribute to the women's activists' private sphere by either helping or preventing their activity in radical social change, mainly through protests? Secondly, how did women's activists respond by creating counter cultural products through which they could express their agency and counter the anti-revolutionary forces?

Violence is the last face of oppression. Young intensifies various aspects of violence: firstly, violence is systemic. Secondly, violence is directed toward people because they are part of a social group. Thirdly, violence is a social practice meaning that everyone knows it happens and will happen again. Fourthly, group violence approaches legitimacy, moreover, in the sense that it is tolerated. Young argues that even the perpetrators who got caught practicing violence often receive light or even no punishment. Therefore, society renders violent acts toward certain social groups as accepted acts. The excessive violence that female activists, as a social group, are exposed to after the topping of Mubarak had all the attributes identified by Young. It was systematic and women who experienced violence experienced it because they were active in various dissenting political activities. The violence was justified by framing dissent activities as against either national or religious interests.

In sum, Young stresses the fact that given that oppression is structural with multiple faces, "it can not be eliminated by getting rid of the rulers or making some new laws, because oppressions are systematically reproduced in major economic, political, and cultural institutions" (63). Egyptian women who participated in the 18 days of the Revolution were conscious that they were in Tahrir Square to not only ask Mubarak to leave the office but to fight against a well-embedded oppressive patriarchal structure (Abuelnaga; Hafez; Kamal; Khamis).

2. Intersectionality

In my research, I use the theory of intersectionality as a framework and an analytical tool to conceptualize research regarding Egyptian women and the Revolution. Collins and Bilge assert that researchers and activists should deal with intersectionality as a tool for critical inquiry and praxis. They define intersectionality as:

A way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, the people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but many axes as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (Collins and Bilge 2)

Carbado et al. asserts that “intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytical tool” (96). Intersectionality has been commonly used by various feminist activists and scholars since the late fifties. The term of “intersectionality” was not used until feminist and legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote her famous article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”. Then it became one of the most-used theories in feminist studies.

A major contribution is that “intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis shifted from bottom-up knowledge projects, reflected in Crenshaw's ability to draw from grassroots to top-down knowledge projects whose structural contours were increasingly shaped by the normative practices of the academy” (Collins and Bilge 84). Therefore, I'm adopting

intersectionality as a theory and analytical tool while acknowledging the important contribution of Black and Asian feminists before the work of Crenshaw in early 1990s.

I argue that intersectionality is the most appropriate analytical tool to this research project as it is “not simply a method for doing research but is also a tool for empowering people” (Collins and Bilge 37). Thus, the use of intersectionality as both a theoretical and methodological tool is very appropriate to understand the various nuances that shape the complexities and contradictions around Egyptian women. Collins and Bilge posit three important elements in understanding intersectionality as an analytical tool. First, it is an approach to “understand human life and behaviour rooted in the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised people”; second, it is an important tool of linking theory with practice that can aid in the empowerment of communities and individuals (36). The third element is that the use of intersectionality as an analytical tool has resulted in “more complex understandings of violence” and “fosters a broader conception of how heterogeneous forms of violence contribute to social inequality and social injustice” (48).

Crenshaw criticized feminist and antiracist theories, arguing that “black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender” (146). Intersectionality does not mean to add other categories of identity into an analysis. As feminist scholar, Yuval-Davis, said, it is not the “Oppression Olympics” where different categories are competing to be resolved before each other. Intersectionality involves a more complex mechanism; it is “an interactive, mutually constitutive relationship among these categories and the way in which race (or ethnicity) and gender (or other relevant categories) play a role in the shaping of political institutions, political actors, the relationship between institutions and the relevant categories themselves” (146). Therefore, Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality is crucial in

analyzing the power relations and the structures of power through exploring the intersection of categories of identity and also the interlocking of systems of oppression.

In the same realm, Crenshaw criticized the work of white feminists and anti-racist activists. She asserts that “this adoption of a single-issue framework for discrimination marginalizes not only black women within the very movements that claim them as part of their constituency but also makes the elusive goal of ending racism and patriarchy even more difficult to attain” (156). Yet, the role of gender as a category of analysis cannot be used similarly in both examples. In her analysis of gender and patriarchy within the black community, Crenshaw argues that “an effort to develop an ideological explanation of gender domination in the black community should proceed from an understanding of how crosscutting forces establish gender norms and how the conditions of black subordination wholly frustrate access these norms” (153).

Another major element in analyzing gender is that gender is performative (Butler). “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (Butler 26). Butler asserts that “gender performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions” (526). Therefore, “gender” solely is not a sufficient analytical category. The social conventions that construct gender must be analyzed first, as the power structures that constitute a “gender norm” are different and changeable in each geographical place, historical context, and socio-economic class. In addition, the elements of oppression, such as the patriarchy, are different from one place to other and from one context to other. For example, Crenshaw asserts that black women experience patriarchy differently than white women. White women experience patriarchy as having restrictions on work and their presence in public places. In contrast, many black women are required to work so their families

can survive, which is a very different experience of the mechanism of patriarchy (Crenshaw 145). Therefore, women experience patriarchy in different forms.

I would argue that the same situation applies to Egyptian women. The women from different socio-economic classes, religious backgrounds, and geographical areas are experiencing patriarchy in vastly different ways. Their identities are not fixed to some standard or norm, as evidenced by the fact women can be both the oppressed and the oppressor at the same time (Butler). Intersectionality has become one of the most used theories in feminist studies among those who belong to the post-modern and post-structuralist schools of thought, as it allows feminist scholars to:

Develop anti-categorical approaches that deconstruct existing systems of categorization, intra-categorical approaches in which the experience of a single social group are defined by an intersection of multiple dimensions, and inter-categorical approaches in which there are complex relations among multiple groups within and across identities and analytic categories. (McCall 175)

Intersectionality and Identity Politics

Some might argue that the application of intersectionality will weaken and dilute women's activism, and that using identity politics to place all women in one category is a much better strategy. Hancock asserts that "for identity politics supporters, a unitary category serves to bind people into a political group based on a uniform set of experiences" and some people might argue that this is a good strategy to keep gender as the only analytical category. However, in her seminal work *Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism*, Judith Butler argues that "identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such,

exclusionary” (38). In the case of Egypt, I would argue that perceptions of feminism in Egypt mainly reflect the experiences of middle- or upper-middle-class, educated, Muslim, heterosexual, able-bodied women living in Cairo or other major cities. The use of identity politics ignores any experiential differences that may exist within that group (Dhamoon). However, this does not mean that gender should be eliminated as a category of analysis. Judith Butler argues:

This is not to say that the term ‘women’ ought not to be used, or we ought to announce the death of the category. On the contrary, if feminism presupposes that ‘women’ designates an undesignable field of difference, one that cannot be totalized or summarized by a descriptive identity category, then the very term becomes a site of permanent resignifiability. (41)

I would argue that the rifts among women over the content of the term ought to be safeguarded and prized. Indeed, this constant rifting ought to be affirmed as the underground ground of feminist theory. Butler argues that:

To deconstruct the subject of feminism is not, then, to censure its usage, but on the contrary, to release the term into a future of multiple significations, to emancipate it from maternal or racialist ontologies to which it has been restricted, and to give it play as a site where unanticipated meanings might come to bear. (48)

This is exactly what the theory of intersectionality is trying to achieve as a postmodern theory. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss postmodernism and poststructuralism, I am using them here to refer to the importance of deconstructing and destabilizing constructed concepts and analytical categories such as that of gender. I argue that the original work of Crenshaw on intersectionality and the massive feminist and non-feminist contributions to this theory provide a very effective research and analytical tool to study women and gender issues.

Identifying the categorical difference is also important for activists, as it “can enhance the potential to build coalitions between movements by acknowledging differences while promoting commonalities. This can lead to mutual acknowledgement of how structures of oppression are related and, therefore, how struggles are linked” (Carbado et al. 312). I am aware that intersectionality is one of the most contested theories and it can only provide a partial solution. “No particular application of intersectionality can, in a definitive sense, grasp the range of intersectional powers and problems” (Carbado et al. 305). There are indeed complex and sometimes paradoxical elements that construct the identity of Egyptian women, but this research will attempt –using intersectional analysis- to bring forth a few answers.

Intersectionality will allow me to develop links and associations between the various discourses in conceptualizing Egyptian women’s struggle. The use of intersectionality as an analytical tool might let these discourses complement each other instead of confronting one another.

Intersectionality as Methodology

The intersectional analytical frame I developed for this research is based on the work of Hancock, Dhamoon, and Collins and Bilge. Hancock explains that there are three strands of quantitative research: the unitary approach, the multiple approach, and the intersectional approach. Researchers who apply a unitary approach “place emphasis on a single category of identity or difference or political tradition” (64). Researchers who apply a multiple approach “recognize a priori the role of several categories such as race and gender or race and class as equally important yet conceptually independent” (68). Finally, researchers who apply an intersectional approach pay attention to the various categories intersecting with each other (unlike the unitary approach) but

also “see more than one category’s explanatory power in examining political institutions or political actors (like the multiple approach)” (70). Hancock’s intersectional research paradigm was mainly developed for quantitative research aiming to develop governmental policies to empower various vulnerable groups, including women. However, I would argue that their work is also valid in other types of research as qualitative and mixed methodology research. The other major element in this research project is the intersectional research paradigm, developed by Rita Dhamoon, called intersectionality-type analysis. A major emphasis of Dhamoon’s research paradigm is that she highlights the importance of analyzing the “system” and the “process” while conducting intersectional analysis. By “process”, I am referring to the ways in which subjectivities and social difference are produced through such discourses and practices of gendering, racialization, ethnicization, culturalization, sexualization, and so on. “By systems, I refer to historically constituted structures of domination, such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, sexism, capitalism, and so on. The focus in both cases is not intersection itself, but on what the interaction reveals about power” (Dhamoon 17). As a result, the analysis for this research is a departure from the various discourses that construct Egyptian women’s activism. Therefore, intersectionality-type analysis can be used to conceptualize systems and processes that produce both oppression and privilege. Consequently, the use of intersectionality as a research methodology facilitates the understanding of the multi-layered power relations that constitute different systems of oppressions and privileges that women experience. Collins and Bilge assert that intersectional framework should constitute six important elements: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice.

Social inequality: Social inequality is not caused by single factor rather by complex, intersected, multi-faceted factors. Therefore, “using intersectionality as an analytical tool

encourages us to move beyond social inequality through race-only or class on lenses” (Collins and Bilge 26). Intersectionality provides explanations on the repercussions resulting from the interactions among various systems of oppression.

Power: Collins and Bilge determine two important elements related to using intersectionality in analyzing power. Firstly, “intersectional frameworks understand power relations through a lens of mutual construction. In other words, people’s lives and identities are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways” (26). Consequently, Collins and Bilge argue that “there is no pure racism or sexism” (26), as power gains meaning when power relations between different systems of oppression are analyzed and the relationship between them is highlighted. Secondly, Collins and Bilge assert:

Power relations are to be analyzed both via their intersections, for example, of racism and sexism, as well as across domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal. These are the structural, cultural, disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power, respectively. Looking at how power works in each domain can shed light on the dynamics of a larger social phenomenon. (27)

Relationality: Intersectional analytical framework rejects binary thinking. Thus, relationality “embraces a both/and frame” (27). Collins and Bilge assert that relationality creates a shift “in perspective and opens up intellectual and political possibilities” (27). Relationality is very crucial when analyzing power because “power is better conceptualized as a relationship, as in power relations, than a static entity” (27). Collins and Bilge add that power constitutes a relationship, so it is not a win or lose game like “zero-sum conceptions of winners and losers on the football playing field” (27).

Social context: Contextualizing one's argument is a major factor in intersectional framework. "The term 'contextualize' comes from [the] impetus to think about social inequality, relationality, and power relations in social context" (Collins and Bilge 28). Collins and Bilge posit that contextualization has a special importance to intersectional projects produced in the South "because scholars and activists working in the Global South face specific sets of difficulties in reaching wider audience" (Collins and Bilge 28).

Complexity: Collins and Bilge (2016) assert that there are two types of complexity related to the use of intersectional framework. First, the intertwined of social inequality, power, relationality, and social contexts produce a certain kind of complexity. Second, "using intersectionality as an analytical tool is difficult, precisely because intersectionality itself is complex" (29).

Social justice: There are various perspectives and angles of vision on social justice. However, fairness is a major element. "Fairness is elusive in unequal societies where the rules may seem fair, yet differentially enforced through discriminatory practices" (Collins and Bilge 29). Fairness is also elusive in terms of outcomes as "rules themselves may appear to be equally applied to everyone yet still produce unequal and unfair outcomes" (29). Elections in democratic societies are a good example as 124haractene has the "right" to vote, but not everyone has equal access to do so (29).

These six elements are used as the analytical framework to analyze documentary films post-2011. This analysis aims to provide a deep critical understanding of women's activism depicted through film by creating links between the private and public spheres, developing novel associations between representation and activism discourses and their efforts in stabilizing dominant ideas about the docility of their bodies. However, various kinds of critiques can be

levelled at the different applications of intersectionality. Bilge argues that European scholars are trying to:

Whiten intersectionality [by] minimizing the importance of race in intersectional thought—for instance, by declaring race as an irrelevant category for Europe. This reflects a dominant tendency among European scholars: disallowing race as an analytic category, and instead framing problems through categories such as ethnicity, culture and religion.

(414)

On the other hand, some other scholars criticize intersectionality for focusing “too much” on black women (Carbado et al. 309). Collins and Bilge criticize researchers who start their research with the assumption that intersectionality is a “finished framework that can be simply applied to a given a research project on political program” (31). Thus, Collins and Bilge assert that “intersectionality itself is constantly under construction” (31).

3. Content Analysis

An inductive content analysis focuses on six documentary films produced between 2012-2015 with the hope to achieve the following research objectives:

1. Analyze the representation of women’s activism in both the private and public spheres.
2. Explore the various resistance strategies adopted by women to counter interlocking systems of oppression imposed on them to transform their bodies to “docile bodies”.
3. Investigate the different ways women used unconventional tools of activism, mainly art and ICTs, in subverting oppression within both private and public spheres while simultaneously claiming ownership to their bodies.
4. Develop a new intersectional analytical framework that reflects the complexities and uniqueness of women activism in the global south.

To achieve these objectives, I use content analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the fight for women's liberation within the private and the public spheres simultaneously contribute to transforming both spheres?
2. What are the different strategies adopted by the new regime in post-Mubarak era to embody violence and transform women's bodies into a battlefield?
3. What are the different resistance strategies adopted by women to claim ownership to their bodies?
4. How did women integrate art and social media in their resistance and in developing new identification strategies?

Walizer and Wienir define content analysis as “any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information” (54). There are some methodologists who argue that content analysis is a methodology that has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions (Atheide; Berg; Jackson; Krippendorf; Van Dijk). They argue that researchers need to interpret the data in order to quantify it and make sense of it, which requires a qualitative effort to understand it in the context of specific content elements. The analysis therefore “should involve consideration of the literal words in the text being analyzed, including the manner in which these words have been offered” (Krippendorf). Bogdan and Biklan build their argument on two elements, the first of which they call “data interpretations”. Content analysis involves developing ideas about the information and data that are embedded in different categories, the patterns that emerge, and the meanings that seem to be conveyed. The second aspect involves the analysis of these ideas. According to Bogdan and Biklan, the analysis should be related to the literature, the broader concerns, and the original research questions. In this manner, the analysis provides the researcher a means by which to learn about how subjects or the authors of textual materials view their social worlds and how these views fit into the larger frame of how the social sciences view these issues

and interpretations (87). This research is only considering the qualitative aspect of the content analysis.

The researcher must apply one of two approaches when choosing content analysis as a research methodology: the deductive approach or the inductive approach. The inductive approach requires the researcher to read the material to be analyzed and develop the coding process and the different categories. The researcher simply derives the categories from the recorded material (Elo and Kyngäs). Therefore, the following six films have been watched many times and helped develop common analytical categories shared by the six documentaries.

The six documentaries are *Words of Witness*, *The Square*, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, *I Am the People*, *Nefertiti's Daughters*, and *The Trials of Spring*. Here is a brief description for each film.

Words of Witness

Mai Iskander, an American filmmaker of both Egyptian and Czech origins, went to Egypt immediately after the ousting of Mubarak to document through her camera the struggles of Egyptian for freedom and democracy. Mai started the film by providing some information about the brutal actions of Mubarak's security services. Facts and statistics about the brutal actions of Mubarak's security services, like arresting, torturing, and killing citizens without any trials were given at the beginning of the film. Iskander then started the film by showing protesters having violent confrontations with the police. Women and men were protesting and also equally clashing with the police in Tahrir Square. Then, Iskander filmed the mass calling for the military to save the people and shouting, "the people and the military are one hand." Immediately, after screening some archival material, Iskander filmed Heba Afify, the film's major character, standing in Tahrir Square surrounded by male and female protesters recording their reactions toward the ousting of

Mubarak regime. Heba Afify is a 22-year-old journalist who started her career in journalism just two months before the outbreak of the Egyptian uprising, as she mentions at the beginning of the film, *Words of Witness*. The film narrates the events happened in Cairo with a special focus on Tahrir Square during the few months after the uprising, from Heba's perspective. Iskander adopted the technique of "cinéma vérité" to "propel the viewer into the action and provides a kaleidoscopic view of the struggle for freedom and the will to change" (Telmissany 12). Thus, the film was successfully able to present some aspects of the "natural and conventional" and the capturing of an unscripted behavior of not only Heba, but all the people in the surrounding private sphere or the public sphere.

The Square

This documentary is directed by Egyptian American filmmaker, Jehane Noujaim. The film perfectly documents Egyptian political struggles from the ousting of Mubarak after 18 days of protests in Tahrir Square until the military coup against the first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi. Noujaim adopted a cinema vérité style through following five young revolutionaries dealing and interacting with different political events starting with the fall Mubarak, then the military takeover, the first parliamentary elections, then the first presidential elections won by the Islamist candidate, Mohamed Morsi, then the protests against Morsi, then the military coup against Morsi. Four out of the five characters in the film are young people who belong to some leftist ideology. Magdy Ashour, the fifth character, is the only person who belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood. However, his voice was not heard a lot in the film as the other four voices were. Thus, some analysts, like Max Fisher, criticized the film claiming that by focusing only on a specific group of protesters, the film "contributes to Egypt's poisonous atmosphere of polarization and distrust by its one-sided and often polemical portrayal of the Muslim Brotherhood". The other important aspect of this film is, unlike all the documentary films made by

female filmmakers, this film did not focus on the experiences of women during and after the 18 days of the Revolution. However, the film not only documents significant incidents that took place in Egypt from 2011 until 2013, but it also provides researchers with valuable data to analyze and conceptualize the political and social transformation happened in Egypt.

Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary

Filmmaker Pierre Toury decided to focus on dichotomy between Islamism and secularism in post-revolutionary Egypt by analyzing the different reactions to Alyaa El Mahdi's famous naked picture. The filmmaker decided to search this conflict by following the story of young, female, political activist, Alyaa El Mahdi. On October 23, 2011, Alyaa posted a nude picture for her on her personal bog. She took the pictures taken by herself. Alyaa was standing upright with her full naked body, with a black patterned stockings and red flats with a red flower arranged playfully in her hair with one leg resting casually resting on a stool. Eileraas asserts that Alyaa defied traditional expectations of female modesty as she "boldly opens her legs to expose her genitals to the viewer" (45). Alyaa wrote under the photo:

Put on trial the artists' models who posed nude for art schools until the early 70s, hide the art books, and destroy the nude statues of antiquity, then undress and stand before a mirror and burn your bodies that you despise to forever rid yourselves of your sexual hang ups before you direct your humiliation and chauvinism and dare to try to deny me my freedom of expression. (El Mahdi)

Alyaa's posting caused a lot of controversy but also developed an international solidarity. Alyaa had to leave Egypt and seeked asylum in Sweden. In Stockholm, Alyaa joined FEMEN, a Ukraine-based radical feminist movement. Members of the FEMEN movement mainly protest naked against various patriarchal ideologies in Europe and elsewhere. Thus, the film is mainly

divided into two major parts. Part one focuses on Alyaa's posting of the naked picture on her personal blog and part two focuses on her activism with FEMEN.

I Am the People

Filmmaker Anna Roussillon decided to narrate the story of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution from the perspective of the people who are on the periphery. Thus, she chose to narrate the story of the Egyptian Revolution not from the Tahrir Square but from the perspective of a peasant who lives in a small village, located in the far south of Egypt. Anna's decision to focus on the people's voice and not on the Tahrir Square events is reflected in the title of the film. Unlike, most of the documentary films produced on Egypt from 2011–2013, all the other films are either named after Tahrir Square or inspired by Tahrir Square (liberation), Anna decided to call the film, *I Am the People*. The title of the film is inspired by an old Egyptian song chanted by the famous Egyptian singer, Umm Kulthum. The song called "I Am the People." The first couple of sentences in the song say, "the people shouted very loudly, strongly, and deeply and say we can do miracles and we do not know the impossible." There are many elements that make this film very unique and different from most of the films that document the revolutionary actions and the political, social, and economic transformations that took place in Egypt specifically from January 25, 2011 (the outbreak of the Revolution against Mubarak) until July 3, 2013 (the ousting of Mohamed Morsi, the first-elected president after Mubarak). Firstly, the dominant theme of the film was a very important element. Anna decided to document the implications of the Revolution on the poor people and the ones who live on the periphery. She decided to create a space for people who are not able to make their voice heard either because they live far in a rural area that the media is not concerned about covering, or they don't have enough knowledge or money to make their voice heard through social media platforms. Thus, this film did not focus on women and men who were either part of the outbreak of the Revolution or contributed to the Revolution in any way, but on

the people who suffered from the living circumstances that took place after the Revolution. Anna decided to focus on the people that did not gain anything from the Revolution except suffering, from the raises of food prices and economic hardship took place afterwards. Secondly, Anna decided not to film in Tahrir Square, like most of the documentaries, and not even in big cities, but to shoot people who live in small villages very far from any political attraction. Thirdly, the way the film characters interact with the Revolution. The filmmakers of almost all the other documentaries filmed with characters who have the first-hand experience with the Revolution. In other words, the characters of the other documentaries participated in one of the protests that started in January 2011. However, Faraj, the main character of the film, and the other characters watched the Revolution and all the major political events on the television. Fourthly, a significant element in this film is the diversity of the characters in terms of gender and age. Although the dominant character in this film was Faraj, Anna was trying as much as she can to have a conversation with Faraj's wife and his female neighbor. Anna was also keen to follow Faraj's young daughter who was 10–12 years old. This diversity regarding both gender and age enriches the film and provides a more substantial understanding of the implications of the Revolution on people's living conditions.

The Trials of Spring

The Trials of Spring, directed by female filmmaker, Gini Reticker, chronicled the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath. The film presented the events since the outbreak on January 25, 2011, until days after the fourth anniversary of the Revolution on January 25, 2014. The film is narrated from the perspective of three women who were actively involved in the Revolution since it broke out in 2011. The three women are Hend Nafea, a 24- year-old Muslim girl, who is originally from a tiny village located at the outskirts of Cairo, Mariam Kirolos, a young Christian girl who belong to the middle-class, and Khadiga Hennawi, an older Muslim woman who is from

Cairo. Khadiga presented herself as Mama Khadiga and established herself as a surrogate mother for young protesters, especially young female protesters. Mama Khadiga mentioned earlier in the film that she converted her house into a smaller Tahrir Square so the protesters could meet as Tahrir Square was not safe on some occasions. However, the film focuses mainly on Hend's story, who was actively involved but also was beaten and molested viciously during one military crackdown and sexually humiliated in a courthouse while going to answer charges made against her. Mama Khadiga and Kirillos also provided very valuable perspectives. The film mainly focuses on the excessive sexual violence that women experienced, mostly in Tahrir Square, and some other, private places. The film brilliantly provided a razor-sharp insight into the disturbing and troubled story of Egyptians trying to both achieve social justice and build a new political system.

Nefertiti's Daughters

Nefertiti's Daughters is co-directed by Mark Nickolas and Racha Najdi. The film mainly focuses on the street art produced by female artists. The film is primarily composed of short interviews with different male and female artists who painted a lot of graffiti around Tahrir Square. However, there were two exceptions: A female, Egyptian journalist, and an American, university professor who teaches in the United States. The American professor was analyzing the graffiti and all the street art produced in Tahrir Square during the Revolution. It could be argued that hosting a white American scholar to analyze the paintings might have indicated that the film was made from an imperialistic gaze. The role of Egyptian artists in the film is only to describe their work and their activism. The role of the female, Egyptian journalist is to give a political context but again not to analyze. However, it is the role of Western, white scholars to analyze and provide interpretation of the actions of the women in Arab and Islamic countries. Thus, I would argue that this documentary is mainly made for the Western gaze. The film is split between the 18 days of

the Revolution where people were unified behind one objective and all the differences between people disappeared, as the female journalist interviewed in the film asserts, and the massive systematic violence women experienced on the street that took place after the toppling of Mubarak.

In summary, an inductive content analysis (Bogdan and Biklan) was conducted to understand the new identities that Egyptian women attempted to construct following the Revolution, especially in (1) creating novel relationships between women's issues in private and public spheres; (2) destabilizing the perception that women's bodies are docile bodies that can easily be controlled; and (3) establishing new associations between the activist and representational discourses. The intersectional analytical framework developed by Collins and Bilge was used to analyze the documentaries and identify common themes between the documenters. Common themes were grouped together, according to the research questions. The amalgamation of the themes was used to develop a nuanced analysis to three major themes developed in the following chapters, namely the subversion of docility, the intersections between private and public spheres, and the connections between arts and activism.

Chapter 4: Women's Bodies and the Subversion of Docility

Tahrir Square was free of sexual harassment during the 18 days of the Revolution. Tahrir Square was an inclusive space; so much so that it was described as a utopia (Telmissany; Abuelnaga). That utopia lasted for less than a month until Mubarak's departure. On March 8, the march for women's rights was attacked, and the military practiced virginity tests on 18 girls. The incident of the virginity tests was the beginning of systematic, brutal, and violent attacks on female protesters. Different documentaries focused on the March 9 attacks. It is important to document sequences of the takes of the March 8 women's march. The march, as documented by many reports and by documentaries, like *The Trials of Spring*, was attacked by men who belong to Islamist groups and thugs in plain clothes (baltageyya). "The men who attacked us and severely sexually assaulted us were saying Qur'anic verses and hadith while doing so" (*The Trials of Spring* 00:05:11-00:06:30). In response to the attack, some women and men decided to organize a sit-in. In the early morning of March 9, the sit-in was attacked by the military police and 19 girls were arrested and all of them experienced virginity tests.

In November 2011, military forces attacked a sit-in and stripped one female protester and molested others after arresting them. Then, in January 2012, during the first anniversary of the Revolution, Tahrir Square witnessed cases of sexual violence and became an unsafe space for women as the incidents of sexual violence start to increase. The sexual violence reached its peak in the second anniversary in January 2013. The intensity became severe as women experienced sexual assault and rape. In one of the cases that were widely documented, a woman was raped using a knife. The following anniversary in January 2014, no one was allowed to celebrate or be present in Tahrir Square, unless they are supporting General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who led a

military coup against the late Islamist President Morsi on July 3, 2013 (Hafez; McRobie). Most of the documentaries (*The Trials of Spring*, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, *The Square*, *Nefertiti's Daughters*, etc) documented an escalation of violence against the protesters, especially against women. The transformation of the status of Tahrir Square as a safe space for protesters imposes different questions that need to be answered to understand the status of female activism in the post2011 Revolution. Firstly, why did Tahrir Square transform from a symbol of liberation to a symbol of oppression and source of trauma for women? Sack asserts that “social power cannot exist without these territorial rules. Territorial and social rules are mutually constitutive” (37). Thus, the state’s authority and existence are determined by its ability to “restrict people’s capacity to act by regulating their movements in space” (Herbert 13). Therefore, contention over space is a direct challenge to the state control and authority as the state’s power is too great to an extent and is consolidated over territories and particular spatial routine (Soudias; Zajko and Beland). However, the contention over space is an embodiment of the political confrontations between the military, Islamists, and civic groups. Soudias argues that:

Protesters intend to appropriate protest spaces, gain control over them and expand them; security forces, on the other hand, attempted to maintain control over spaces, to keep them contained and ‘orderly.’ As resistance (protesters taking to the streets) and authority (political elites and their representative security forces) interact, modifications in the larger political context will appear over time.” (40)

Thus, I would argue that March 8, 2011, is the day the military decided to claim control over the state and implicitly announce their new rule through their control of women’s bodies.

I claim that there was a strong alliance between the military and Islamists, especially the

Muslim Brotherhood, who gave the military moral authority to support their actions in violating women's bodies and spreading their control over the space. Foucault asserts that "those who have the power to command and produce space possess a vital instrumentality for the reproduction and enhancement of their power" (265). Therefore, the military needed the Islamists to start the attack on the female protesters in the women's march on March 8. It can be argued that the role of the Islamists was to delegitimize the women's claims and to frame both the protesters and their demands as against Islam. The actions and the claims of the Islamists provided an ethical cover to practice virginity tests claiming that this was the way to differentiate between "bad" and "good" girls and that this action was taken to protect all the female protesters from "bad" girls who might be present at the sit-in. "Honour" and "shame" not only constitute the discourse around women's bodies (Heijthuyzen), but the man's honour is also directly associated with women's sexuality (El Said; Heijthuyzen). Thus, women's bodies and sexuality should be regulated (El Said; Heijthuyzen). "The choice of sexual violence is therefore peculiar (or not) since it is perceived to be 'honour-tarnishing.' When women are the bearers of 'honour' which is linked to her sexuality, sexual violence is a weapon targeted at women to break, defeat, and banish them" (Heijthuyzen 5).

On the other hand, the Islamists decided to join the military (it also can be argued that they coordinated with the military) in oppressing women and practicing violence over women's bodies as they thought that developing a coalition with the military and working together in oppressing peaceful protesters and controlling the space through controlling women's bodies would help them implement their political agenda. Thus, they were trying to control the space to enhance their power. As a result, female protesters found themselves fighting against intersectional systems of oppression. Heijthuyzen argues that the use of sexual violence in post-revolutionary Egypt "should

be understood within an authoritarian system that intersects with a patriarchal structure” (8). Both the power of Islamists and the military can function independently. Collins and Bilge assert that power gains meaning when power relations between different systems of oppression are analyzed, and the relationship between them is highlighted. These two powers contributed to each other in preventing women from claiming public space after Mubarak’s ousting. They were trying to force women to go back to the ‘norm’, which was abstaining from claiming public space (Heijthuyzen). However, the act of protesting against systems of oppression and claiming public space is an act of non-observance to this norm (Heijthuyzen). Thus, as Foucault posits:

bodies that are non-observance are punishable. As a result, female protesters were ‘disciplinary punished’ in different forms; being arrested on the grounds of prostitution, subjected to virginity testing, stripping while being photographed or filmed by soldiers and other forms of sexual violence that targeted the female body as an object of power. (El Nadeem, Nazra, and New Woman Foundation; Heijthuyzen)

Sexual violence shouldn’t be considered only as the result of women’s oppression but also a tool to reaffirm the oppression of women (Abuelnaga). Thus, the army decided to practice virginity tests as it is targeting only “women and classifies women by their virgin/non-virgin status, feeds into normalcy, and is punished accordingly” (Parla 82). The virginity tests were also able to achieve two functions for both the military and Islamists. Firstly, to uphold male dominance and secondly, to divert the attention from the women’s demands and the perpetrators and place attention on women’s morality (Jabiri).

The objective of all these sexual attacks was to develop docile bodies and to prevent women from being present in the public sphere. However, as many scholars assert, these practices failed to produce docile bodies, but on the other hand, it pushed women to develop new forms of agency.

Feminist scholar, Shereen Abuelnaga, asserts that “women transformed the engendered violence into means of resistance and a route to the agency” (43). Notwithstanding as Abuelnaga stressed that “the reactions and interactions with the gendered disciplinary practices were not monolithic” (43). It is extremely important to understand that rape is not only a sexual act for the pleasure of men, but it has a social role (Plaza; Collins). Rape is also a sexual act even if an object besides the male’s penis is used. Plaza’s definition of rape is extremely important:

Precisely, what is rape? Is it or is it not a “sexual” practice? We need to agree on the notion of sexuality. Rape is an oppressive act exercised by a (social) man against a (social) woman, which can be carried out by the introduction of a bottle held by a man into the anus of a woman; in this case, rape is not sexual, or rather, it is not genital. It is very sexual in the sense that it is frequently a sexual activity, but above all, in the sense that it opposes men and women: it is social sexing, which underlies rape. If men rape women, it is precisely because they are socially women, or even more because they “are “the sex,” bodies which they have appropriated, by the exercise “of a “local tactic” of a nameless violence. Rape is sexual essentially because it rests on the very social difference between the sexes. (29)

Thus, the fact that the vaginas of the female protesters who went through the virginity tests or experienced sexual assaults were penetrated by either fingers or some objects, like knives, does not change the act into a non-sexual activity. However, it is very important to understand that the ultimate objective of these sexual attacks was to maintain social patriarchy and to remind women of their position at the lower level of the social hierarchy. “For men rape women insofar as they belong to the class of men which has appropriated the bodies of women. They rape that which they have learned to consider as their property individuals of the other sex class than theirs, the class of

women (which, I repeat, can also contain biological men)” (Plaza 29). Therefore, the military, which is an organization built around masculinity, and Islamists, who are a conservative organization, would definitely implement all the possible strategies, including sexual violence to maintain socially-constructed hierarchy between (social) men and (social) women. The insistence and presence of the military to transform the activism in the public sphere into issues related to the private sphere dominated the public discourse in Post-Mubarak era.

The third analytical framework is how the military made a private issue into a public issue. The military decided to violate the right of these women and men who were organizing a sit-in and a protest. They decide not to arrest the men who attacked the march earlier but raid the sit-in and arrest some of the men and women at the sit-in. I argue that by doing this, the military was trying to achieve two objectives: Firstly, to create “docile bodies” by practicing virginity tests on girls who would then be afraid to publicly participate in any kind of radical dissent action. Abuelnaga asserts that the virginity tests were a “defining and turning moment. Body disciplining as a means of socio-political control started to be a systematic practice against women protesters” (43). Abuelnaga posits that the physical abuse and torture that the men and women experienced is interpreted in a different way as men interpreted it as political, but “all forms of abuse practised on women’s bodies were taken by society-supporters and opponents of the women protesters- to be cultural” (43). The virginity tests were meant discipline the bodies who want to deviate from the culture and political norms (Abuelnaga).

The body was used as a means of discipline and punishment. It define[s] how one may have hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the technique, the speed, and the efficiency that one

determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile bodies'. (Foucault 138)

Consequently, it is very important to reconstruct Foucault's "docile bodies" and to understand it with various nuances. Abuelnaga criticized Foucault's "docile bodies" by asserting that he treats human bodies without differentiating between women and men. "One should ask how the disciplinary practices engender the bodies of women" (Abuelnaga 43). Men were arrested and some of them were tortured as well during the various events after the toppling of Mubarak. But the violence that woman and men experienced during these events should be conceptualized differently. Context plays an important aspect here as well. As mentioned in chapter three, women in Egypt are framed in a nationalist discourse. Therefore, women are expected to be responsible for the reproduction of the collective identity and for the transmission of its culture (Anthias & Yuval-Davis). Consequently, both the military and Islamists tried to control deviant women by violating their bodies and practicing various forms of violence against them. It can be argued that they were trying to serve two objectives by doing so: Firstly, they might have attempted to control the women so that they would not be able to reproduce dissent culture. Secondly, the excessive violence towards women in the public sphere would yield more violence towards them in the private sphere, as women's honour is collectively owned, mainly by families. Thus, families would ban their female family members from participating in the activities in Tahrir Square.

The excessive use of sexual violence in the early days of the Revolution was both justified by the military and accompanied by propaganda against the Revolution and the protesters in different mass media outlets. A very excellent example of the media propaganda is the interview that CNN did with one of the military generals after the virginity tests took place. The general described the girls who went through the virginity tests by saying, "the girls were not like your

daughter or mine”. This description made many female protesters, like Mariam Kirollos, one of the protesters interviewed in the film, *The Trials of Spring*, refuse this description and refute his logic of perceiving women as full citizens who have the right to protest, but also through a classic, patriarchal lens. Feminist scholar, Shereen Abuelnaga, asserts that the general was trying to “take the fight to a different terrain, that of [the] ‘private sphere’ (Abuelnaga 44). It can be argued that the other objective of the media propaganda is to transform the utopia of Tahrir Square to a dystopia (Telmissany). Both the military and Islamists were trying to transform the depiction of Tahrir Square from a fount for pride and courage to a symbol of shame and deviance by claiming that young women and men organized orgies there.

The various documentaries show how women developed various forms of resistance to challenge these practices and subvert oppression. Women’s response to the gendered disciplinary practices changed, transformed, and even escalated, parallel to the escalation of these practices as documented. In the following section, I analyze the various resistance strategies developed by women to claim ownership of their bodies and simultaneously refute the idea of their bodies as being docil

1. Legal Resistance

Samira Ibrahim, a young female protester, was arrested by the military on March 9 along with 18 other women. The military conducted a virginity test on all of them. All the young women who went through the virginity test did not speak publicly about their experience, except Samira Ibrahim. Samira decided to share her testimony with a non-profit organization and sue the officers.

The film, *The Trials of Spring*, show part of an interview Samira Ibrahim did with an American channel speaking about how this test was not a test, but basically a form of rape. She mentioned that she was asked to strip all her clothes and to sleep naked on a bed in front of a

physician and a military officer. However, the physician did not examine her, but the military officer penetrated her hymen with his fingers. Thus, she lost her virginity, which is externally problematic to a young Muslim girl who comes from a conservative community (*The Trials of Spring* 00:5:45-00:06:01). Samira Ibrahim was the only one to speak out and share her testimony with the media; the rest of the 17 female protesters remain anonymous. Samira Ibrahim was a young woman in her early twenties, from a very conservative family, who lived in a traditional conservative city, located in the south of Egypt. She is a conservative Muslim herself who wears a hijab. Shereen Abuelnaga asserts that:

These were essential factors that should have been taken into consideration how gender- as a main component- will seek real agency. They were factors that, in the past, should have worked against the victim; paradoxically and fortunately, they worked for her. Without the Revolution, nobody could have sued the authorities. (49)

There were many women who share similar factors (class, age, religion, origin, etc.) that constitute Samira's identity who actively participated in the different events related to the Revolution. There are two important elements that should be highlighted in this incident: (1) the military was not able to control Samira's body or agency by humiliating her body, but rather strengthened her agency and her resistance; (2) the Revolution encouraged certain categories of women to speak up and to defy many societal conventions.

Samira with the support of some feminist organizations decided to sue the military. The film, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, included some video footage from the court case. The narrator says in the film: "Samira bravely decided to press charges before SCAF, with her father's help and on behalf of all of Egypt's women. This is Samira when the historic verdict was announced that the army had to stop their virginity tests on women who have been arrested" (*Alyaa: The*

Naked Revolutionary 00:30:52-00:30:58). The narrator asserts that Samira received support from her father, along with different feminist activists and organizations. The other important fact is that the other girls who underwent the virginity test joined Samira in suing the military and some even testified in her favor. The Arab media provided little support, according to the narrator of the film. Samira won the case and the court ruled that the army can't use virginity tests against female protesters but the soldier who conducted the test was acquitted. Abuelnaga asserts that Samira Ibrahim's case should be analyzed beyond gender. Samira comes from a conservative workingclass family. She is a devout Muslim who wears a hijab. However, despite all these intersecting factors, she was able to be "shockingly subversive of a docile society that had learnt not to break silence over the question of sexual harassment and rape- both acts entailing an offensive questioning of women's 'honour'" (Abuelnaga 44). Samira's action also challenged the Western perception that Muslim, hijab-wearing women are oppressed and have no agency. She asserts that Samira "did not stick to the rules of the script triggered a hugely hostile social reaction. By smashing the myth of the female body as a symbol of personal and collective national honor and as site of docility" (Abuelnaga 45), Samira not only resisted the military, but also resisted the embedded social patriarchy within Egyptian society.

2. Protests against the Military

The other important incident that transformed the relationship between female activists and the military is the incident that took place on December 18, 2011. The incident is known as "The Blue Bra" incident. In November and December 2011, female and male protesters occupied Tahrir Square again to protest against SCAF. On December 18, the military forces brutally attacked the protesters to disrupt the sit-in. Thus, violent confrontations took place between the protesters and the military. The military attacked a woman and drugged her and savagely beat her on the street

until her top was removed and her blue bra appeared. This incident was documented in a photo and known ever since as “the incident of the Blue Bra.”

In response to the attack on “the blue bra girl”, women in massive numbers went downtown to Tahrir Square to protest against these practices. The chants, as present in *The Trials of Spring*, focused on the refusal of these gendered practices, emphasizing that women’s bodies are untouchable using the slogan “Egyptian women are the red line” against the military. I argue that this is a transformational moment in regard to the relationship between women and the military (in particular, women who participated in mass protests) as in early 2011, women were chanting “the military and the people are one hand”, but in late 2011, the chant transformed into “down down the military regime; military scumbags; Egyptian women are not to be stripped”. They also carried signs that showed a hand with a military uniform with the caption, “cut your hands”. This was a transformational moment not only because women decided to claim their agency collectively and actively, but also because women saw the military as the embodiment of a masculine discourse that practices and imposes violence. There are two significant outcomes of this transformational moment: Firstly, on the level of development of these practices and the level of reaction and interaction of these practices. On the scale of developing these practices, neither the military nor the Islamists explicitly did these practices by themselves. However, they both allowed the behaviour and did not provide any practices or policies to protect women present in the public sphere.

The public responded differently to the incident of the virginity tests and the blue bra incident. The military, supported by Islamists in both cases, was the preparator, however the public response to both events was completely different. These were public reactions for both incidents with various complexities related to women’s agency and experiences in public and private sphere.

I would argue that the difference in the reaction between the two incidents should be problematized. The primary question is: If the masses protested against the military when they publicly stripped and brutally beat the girl, why didn't they react similarly when the military practiced virginity tests on the protesters on March 8? I'm fully aware that there are various ways to answer this question and to conceptualize this discrepancy. Thus, I would like to discuss the various reasons for the behaviour change towards the military sexual violations against women.

Firstly, the virginity tests took place in private, and none of the young women (except Samira Ibrahim) spoke out and narrated their experience (Hafez; Sorbera). Thus, there is a lack of information. I also would argue many people would have denied that the military would have harmed any girl. Despite that fact, the General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the Chief of the Military Intelligence then, admitted that the military practiced virginity tests (*The Trials of Spring*). In the documentary, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, Alyaa El Mahdi, said in an interview commenting on the incident of the virginity tests:

Unfortunately, I know plenty of women who underwent the virginity test. When we learned on the news the day it happened to Samira, my mother told me, it's only natural. If girls sleep with the men in the tents in Tahrir Square, it's to be expected. She wasn't shocked by it at all. My parents again are asking me if I slept with Kareem. My mother wanted me to take a virginity test. They threatened me a lot." (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:32:37-00:34:00)

Forcing a young woman to undergo a virginity test is considered a "normal" practice in Egypt for some families, especially within lower socio-economic classes. The normality of these tests is understood, as the girl's "honor" is embodied in her sexuality. An intact hymen is the indicator of the girl's honor. In a country like Egypt, the girl's honor is not a personal matter, but a public and familial issue (Abuelnaga). Therefore, men (and in some cases, women) will implement patriarchal practices against women and justify them by claiming that they are protecting the collective honor not only of the people, but of the nation. Thus, the fact that the virginity tests did not take place in

public, in addition to the hegemonic discourse on collective honour and the military framing, played a crucial role in the development of the reaction to this attack.

Secondly, the proximity of this incident and the ousting of Mubarak from the office played an important role. The protesters, including the female protesters in the film, were chanting just a month before this incident of the virginity test, “the military and the people are one hand.” People were still under the effect of euphoria. Thus, the remoteness of “the Blue Bra” incident from January’s utopia made the people change their emotional position to one against the military.

Thirdly, one can argue that one of the most important reasons for the outbreak of mass protests after that incident is the fact that the incident was broadcasted live on the TV stations. The picture was on the front page of many newspapers, not only on Egypt, but everywhere including major Canadian newspapers, like the National Post, and the Globe and Mail. Women led mass protests the following day with the participation of men. In those mass protests, women carried signs and chanted “the daughters of Egypt do not get stripped” and “the daughters of Egypt are a red line.” Therefore, by using these kind of slogans, women were affirming a patriarchal nationalist discourse instead of challenging them. Hafez contends that women were able to affirm their political voice and demands by confirming their allegiance to the nation. Den Bogert argues that “because women represented themselves as mothers and daughters of the nation, thereby endorsing the patriarchal system that links women’s bodies with honor and the nation, the women’s protest was accepted by fellow protestors” (77). Therefore, women were able to use these patriarchal gender discourses and structures to subvert oppression and voice their demands more importantly to claim national signifiers as a space for embodied feminist resistance (Hafez; Den Bogert).

The contrast between the virginity tests incident and the blue bra incident reflects the complexity and paradoxical position of women's bodies in Egypt. Women's bodies in Egypt are perceived as the terrain of cultural, moral, and political subjection (Kandiyoti; Lazreg; Mernissi). Women's bodies in both incidents were used by the military to impose their power and to control the public spaces. In both cases, the framework of the nation as a woman was implemented. The virginity tests event was used to justify the suppression of women and the blue bra incident was used to liberate women and maintain feminist resistance.

Islamist media and leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, who had the majority of parliamentary seats in the first elected parliament after Mubarak and was in power during the incident of the blue bra, blamed the victim and commented her clothes. Films like, *The Trial of Spring* and *Nefertiti's Daughters* showed how famous Islamist television anchors talked about her as well. "She was wearing a bikini and not a bra?" "I don't believe this girl was veiled. You do not dress that way if you were veiled. She is a fake!" Islamists, who were in power by holding most of the seats of the parliament, could have chosen to take the side of the woman in question and hold the military accountable, but instead, decided to side with the perpetrators (the military). The Islamists' position towards "the blue bra incident" contributed to the change in how Egyptians identified themselves with Islamists.

The documentaries showed that violence towards female protesters escalated. Unlike the violent attacks that took place in 2011, the attacks that took place during the celebration of the anniversary of the Revolution, in both January 2012 and 2013, were not executed by the military or Islamists, but by thugs. At the same time, the state security institutions, such as the civil police or the military, did not protect women or, at least, punish the perpetrators.

The Trials of Spring presented two different strategies developed by two of the film's main characters, Mariam Kirollos and Hend Nafea. Mariam Kirollos established an initiative with her friends, titled, "Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment". Kirollos says in an interview:

Sexual harassment, and sexual violence, has been super evident since the virginity tests. I mean rape and mob assault were taking place all the time, but who did anything? No one. It was just us protecting ourselves, so we decided, as a group of friends, to form some intervention team [that] started as 'operation anti-sexual harassment' and then, later on, we realized that we should not sugar-coat the level of crime and added sexual assault. We walk around in Tahrir and whenever we see cases of sexual harassment, we try to do something about it. (*The Trials of Spring* 00:30:29-00:33:00)

Sorbera asserts that the young feminist activists created this initiative as an outcome to their critical position toward "the masculinization of the public space and the political discourse which, in their view, is the result of the contraposition between two patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and gender roles: the state (police) one and the revolutionary one" (69). Thus, female protesters realized that they had to develop new ways to fight against interlocking systems of oppression produced through the interaction of a different misogynist power. They continued their activism for the Revolution demands, which were bread, freedom, and social justice. They fought for more women's rights, especially under the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, and at the same time, protected themselves as both the state and male protesters failed to maintain Tahrir Square as a safe space the way it was during the 18 days of the Revolution.

3. Nudity as a Form of Resistance

On October 23, 2011, young female activist, Alyaa, posted a nude picture of herself on her personal blog. The picture was self-taken. Alyaa was standing upright, fully naked, with black patterned stockings and red flats, with a red flower arranged playfully in her hair, and one leg resting casually on a stool. Eileraas asserts that Alyaa defied traditional expectations of female modesty as she “boldly opens her legs to expose her genitals to the viewer” (45). Alyaa wrote under the photo:

Put on trial the artists' models who posed nude for art schools, until the early 70s, hide the art books, and destroy the nude statues of antiquity, then undress and stand before a mirror and burn your bodies that you despise to forever rid yourselves of your sexual hang ups before you direct your humiliation and chauvinism and dare to try to deny me my freedom of expression.” (El Mahdi)

Alyaa's posting caused a massive controversy but also developed international solidarity. Alyaa had to leave Egypt and move to Sweden as an asylum seeker. In Stockholm, Alyaa joined FEMEN, a Ukraine-based radical feminist movement. Members of the FEMEN movement mainly protested naked against various patriarchal ideologies in Europe and elsewhere. Thus, the film is mainly divided into two major parts.

The film and the scholarly literature show there is no consensus among women's activists and feminists in Egypt on Alyaa's way of protesting. Some of them believe that what Alyaa did harmed the women's movement in Egypt and some of them assert that this was a needed revolutionary act that contributed to the advancement of women's issues and subverted interlocking systems of oppression. Alyaa's act of deviance “was deemed anti-revolutionary, immoral and atheist by both the liberal and the religious parties” (Assaad 108). However, Assaad

asserts that Alyaa's act was a revolutionary act as "Alyaa projected her body, not as sexual object inside the sensual and erotic sphere, but as a political object outside the male gaze of appropriation and oppression" (108). The question is: Why did Alyaa's picture created all this debate? Is it because of the nudity or it is because of the way Alyaa was posing? Or is it because of the timing? Assaad comments the following:

Nudity is generally a problematic act, but also it must be understood in the Egyptian context. Postcolonial theorist, Hamid Dabashi, asserts the following:

Dressing is the ceremonial ritual to present the body in public. Posing a body beneath or beyond its habitual habitat is disruptive in varied cultures. The deliberate stripping of clothing a culture has called 'decent' is an act of staged formal destruction that disrupts the normality of socializing norms for a deliberate pause. It is the staging of the body for a momentary reflection.

Nudity is welcomed and encouraged only if it is serving men's gaze and pleasure but is perceived as an act of deviance if it is serving the purpose of women's empowerment. However, it is more complicated for women than men because the patriarchy does not allow women to have control over their bodies in public spheres. Judith Butler asserts that:

The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life; only later, and with some uncertainty, do I lay claim to my body as my own, if, in fact, I ever do. (26)

Nationalist discourse adds another level of complexity for women's bodies in Egypt. Egypt as a woman is a dominated and prevalent discourse; an often popular and official rhetoric (Baron). Baron highlighted the paradox Egyptian women experience in the creation of Egypt as a modern

nation. Women's bodies became the central representation of the nation but at the same time, they are excluded from mainstream political processes. Therefore, women like Butler assert that they don't own their bodies in public spheres, but also that gender is performed based on a script authored by the various social powers in the community. Different scholars (Assaad; Eileraas; Karidy) argue that Alyaa's nude picture is act of deviance from the imposed script on women's bodies. One could argue that Alyaa's nude photo challenged the various scripts developed by both nationalist discourses within Egypt and the Orientalist discourse developed mainly in the global north.

Thus, Alyaa's act was mainly to claim her agency and the ownership of her body. Alyaa's nude picture also challenged the Orientalist discourse. Alyaa's self-portrait is completely contrary to the Orientalist portraits of odalisques, like that of *Grande Odalisque* (Eileraas). The woman in *Grande Odalisque* is laying on bed with a bare breast in an empty room waiting for a man come in. The painting reduced the woman to "a passive object, waiting for space to be filled and history to be shaped by others" (Eileraas 45). Alyaa's fully naked portrayal is on the complete contrary as she posed standing up with a powerful, determined gaze. Therefore, Alyaa's self-portrait challenged the Orientalism discourse by emphasizing her agency and claiming full control over her body. Feminist literature (Vickers; Enloe) on women and revolutions, especially nationalist revolutions, posit that new political powers, post-Revolution, demand women to put feminist-inspired demands aside, as Cynthia Enloe asserts that the message received by women post-

Revolution is "not now, later" (62). However, Egyptian women post-Revolution not only experienced the same in terms of ignorance to their social and political demands, but also experience an incredible amount of physical and psychological violence sponsored by the state,

like the virginity tests and mass rape in Tahrir Square in the subsequent years to Mubarak's. The acts are also sponsored by the media through the public shaming of presumably "loose" women occupying Tahrir Square alongside men (Eileraas 47). All these lead to various interlocking forms of violence towards women and had great negative repercussions on their agency. Therefore, Alyaa's nude picture can be considered as a counter response to both political deliberate ignorance and various forms of violence. Alyaa wanted to push women's issues onto the political agenda and emphasize a woman's agency over her body (Assaad; Eileraas).

Pierre Toury, the filmmaker behind, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, created parallels between Alyaa's action and Samira's virginity test. The filmmaker asked Alyaa to comment on what happened to Samira. A major theme in the film is the comparison between Alyaa El Mahdi and Samira Ibrahim. There are three major analytical frameworks that should be developed in analyzing Samira's virginity test. Alyaa mentioned that her own family asked her, or rather threatened her, to get a virginity test. Firstly, Alyaa's comments on the virginity test show that this virginity test is a not a foreign practice in Egypt. It is a practice that many families do to their daughters, especially before they get married. Alyaa herself was threatened by her parents before she underwent a virginity test because her parents saw her walking in the streets with a boy.

Secondly, there is no consensus on the role of the military/the ruler among the people. Alyaa's mother believed that the virginity tests practiced on Samira and the other girls were necessary as these women and girls spent the whole night with men and boys in the same tent. Alyaa's mother's position should be unfolded into two aspects: Firstly, violence and masculine practices are not only practiced by men but also be practiced by women (e.g., mothers). Alyaa's mother thought that virginity tests practiced by the military was a valid practice. Secondly, other women decided to support Samira and joined in her in court. This illustrates that there is no consensus among women

on the role of the state and the right of women to be present in public spaces and have autonomy over her body.

Alyaa received many threats from men who had nothing to do with her. In 2017, Egypt was ranked as the second country worldwide for watching porn (Gupta). Therefore, the issue is not that Alyaa showed a naked picture; the problem is the way Alyaa expressed her agency and her body in a way that challenged the male gaze. Assaad asserts that Alyaa's act represented a threat:

How could one look at the naked picture of a woman, without seeing her nudity? The daring move forces the society to reassess its own evaluation of the female body, even if at first the only foreseeable reaction is one of shame, embarrassment, anger and even revolt. She insinuated herself within the minds of people, and not as a sexual object. (110)

Alyaa expands in one of the interviews on the different threats she received because of the nude picture she posted. Alyaa's defiant action was perceived as a threat to the patriarchal society. Thus, she has to be disciplined:

Threats and outrage. I've had messages, people asking me, where are you? If we see you, we'll kill you. I've been threatened with rape. What really scares them is the fact that women can be free, can have control over their own bodies. Men's control over women's bodies, there's a lot of comments about that. They asked if there were no men in my family that could have stopped me doing that. Why didn't they kill you? They blamed my family and then the whole country, as if all the men in Egypt were in control of my body. (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:17:19-00:18:10)

There are two ways to interpret men's violent responses to Alyaa. The first is that women's bodies are considered by men as private property to all men and not only to men who directly relate to the "deviant women". Within the conservative views, men's honor depends on women's actions. Thus, men feel that they have to fill the place of other men who did not do a "proper job" in maintaining women's bodies as safe and hidden. Any kind of deviance will not only affect the reputation and "honor" of the men related to that woman but will also affect the reputation of all men in society. A young woman, like Alyaa, is considered as deviant; therefore, there is a wide range of ways to discipline her body. Firstly, by locking her up, or beating her (an extreme reaction could be killing her). Rape is another tool to discipline women's bodies. I would argue that Alyaa was threatened to be raped to remind her that women's bodies' main function in society is to pleasure men and cannot act as a political tool.

Alyaa expressed in the film that she experienced some of these disciplinary acts. Alyaa's parents locked her up once for a week because they saw her walking home from the university campus with her boyfriend. Alyaa was telling this story in the interview while making fun of the reaction of her parents. "You're not allowed to walk with a man in the street. They changed the locks on the door, and for one week, I was only allowed out to go to university" (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:08:46-00:09:15). This incident took place before the Revolution. Sometime after she posted her picture, two boys kidnapped her and tried to rape her. However, she resisted fiercely so the two kidnappers decided to let her go and not to rape her as they thought that she was a virgin, and they did not want to impact her hymen. They ended up stealing her money and letting her go. That incident demonstrates the contradiction that Egyptians have towards women's bodies. They kidnapped her and wanted to rape her as way to show her that her body should be only used to serve men's sexual desires and not a protest tool. However, at same time, her resistance made them

think that she was virgin who is trying to protect her hymen. I would argue that they decided to leave her as they thought that she was still “pure” as she is still maintaining her virginity. Collins asserted that rape not only originates from sexual desire but is also a tool to remind women that they are at the bottom of the hierarchy of the society. Thus, one can argue the two men who kidnapped Alyaa were not merely motivated by sexual desires but to remind Alyaa that she does not own her body and that she, as a woman, is the bottom of the social hierarchy. Egypt is portrayed as a woman in all the cultural productions (songs, cartoons, films, public speeches by public officials, etc.) (Baron). Therefore, the kidnappers thought that disciplining Alyaa through rape was a national task because by doing this, they are protecting the honor of Egypt, the woman. The kidnappers’ major problem was that Alyaa’s nude picture was a challenge to the socially accepted script and they thought sexual violence, either by actually raping her or threatening to rape her, would remind her that she does not own her body and that she has to behave according to her gender by following a script developed by society. In addition, Alyaa’s nude picture put the women’s agenda again on the mainstream political agenda during a time that different political groups (both who belonged to Islamist, liberal, and leftist sides) in Egypt were arguing that there are more important issues on the political agenda than women’s issues. Therefore, despite various downfalls of Alyaa’s nude photo, her act can be considered a declaration of women’s full agency over their bodies in that trying time.

The gender performative script is not only imposed by normal citizens like the ones who kidnapped Alyaa, but also by regulated laws and the legal system in Egypt applied by the state. Any act of deviance will cost the person a legal punishment. In the documentary, Karim (Alyaa’s boyfriend) and Alyaa narrate the story of them going on a date to Al-Azhar Park (a public park that is located near downtown Cairo). According to Karim’s interview in the film, Karim had his

arm over Alyaa's shoulder. The park's keeper came to them and took them to the park administration's office where they found a lay person and couple of low-rank police officers. On the way to office, Karim was confronted by the park keeper who told Karim that they did not have the right to perform that action. The park keeper added that it was a violation of tradition and custom. Karim decided to use his cell phone camera to record what was happening in the office. Both Karim and Alyaa, especially Alyaa, were mistreated. Karim says in the interview that the garden manger "was rude to Alyaa, treating her like a doll" (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*). The manager asked for their identification papers. Karim asked him what they had done wrong. The confrontation was being recorded on Karim's phone. The manager told Karim that he and Alyaa did an illegal act, by the definition of "any act that can offend the public, any touching of others or of yourself" (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*). The manager gets a long document and starts to recite the different articles from a law that addresses people's behaviour in public places to Karim. This adds another layer of gender performativity as it is not only socially constructed but also enforced by legal systems. The state, through its various legislative and police apparatus, interferes, organizes gender expectations, and imposes rules for private relationships. In Egypt, any act of "social deviance" could lead to the "deviant" to not only be marginalized and alienated but also face potential legal consequences.

In the film, Alyaa faced legal consequences twice for her actions: once, in Al-Azhar Park because the park keeper thought that the act of her boyfriend putting his arm on her shoulder was illegal, and the second time was when she joined members of FEMEN movement to protest against Islamic Sharia. A Cairo-based lawyer, who belong to an Islamist political party, demanded the court to revoke Alyaa's Egyptian citizenship, arguing that Alyaa's action of protesting naked in front of the Egyptian embassy, holding a Quran, is an act against Islam and a humiliation to the

reputation of Egypt. The police at the park did end up arresting Alyaa and Karim but gave them a simple warning. They did not follow up on the case to revoke her citizenship. One way to resist the social script supported by the state in one's personal life is to follow Alyaa's lead and share your personal struggle publicly online. "To denounce these kinds of violations. To denounce these people who in a public place violate your private life" (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*) That was Karim's response to the question of why he posted the video of the confrontation with the police at the park on the internet. The narrator said that the video got 30,000 viewers. This is not the first time that Karim uploaded a video that had to do with their private life. Karim has uploaded pictures of him and Alyaa kissing each other and intimate positions. The aim of posting these pictures on their personal blog is to announce that this is their personal life and own bodies and that there shouldn't be any constraints on their agency and their bodies.

One can argue that Karim and Alyaa's actions of sharing their pictures online is a way of continuing the protest against interlocking systems of oppression, but not in a physical space, like Tahrir Square, where it can be dangerous for their personal safety. They also might not get the exposure they are hoping to, which makes the internet a better option. However, this is a major characteristic of contemporary hybrid social movements. There is another layer of safety when it comes to moving the protest from the physical space to the virtual space. Perpetrators (the police in case of Karim and Alyaa) are sometimes afraid of the consequences if their actions go virtual. The incident at Al-Azhar Park took place in late 2011 where there was a still a revolutionary spirit. Thus, one can argue that Karim filming the arrest and part of the interrogation concerned the police especially because they asked him many times to stop filming. One can presume that the police released them and just gave them a warning because they did not want to have any implications if Karim posted the video.

4. Solidarity or Support

Alyaa's nude picture developed a movement of solidarity and support from women all over the globe. "The creative and political deployment of El Mahdi's body in cyberspace and on the streets, activates new bodily imaginaries, or symbolic spaces, in which to reimagine vulnerability as a basis for solidarity and tool for social change" (Eileraas 43). Alyaa's image motivated women to organize both virtual and streets protests not only to support Alyaa's action but also to declare ownership over their bodies. Women from different countries, but mainly from Arab and Muslimmajority countries, sent nude pictures of themselves mainly without showing their faces. Most of the pictures have an Arabic text on it that is saying something against Islam. The film showed two events that took place in support to Alyaa: a protest, organized by FEMEN, a radical Ukrainian women movement, in Paris, in March 2012, and a collective nude picture for Israeli women orchestrated by Orka Tepler, a Tel Aviv-based musician. The footage of Paris' protest was accompanied by the narrator saying, "On the Trocadero in Paris, women pose topless in solidarity". In the protest, women were distributing a calendar with famous female activists posing nude. Maryam Namazie, an Iranian feminist activist, was one of the women who attended the protest and also contributed to the calendar. Namazie was interviewed while participating in the protest. Namazie said in the interview "I, for example, found the nudity very, very difficult to do. I found doing my photograph the most difficult thing I've ever done. And I have also fought with Islamists and been threatened by Islamists, but it has been more difficult to go nude. But it's basically saying, 'yes, why do you hate our bodies so much?' What's wrong with the body? There's nothing wrong with nudity. It's humanizing. It's beautiful. And it's revolutionary to be nude currently when you have Islamism trying to cover up women, trying to silence them, gag them, and make them nonentities and inhuman as a result of the veil, the burka, and sexual apartheid." (*Alyaa: The Naked*

Revolutionary 00:27:00) Namazie's comment is very problematic as it simplifies Alyaa's fight against interlocking systems of oppression and framing it in a way that gives the impression that it is only a fight against Islamists. The other problem is that it equates nudity with "liberation". Various scholars (Brumberg; Fluri; Jay) assert that the publicly displayed female body is in many ways considered an integral part of the process of Western modernity. Fluri developed an extensive critique of what is called "corporal modernity". Westerners celebrate Muslim women stripping publicly or removing the hijab publicly (as in the case of Afghani women removing their hijab on air in American TV show) and associate this act with liberation and modernism. Therefore, it can be argued that part of the Western celebration of what Alyaa did confirms certain Western understandings of modernity.

Then the film, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, shows a group of Israeli women in Tel Aviv who decided to picture themselves naked as a form of support for Alyaa's naked picture. The narrator introduced this scene by saying "there's unexpected support from Israel too. 40 women have stripped naked for a historic photograph. The picture was the brainchild of a young musician." Orka Tepler is a young Israeli musician who identifies herself on her Facebook page as "Orka. Singer. Song writer. Woman's circle holder. serving the spirit" Orka's Facebook page,⁶ which does not show any form of political activism, especially in supporting the rights of Palestinian women under the Israeli occupation, was the platform on which she displayed this group photo to support Alyaa. Tepler said in the interview that:

The first time that I saw the picture of Alyaa, I felt very inspired. I felt that there was a window of chance to do something supportive [for] her. But also, people asked me a question that I didn't think about before we did it. Maybe we were putting Alyaa in danger

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/or.tepler>

by doing this picture because we were Israelis supporting her. And maybe it's enough that the Muslim societies are angry with her for being naked. (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:21:55-00:22:30))

Tepler's comment reflects the complexity of international solidarity among women. Tepler never mentioned in the interview she did in the film that she is admitting her privilege as an Israeli settler who might directly or indirectly be contributing to the daily oppression of Palestinian women, both inside the state of Israel, and in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Famous black feminist bell hooks criticized the idea of "sisterhood" developed by the women's liberationist movement. In her work, hooks asserts that sisterhood is "based on the idea of common oppression" (43). hooks criticizes the idea of common oppression by positing that it "was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality" (44). hooks emphasises that women are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class, privilege, and a host of other prejudices. "Sustained woman bonding can occur only when these divisions are confronted, and the necessary steps are taken to eliminate them" (44). hook's critique to sisterhood can be applied to Tepler's support of Alyaa's actions.

Tepler did not want to confront the fact that she herself, as an occupier, is an oppressor. She could have organized activities or actions to support either Palestine women who live in the West Bank in Occupied Palestine or Palestinian women with Israeli citizenship (known as Arab of 1948) who are living under difficult conditions and suffering from interlocking systems of oppression (Sa'ar). Tepler justified her support by saying "there was a time in Israel when the religious parts of Israel became very strong and tried to decay women's rights in here. So, with

buses in Jerusalem, women were not allowed to sit with men. And it's a weird thing because Israel is not a religious country. Still, it's very, very hard to be the first person to try to break the barriers. So straight away I thought, 'wo', she's a hero', and we have to support her" (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:23:29-00:23:50) Tepler identified common oppression as a reason for her support of Alyaa. However, at the same time, she did not admit her position of power and the possibility that she might be an oppressor to other groups of women. She moved ahead with her public act, despite the fact that Tepler's friends warned her that her support may cause harm to Alyaa because the support was from an Israeli. However, she framed it in a way that disregards the fact that she belongs to an oppressive group that has a long history of violating the rights of Palestinians and highlights the presence of a Muslim-majority society as the problem. Namazie's comment also limits the interlocking systems of oppression that Alyaa is facing to a battle only with Islamists.

Many scholars criticized the FEMEN movement by arguing that it has an "Islamophobic, neocolonial, feminist agenda" (Eileraas 26). The FEMEN movement is mainly formed of white, slim, blonde women. Therefore, numerous feminist scholars and activists are highly skeptical of their political agenda (Eileraas). Therefore, it is very important to differentiate between support and solidarity. bell hooks developed a clear distinction between them. hooks asserts that: Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs, and goals around which to unite, to build sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment. In feminist movement, there is need for diversity, disagreement, and difference if we are to grow. (hooks 47)

Therefore, the two events shown in the film can be called actions of support and actions of solidarity as described by the narrator. The organizers of both events identified themselves with Alyaa based on “making shared victimization” (hooks 45). hooks highly criticized women who adopt that identifying strategy arguing that:

Women are enriched when we bond with one another, but we cannot develop sustaining ties or political solidarity using the model of sisterhood created by bourgeois’ women’s liberationists. According to their analysis, the basis for bonding was shared victimization, hence the emphasis on common oppression. This concept of bonding directly reflects male supremacist thinking. (hooks 45)

That’s the argument as to why different women’s organizations in Egypt did not praise this international support as I would argue they were expecting a form of identification that is beyond the identification based on common victimization and beyond streamlining women’s issues in Egypt as a conflict between Islamists and secular people. On the local level, the filmmaker joined a young woman. “Laila Magued is a feminist and a graphic designer who lives in Cairo” (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:27:15-00:27:20). The sequence started by the narrator saying:

Despite the revolution, women’s rights in Egypt have not progressed. After the fall of Mubarak, they even took a step backwards. The people voted for what they saw as the only alternative, the Islamists. Egypt’s religious parties are the only political groups that oppose the emancipation of women and sexual freedom. (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:27:10)

This statement reflects the huge lack of understanding of the complexity of women’s issues in Egypt. The narrator, again, is simplifying the complexity of women’s oppression in Egypt and streamlining the cause to Islamists. Laila drove the filmmaker to Tahrir Square to show him the

graffiti painted to support both Alyaa El Mahdi and Samira Ibrahim. Laila spoke about the different kind of harassment she experienced in Egypt. She said:

There are several types of harassment here. Some might tell me, 'you're cute'. I'll ignore it, but it's an assault on my liberty. And he hasn't the right. Then there are the insults. When I answer back, he'll say, 'wear a veil, cover your body'. Here, people think they can tell me how to look. (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:27:16-00:27:22)

Laila's comment confirms Butler's words on the ownership of the body in public spaces. Laila's comment also reflects men's application to religion as a way to justify their harassment and misogynistic acts. Interesting enough, Laila did not specify the harassers. She said "people". This reflects that sexual harassment and the notion that women don't own their body is very prevalent in the Egyptian society and it is beyond the Islamists. The contrast between the narrator and the Laila's comments reflects a nuanced way of analyzing and understanding women's issues in Egypt and should be beyond the binary of those who are secular and those who are Islamists. Laila took them to the Tahrir Square where there were young female and male artists drawing graffiti. The graffiti was a mix of pictures of young people who were killed during the Revolution and different paintings for girls and statements beside them that challenged pervasive patriarchal discourses. One of the graffiti pieces said, "I have freedom over my body" (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:28:32-00:28:45). Laila mainly took the filmmaker to Tahrir Square to show them a graffiti piece for Alyaa's naked body and a face portrait for Samira Ibrahim, painted by a male artist called Ammar Abo Bakr. Abo Bakr's graffiti showed pride for both women. The graffiti confirms women's agency and control over their body. More importantly, painting the two girls beside each other depicts how the bodies of these two women became an embodiment of resistance not only to patriarchy but also to confirm that women's bodies are not "docile" and that both the military and

their allies from conservative groups are not going to control the Revolution through women's bodies. However, Laila was very critical of Alyaa's actions questioning how Alyaa's action can contribute to advance women's causes: I don't really think Samira pressed charges on behalf of women's rights, but more to protect her own dignity. As referred to, Alyaa tried to impose her point of view in a society that has no room for her. I respect Alyaa's freedoms and what she does. She's free to do that. On the other hand, here in Egypt it doesn't help the cause of women. Whereas Samira's struggle has been more accepted. Her struggle will help the feminist cause today. (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:31:31-00:31:50)

Laila's perspective is the complete contrary of the FEMEN movement or female activists in Tel Aviv. Laila, in the words of bell hooks, did not choose to identify herself with Alyaa based on common oppression but based on agency. She showed full respect to Alyaa's actions, but she was critical of it questioning how Alyaa's actions can contribute to Egyptian women's emancipation. One can argue that Samira's actions contributed to the feminist cause in two major ways. First, she claimed her body and dissociated from the notion that she should be shamed because of what happened to her body, but it is the perpetrators who should be not only shamed but also punished. Secondly, she somehow delivered a message to the military and to any other anti-revolutionary power that they cannot control women's bodies through assaults. The film showed many women were with Samira in the court supporting her and a graffiti artist painted her face as a graffiti piece in Tahrir Square.

The contrary position between international and Egyptian women towards Alyaa's naked picture raises three questions on the effectiveness of her actions: 1. Why did the filmmaker decide to focus the film on Alyaa's activism? 2. Why did women in the West (mainly white women)

decide to organize protests to support Alyaa's actions, but not Samira Ibrahim's or any other women's who were assaulted by the state and/or Islamists in the various events of the Revolution?

3. Why did Egyptian women's activists not show acts of support and/or solidarity with Alyaa as they did with Samira Ibrahim? One way to answer the first question is to adopt the Jennifer L. Fluri work on Afghani, Muslim women, post-September 11, 2001. Fluri did a discourse analysis on the activists of The Beauty Academy of Kabul (a center established by American expats for the purpose of teaching Afghani women how to use beauty products). The participation of Miss Afghanistan (sponsored by the U.S.), in the 2003 Miss Universe pageant, and the appearances of famous, Afghani women in famous, American talk shows, like Oprah Winfrey's show, popularized the desire to publicly unveil themselves. Fluri argues that "Afghan women's bodies are unveiled into the beauty parlor in order to reveal feminine corporeal modernity as a significant, and at times 'necessary', link to Western ideals of freedom and liberty" (241). Different scholars (e.g., Brumberg; Jay) assert that the publicly displayed female body plays a crucial role in the process of Western modernity.

Fluri went further by arguing that placing the public (unveiled) body in continual contrast with the private (veiled) body contributes "to the identification of the former as both an example of modernity and, an example of democratic expectations of liberty and freedom" (242). The U.S. beauty magazines did a comparison between Afghani women secretly using beauty products under the Taliban and the usage of beauty products in the U.S. as perceived as normal and expected (Fluri). Fluri asserts that this way of coverage "strengthens the interconnected web of politically and socially produced expectations on the modern feminine body, which acts as a representative space to monitor levels of acceptance to or rejection of Western modernity" (242). Therefore,

“corporeal modernity becomes a public marker for identifying a State’s democratic ideals” (Fluri 242). In summary, non-Western women publicly unveiling, either in TV shows or public events, and adopting certain beauty products and technologies means that they are accepting “Western modern values”. The concept of “corporal modernity” (Fluri) can then be applied to understand the Western enthusiasm to Alyaa’s act of nudity. One can argue that Alyaa’s nakedness was perceived by Western discourses, both media discourses and activism discourses, not only as a form of activism, but as a confirmation of the Western discourse around modernity and liberation.

On the contrary, these Western feminist groups did not organize protests to support the female protesters who went through virginity tests or organized protests to condemn the actions of the military, like stripping girls publicly, like in the case of the “blue bra girl”. The violations of the military of women’s bodies confirmed the Orientalist discourse as men are barbaric and noncivilized and women are passive. Thus, the Western support to women’s issues in Western countries can be very problematic and might be originally built on a racist and oppressive stand.

5. Beyond the Binary of Islamism and Secularism

The conflict in Egypt, especially when it comes to women’s issues is beyond the dichotomy between Islamists and secular people. The reaction to Alyaa El Mahdi’s naked pictures by both an Islamist woman and secular, veteran feminist, Nawal El Saadawi, appeared in the film, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*. She confirms Abuelnaga’s argument that “limiting one’s reading to an analysis of binaries generates a reductionist structuralist analysis that could turn the process of negotiating boundaries into a monolithic unit of meaning” (Abuelnaga 20). The film, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, is mainly based on reading the conflict in Egypt with a lens of there being a binary of either Islamism or secularism. Alyaa El Mahdi traveled to Sweden after seeking political asylum after the threats she received for posting her naked picture.

In Europe, Alyaa joined, FEMEN, a radical feminist organization, that protested nude against various forms of oppression. Alyaa and two other girls protested naked in front against the government of the Muslim Brotherhood in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Sweden. Alyaa and the two other girls were fully naked but wearing long black socks and chain of flowers over their head. Alyaa wrote on her body “Sharia is not Constitution” while covering her vagina by a book with the word “Quran” written on it. The other naked protester wrote on her body “Apocalypse By Mursi” while covering her vagina by book with the word “Torah”. The third woman wrote on her naked body “No Islamism Yes Secularism” while covering her vagina by a book with the word “Bible” written on it. Some Egyptian media covered this protest.

Alyaa’s act triggered a substantial amount of anger in Egypt, especially among Islamists. Islamist-owned media organizations attacked Alyaa. In addition to the media’s attack, an Islamist lawyer, decided to sue Alyaa accusing her of destroying Egypt’s image abroad and demand that the court revoke her Egyptian citizenship at that point, Alyaa was in Europe as an asylum seeker. The filmmaker of *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* went to the lawyer’s house to interview him. The lawyer has three women living with him in his apartment: his mother, his sister, and his wife. The three women wear niqabs. They expressed their upset feelings and frustration from the way Alyaa expressed her refusal toward Islamism. The lawyer’s wife commented on Alyaa’s action by saying: Why does this woman say she's oppressed? How has she been oppressed? Here in Egypt, women can work, they can move about freely. They are not oppressed. And even if this woman were oppressed, she can't express herself in this fashion. It's not possible. If she wants to express herself, she should do it in Egypt. She can even press charges. Here she's posing naked with a Quran. What has the Quran done to her? (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:41:26-00:41:40)

The woman did not agree with the fact that Alyaa opposes oppression in Egypt from abroad. She emphasized that if she wants to oppose anything in Egypt, she must oppose from inside Egypt and not from outside. The last sequence in the film showed the famous feminist militant, Nawal El Saadawi, protesting in Tahrir Square against the Muslim Brotherhood and comforting young adult men, arguing against Islamic Sharia, and explaining to them why secularism is better for everyone. The second scene in the sequence was an interview with El Saadawi. She expressed her refusal to Islamists by saying:

We fought against a military dictatorship Now we're fighting a religious dictatorship And a religious dictatorship is more dangerous than a military one. You can negotiate with the army, even if they shoot real bullets. But dialogue is possible, whereas a religious dictatorship allows no room for dialogue. They speak in the name of God, so how can you question God? (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:48:02-00:49:03)

The filmmaker asked El Saadawi what she thought of Alyaa's choice to protest naked. She replied:

It makes me laugh. A woman with no clothes-- it's as if a man got undressed on the street. It's a cry, a cry by a woman against a regime. That's all it is. Alyaa is now living abroad, but those who want to fight should be here in Egypt. It's difficult to fight for your cause from abroad. (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary* 00:49:03- 00:49:10)

Both the Islamist woman, and secular woman, who spent most of her life in United States of America, believe that opposing patriarchy and fighting for women's liberation in Egypt has to happen from inside Egypt. Despite the fact, that both women belong to two opposite poles in the binary of secularism and Islamism, they agreed on a certain script that activists should follow while protesting. Both of them assert that Alyaa has to follow a certain national script.

History is repeating itself again when it comes to women's activism and protesting against the Egyptian political regime from a foreign country. El Saadawi's position and the Islamist woman's position resembles the historical story of Doria Shafic, when she decided to oppose Nasser's regime from the embassy of India in Cairo. Both the Islamist and the secular women condemned Alyaa's action on a "national basis". Alyaa's action was perceived as "immoral and atheist by both the liberal and the religious parties" (Assaad 106). The nationalist discourse is not only imposed by men and women involved in both the leftist and Islamist movements but is also a part of women's movements that adopt progressive egalitarian agendas. This shows that women's movements have a confused and paradoxical position toward anything that is not Arab. Nawal El Saadawi spent almost all of her life teaching at the United States of America; teaching and participating in different forms of activism for issues related to the sexual rights of Arab and Muslim women. El Saadawi criticized Alyaa for advocating against the Egyptian government from Europe. The consensus between El Saadawi and the Islamist woman towards Alyaa's actions, and the position of the leader of the women's movement in 1960s towards Doria Shafic, confirms Abuelnaga's argument that a binary reading of the event of the Revolution does not give an accurate reading to the complexity of the reality for Egyptian women.

Covered Bodies

On the complete contrary to the documentary, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, the film *Words of Witness*, focused on the story of a young journalist wearing a hijab. The film presents a multifaceted representation of the bodies of Muslim women wearing hijabs. Firstly, new relationships between women who have different understandings and perceptions of their bodies were constituted after the Revolution. Filmmaker, Mai Iskander, is an American filmmaker with a Coptic Egyptian father and a Czech mother. She decided to have Heba Afify, a Muslim, veiled, young girl be the principal character of her film. I would argue that one of the significant

contributions of the Revolution is the establishment of a new form of solidarity and relationships between women who belong to different backgrounds and ideological stands. Only the Revolution was able to bring these women together. Telmissany asserts that the ability of the Revolution to bring people together, who would have unlikely collaborated otherwise, is one of the utopian attributes of the 2011 Revolution. The motivations or the reasons behind Afify (or her sister) wearing a hijab are not discussed in the film. However, Afify's actions in the film challenged many Orientalists' claims that Muslim women are passive and obedient.

Afify's hijab allowed her to be present in heated events. The fact that she is wearing the hijab gives her access to different places that I would argue that she would not be able to access if she were not wearing the hijab. For example, Afify goes to cover a story about a church that was destroyed by some radical, young Islamists located in a small village in the suburbs of Cairo. Afify not only subverts the oppression that the hijab represents, changing it into an opportunity to progress in her professional career, but she is also able to give a voice to a vulnerable community (the Coptic Christian community). I would also claim that many women interviewed by Afify, especially the poor working ones, felt that they could relate to Afify and be very confident while speaking to her as she also wears a hijab. While wearing a hijab may have helped Heba to progress in her professional career, it did not sufficiently protect her from harassment. Heba did not share any sexual harassment or explicitly discuss it in the film. However, on many occasions in the film, we see that Afify is surrounded by men and they try to get close to her to a degree makes her uncomfortable. Afify either had to leave the place or ask the men she was interviewing to move farther from her. In one of the scenes, we see that there is a man who trying to get very close to Afify's back while she is interviewing some people. The man is not only trying to touch Afify's body but is also gazing at her in a very sexualized way. Thus, women's bodies are still very

vulnerable after the Revolution because of the lack of laws that protect women from harassment and also the presence of a misogynist, sexist culture. However, the filmmaker was perfectly able to challenge Orientalists' views on Muslim women wearing hijabs. The Western, dominant discourses frame women in hijabs as oppressed women without any form of agency. However, Mai's film demonstrates how Heba's hijab is empowering.

6. Women's Bodies on the Periphery

A major critique of both the films and most of the scholarly literature on women and the Revolution is that they focused only on women in Tahrir Square. There is a huge blind spot in regard to both the representation in films and scholarly analysis in relation to women on the periphery. We know very little about how the 2011 Revolution contributed to the daily experience of the women who were not actively involved in the Revolution. How did women on the periphery perceive the Revolution? How did the women who couldn't be physically present in Tahrir Square contribute to the Revolution? Filmmaker Anna Roussillon, in her film, *I Am the People*, presented a unique perspective on the pervasive discourse on Egyptian women's agency and bodies after the Revolution. Various scholars have argued that Egyptian women were able to restore their agency and to develop resilient strategies to the mass violence they experienced in the public spaces after the ousting of Mubarak. Shereen Abuelnaga asserts that in response to the state violence toward women, a transformation happened to the women's bodies. "What was disciplined as a docile body turned into a body that revolted. However, the reaction to and interactions with the gendered disciplinary practices were monolithic" (43). This transformation did not happen by any means to women on the periphery (e.g., rural areas, marginalized towns, villages in the South, etc.).

The filmmaker interviewed a family of peasants, including the maincharacter, Faraj. She also interviewed Faraj's female neighbor on the day of the first presidential election after the 2011

Revolution. The lady confirmed that she did not get to vote because she was concerned that if she voted for someone that the police did not want, she might be arrested and beaten by the police. Consequently, her body is still docile and disciplined by police. However, on the other hand, Faraj perceived this election as the first free and fair election in the history of Egypt. Collins and Bilge argue that “fairness is elusive in unequal societies where the rules may seem fair, yet differently enforced through discriminatory practices” (29). The political situation in Egypt was very ambiguous. Thus, Faraj’s female neighbor was confused about which candidate she should support and at the same time, did not want to put herself in troubles with the security services.

It is very paradoxical that women on the periphery did not benefit from the gains gotten for women in the urban cities, women who belonged to a higher socio-economic class or even the overall gains, that Faraj and other men in the village received. On the other side, Faraj’s female neighbor enjoys a privilege that the residents of big cities, like Cairo, and women who live in the upper socio-economic class don’t enjoy. This privilege is the safety. In one of the conversations with Anna, she asserts that unlike the people who live in a big city, people like her who live in small villages, are safe. Safety is not a concern or an issue as most of the residents of the village know each other and protect each from any external threat. Thus, unlike most of the documentaries and scholarship on women in the post-2011 Revolution, sexual harassment did not seem like a problem to the women who spoke in this documentary.

A major important aspect that the film *I Am the People* showed is that women on the periphery enjoy certain privileges that women at the center do not enjoy and vice versa. The women in *I Am the People* did not seem to have a problem with classic patriarchy (the abandonment of the presence of women in public sphere) in the same way as women in urban areas. Women in the village were able to be on the farm and go out to change the gas cylinder during late night without

any objections from the male figures in the family. To be more explicit, women are allowed to occupy public space either to help the economy of the house (in the case of this documentary, to shepherd the animals) or to attain items that will support their tasks in the kitchen. Thus, women belonging to lower-income socio economic class can be present in the public sphere as long they are serving patriarchy. The other important aspect is that some Western scholarly and activist discourses around the issues of women's bodies, both in Egypt and countries with a Muslim-majority, is simplified around women's oppression from the veil.

In the winter that followed the election of the Mohamed Morsi as the president of Egypt, this conversation took place between the filmmaker Anna Roussillon and Faraj's female neighbor:

Faraj's neighbor: Uncle Morsi said he would lower the price of gas. He lied.

Anna: He lied? What do you mean?

Faraj's neighbor: Nothing has changed! Actually, prices have gone up.

Anna: You don't like Morsi?

Faraj's neighbor: I like him. Why shouldn't I?

Anna: I don't know. If he's done nothing, maybe you'd be angry.

Faraj's neighbor: I don't know if I'm happy or not yet. Maybe I don't understand. Like most people.

Anna: Don't you think?

Faraj's neighbor: Anyway, people were afraid of him. But nothing happened. Women with veils, women without. Nothing has changed.

Anna: Not yet.

Faraj's neighbor: I hope he teaches the unveiled ones some manners.

Anna: But who is unveiled here? Nobody!

Faraj's neighbor: The only thing that happens here is poverty! We're no pasha! We don't dress or eat like them. We are just poor fools.

Faraj: You are a poor fool?

Faraj's neighbor: Of course. You think we're like those people. Who eat on plates with forks, knives, and spoons? I only eat if I make the bread myself. Which always wears me out... (*I Am the People 1:12- 1:1:16*)

This short conversation unpacks many important issues related to the tension between Islamists and non-Islamists. Veiling women and controlling women's clothes is always a nonIslamist's primary concern about Islamists holding power. This interview presented that these concerns are very elitist and are about trying to protect the interests of Muslim women, who belong to a specific socio-economic class, and non-Muslim women. However, poor women who live on the periphery, like Faraj's neighbor are not part of this debate. In Egypt, wearing hijabs is the norm for poor women, like the ones who appeared in this documentary. Some feminist scholars assert that these women are wearing hijab as they are bargaining with the patriarchy. Other feminist scholars argue that some women in Egypt, and other Muslim-majority countries, wear hijabs as a way to challenge Western hegemony ideas imposed on them through different ways, including the media.

I would argue that Deniz Kandiyoti's concept of "bargaining with patriarchy" can be used to conceptualize the status of women who are similar to Faraj's female neighbor. Faraj's female neighbor expressed that imposing a hijab or liberating women from it is not her problem. The prices and economic hardship are the significant problems and not the women's clothes. She was able to articulate that the hijab tension is a tension between the women who belong to the upper socio-economic class, who are not suffering economically, and those that are. However, she did

not stop from implicitly saying that she is not part of this conflict but also wished that the president would impose hijabs on these women. Thus, they can suffer, and hopefully, this can create solidarity among women who are suffering from the political regime. This woman had hopes that the Islamist president would be able to achieve more social justice. But, after months of having an Islamist president, nothing improved either on the economic level or the cultural level. Thus, she explicitly said that she is very confused about which position she should take towards the Islamist president.

To conclude to this chapter, I claim that the various documentaries discussed here embody what Collins and Bilge assert regarding the relationship between different structures of power. The gendered practices performed in the public spaces must be understood in relation to the gendered disciplinary practices in the private sphere. Relationality “embraces a both/and frame” (27). Collins and Bilge assert that relationality creates a shift “in perspective and opens up intellectual and political possibilities” (27). Relationality is very crucial in analyzing power because “power is better conceptualized as a relationship, as in power relations, than a static entity” (27). Collins and Bilge determine two important elements related to using intersectionality in analyzing power.

Firstly, “intersectional frameworks understand power relations through a lens of mutual construction. In other words, people’s lives and identities are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways” (26). Consequently, Collins and Bilge argue that “there is no pure racism or sexism” (26) as power gains, meaning when power relations between different systems of oppression are analyzed and the relationship between them is highlighted. Secondly, the following:

Power relations are to be analyzed both via their intersections, for example, of racism and sexism, as well as across domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural, and

interpersonal. These are the structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains of power, respectively. Looking at how power works in each domain can shed light on the dynamics of a larger social phenomenon. (Collins and Bilge 27)

The documentaries show that women in post-Revolution Egypt face an interlocking system of oppression that is produced by various structures of power. These structures contribute to each other and are relational to each other in both the private and public spaces. After Mubarak's ousting from the office, different power structures (mainly the military, Islamist groups, and popular conservative ideologies) contributed to oppressing women through the controlling of their bodies. However, women, as shown in the documentaries, developed various strategies to challenge and subvert the multiple systems of oppression in both the private and public spaces. The next chapter discusses, in detail, the various strategies developed by women to subvert oppression and the embodiment of the intersection of power relations in shaping women's experience in both the private and public spheres.

Chapter 5: Liberation in Both the Private and Public Sphere

On January 24, Asmaa Mahfouz posted a video criticizing the Egyptian government and police brutality. She called the Egyptians to join protesters on January 25, saying:

If you think yourself a man, come with me on 25 January. Whoever says women shouldn't go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on 25 January. Whoever says it is not worth it because there will only be a handful of people, I want to tell him, 'You are the reason behind this, and you are a traitor, just like the president or any security cop who beats us in the streets. (Mahfouz, 00:10:0) The language Asmaa adopted in the video caused a heated debate among female activists and scholars in Egypt. Some rejected the language and criticized Asmaa, arguing that it is confirming gender stereotypes and submitting to patriarchal systems as she was calling men to be present to protect women (Khamis). Other scholars and activists praised her, asserting that this was Asmaa's way of negotiating her agency and that the video was a successful technique to mobilize protesters.

Khamis argued that Asmaa was "asserting the right of women to participate publicly in the political arena and encouraging them to do so, while simultaneously drawing on gender stereotypes, which in Egypt traditionally frame men as women's protectors and defenders" (153). Despite the fact that the language of the video was perceived in different ways, it mobilized masses of people to Tahrir Square.

The film, *The Trials of Spring*, starts with the voice of Hend Nafea, speaking about how she was raised in the village where people had expectations of gender roles. Nafea said:

In the small village where I was raised, they think a girl should stay home and raise the children, but I think girls have a right to their freedom. I believed that the situation in Egypt was wrong and needed to be changed. People have suffered numerous injustices and have seen a lot of corruption. I knew that one day people would take to the streets. I knew I would participate. I went down to Tahrir Square as an Egyptian woman demanding her rights neglected in the past. (*The Trials of Spring* 00:00:11-00:00:18)

At the same time, the filmmaker is showing different pictures for different women in the village who look very poor and are using very primitive tools either to plant the soil or to do their laundry directly in the Nile. Then, Mariam Kirolos said that she knew about the protests from Facebook. She asserts that “no one imagined women in the streets.” (*The Trials of Spring* 00:02:29-00:02:40) However, she mentioned that immediately after Mubarak left office, her first wish for

Egypt, after the ousting of Mubarak, was the end of sexual harassment. Along the same lines, Mama Khadiga asserts that for her, the 18 days of the Revolution were “transformative.” She assumes that “women were at least 50 percent of the revolution, maybe more” (*The Trials of Spring* 00:00:53-00:00:58). The three comments above show that women actively participated in the Revolution to express their refusal on issues that were both related to the public sphere but also the private sphere. The pictures shown are of poor women sitting on the ground in front of their homes in the suburb of Cairo. They are shown as Hend’s voice is played and this develops strong links between women’s issues in the private and public sphere.

In one of the early scenes of the film, *I Am the People* by Anna Roussillon, the filmmaker filmed Marwa (Faraj's daughter) watching the trial of Mubarak. The following conversation took place between Marwa and Anna:

Marwa: How awful! Why don't you want to die? Just die and you can rest!

Marwa: Honestly? If I was the judge in this trial. I would sentence him to death. Right away. Without calling witnesses and that fuss. That's all. Anyway, the country doesn't want him. Why should he live?

Anna (voice behind the camera): What do you think about the revolution?

Marwa: I'll tell you something: Every Revolution has good and bad sides. And there are more bad ones than good ones.

Anna (voice behind the camera): Bad sides? What do you mean?

Marwa: The president hasn't been sentenced yet. The economy is still stalled. Nothing works properly in the country. And all this destruction. It's like destroying your house with your own hands.

Anna (voice behind the camera): What are the good sides?

Marwa: That the Revolution happened. That we're going from bad to good. And that the president resigned. That's all. Nothing more.

Anna (voice behind the camera): And what happened here?

Marwa: Where?

Anna (voice behind the camera): Here, in the village.

Marwa: Nothing at all. [It's] as if nothing had ever happened. (*I Am the People* 30:0034:00)

That conversation sheds the light on the fact that the people on the periphery did not collect any gains from the Revolution, but instead, their lives were made harder because of the

economic hardship and political unrest Egypt witnessed after the toppling of Mubarak. Even though Marwa is poor and lives in a very primitive house with no internet connection, she still has some social indicators that protect her. Her father is educated and also has means to pay for the cost of living. Other girls who are the same age, through social circumstances, were forced to get married to older men (Allam). Some informants Allam interviewed for her book, *Women and The Egyptian Revolution: Engagement and Activism During the 2011 Arab Uprisings* spoke about the realities families faced post-Revolution. Rania Ramadan, a facilitator at the Population Council project, *Niqdar Nisharak (We Can Participate)*, told her that there are some families who were really afraid that they couldn't protect their young daughters during the security vacuum that happened in Egypt after the Revolution, so they forced them into marriage as a way to protect them (Allam). Another informant from another small city, located in the middle of the Nile Delta, called El Mahla El Kobra, told Allam the same thing. The economic hardship, the dominance of corruption, and the absence of security apparatuses developed the conditions for families to force young girls aged, 14–15 years old, to marry older men (Allam). Marwa's comment and the stories Allam documented in her book show that the Revolution did not benefit but may have damaged areas and caused hardship for some people who are on the extreme periphery, either because of their geographic location (anywhere that is not Cairo) or because of their position at the lower socio-economic ladder.

These anecdotes raise important questions regarding the public and private status of women's spheres, the paradox of liberation, and various forms of political, societal, and patriarchal barraging within domestic spheres and public spheres. These anecdotes reflect the complexities and the paradox of women's everyday politics. Therefore, it is important to define politics, especially the meaning of politics from feminist standpoint.

Elizabeth Frazer posits that the most common definition of *politics* is “the practice of, and the study of power to govern” (50). Political scientists, like Bernard Crick and Philip, emphasized defining politics as the practice of governing in a particular way. They identified certain attributes. Governing should be done through institutions that are public and these institutions adopt nonviolent mechanisms and by referencing to the people who are governed (Frazer 51).

Frazer argues that political theory is divided into analytically distinct but connected forms: perspective political theory and descriptive political theory (51). The former focuses on how governance should be done and the latter focuses on how legitimate governance can be done. Thus, researchers who study perspective political theory focus on analyzing what “ideals should be realized, or at least must not be undermined by government, if the government is to be legitimate” (51). Therefore, concepts like equality, rights, freedom, obligation, and justice are researched within the discourses of perspective political theory.

Researchers who focus on descriptive political theory analyze concepts and phenomena such as authority, power, law, decision making, and judgment. The study of these concepts helps researchers to better understand how a legitimate government can be achieved. Frazer’s major critique is that political theory develops a clear distinction between public and private. Going back to the writings of Aristotle, Hegel, and Rousseau, and liberal theorists like Locke and Mill, Frazer argues that these philosophers developed a distinction between the private domestic world and public political world. The public political world was described as the masculine and the private domestic world was described as the feminine. This distinction between the private and public “managed to take for granted and to reinforce women’s exclusion, qua women, from politics” (Frazer 51). Thus, feminist scholars, especially feminist political theorists, worked to challenge and subvert this distinction.

According to Frazer, feminist activists and theorists assert that change within governmental and political institutions will not bring the desired social change. Feminist political theory expanded the focus to analyze power dynamics beyond government institutions. Frazer posits that feminist political theory involves the following:

Modelling and empirically scrutinising the connections between events and changes in State government and government policy, changes in laws, social relations in institutions like firms and households, and in locations like streets and homes, and finally meanings and values constructed and expressed in popular culture, and other cultural practices like the conduct of sexual and romantic relations, or pastimes like going to the pub. (54)

Frazer categorized feminist activism to create a real social change into four forms of activism. Frazer's Model is mainly developed based on Western women, but one can argue that it also applies to Egyptian women's activism. Firstly, women organized campaigns for a specific legislative change. In Egypt, women organized many campaigns for specific legislation amendments, changing the articles related to divorce in the personal status law to have the right of divorce for themselves (Bakr) Secondly, women organized themselves for non-legislative purposes, like increasing the number of women into the parliament and other influential positions. Egyptian women developed their activism through the state institutions in Egypt and were able to implement the quota system in the legislative system (Kamal). Thirdly, there is some feminist activism that is organized around developing pressure for formal social change, but it is mainly working on informal change like providing safe spaces for survivors of violence. In 1993, a group of Egyptian, female physicians established El Nadeem Center against Violence and Torture as a space for violence survivors and feminist research⁷. Fourthly, women organized themselves in

⁷ <https://elnadeem.org/?lang=en>

cultural organizations and collectives involved in various forms of culture production, ranging from film productions to book publishing.

Frazer's main objective was to refute political theorists' position on the feminist slogan of "personal is political" as political theorists argue that this slogan is "lacks consistency, that it has totalitarian implications" (50). Frazer concluded in her research that "first, feminists are inclined to reject politics as such as a man's game. The emphasis rather is on social change and transformation by other than political means. Second, though, there is a move to reconstruct the concept and practice of politics - to insist that activity in personal and social life is political" (57). Capitalizing on Frazer, this chapter's main objective is to analyze the activities of Egyptian women in the context of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution in their public, personal, and social life, and to understand how Egyptian women's activism in the public sphere was connected to and contributed to their activism in the private sphere.

1. The Question of Identification

The identification strategies, developed by Iris Young, (discussed in chapter 3), are used to analyze how the protesters identified themselves and how the various political events that took place in the years followed the toppling of Mubarak contributed to their identification methods. The documentaries show that Egyptians, both those who were actively involved in the protests and the ones who were not active and involved in the protests have developed different identification strategies after the toppling of Mubarak. There are three common identification strategies in most of the films: identification with the military, identification with the Islamists, and identification with the protesters. These identifications strategies were dynamic and changed over time due to

various complex and paradoxical factors. The next sub-sections focus on the various elements that construct these identification strategies.

Identification with the Military

Different documentaries filmed the euphoric way the protesters welcomed the military tanks to Tahrir Square on January 28. The military took over as the internal police systems collapsed after many violent attacks on police stations and security buildings. Documentaries showed that protesters welcomed the tanks chanting “the people and the military are one hand”. One can argue that protesters developed this framing strategy for three reasons: Firstly, protesters might have been afraid the military would become violent and use excessive violence toward them (which started to happen a few weeks after the toppling of Mubarak). Therefore, protesters, through this chanting, were trying to make the military identify itself as a very powerful institution with the people and not with the ruling elite. Secondly, generally speaking, the military is a symbol of masculinity, conservatism, and patriarchy. Therefore, a huge number of people in a country like Egypt, where conservatism and patriarchy are dominant and pervasive, would welcome and even call for a conservative institution, like the military, to rule and dominate in order to maintain patriarchal power. As a result, this chant can function in an opposite way to the first identification strategy as it is the people (the majority of them) who want to identify themselves with a masculine patriarchal organization that maintains the system but hopefully better than Mubarak did.

The frame of “the people and military are one hand” did not last long as the military became brutally violent in dealing with protesters and even causing some big massacres against different groups, like practicing virginity tests on women, killing sports fans in Port Said, killing Christian protesters in front of television buildings, killing peaceful protesters organizing a sit-in

beside the building of interior affairs on Mahmoud Street. All these brutal attacks had an important contribution to the change of the dynamics of the relationship between the people and the military. However, this research focuses only on attacks related to women. One can argue that to better understand the dynamic process of the construction of the identification process, one should understand that the polarization contributed to the formation of that historical period.

The documentaries I analyze here show, with different degrees, that polarization is a dominant characteristic for the period after Mubarak. It is clear in the films that Egyptians who were unified during the 18 days of the Revolution became polarized in the months after it. Not only polarized regarding political ideologies, but also in terms of what should be next. For example, the film documented the considerable debate among Egyptians on if there should be a new constitution first or an election first. Both ambiguity and polarization played a crucial role in shaping the citizens daily life in post-revolutionary Egypt.

Filmmaker Mai Iskander, in her film *Words of Witness*, indicated that the period after the ousting of Mubarak was mainly characterized by ambiguity and polarization. Afify, her colleagues, her family, and everyone in the film appear to be confused and not able to take a clear stance regarding the actions that should be made after the Revolution. The position towards the military was one of the significant sources of confusion and ambiguity. The military was perceived as the protector of the Revolution. Thus, the people during the later half of the 18 days of the Revolution and a few weeks after the Revolution were chanting “the people and the military are one hand.” However, this doesn’t last long as the military, who was ruling the country under SCAF, between the ousting of Mubarak and the election of Mohamed Morsi in the first presidential elections in June 2012, started to oppress the people through torturing, arresting, and even killing protesters

and exercising virginity tests on female protesters. The chant then transformed into “down down the military rule”, from as early as May 2011.

In *The Trials of Spring*, Reticker filmed protesters chanting “the people and the military are one hand” among other pictures of the protesters celebrating the presence of the military in Tahrir Square. Reticker interviewed two women who were very active during the 18 days of the Revolution and also the days after the toppling of Mubarak: A woman in her early fifties, called Mama Khadiga, and woman in her early twenties, called Mariam Kirolos. Mama Khadiga said that “the military uniform did not matter to us. It belonged to all of us. It was our army. The Revolution unites one thought and one love: the Love of Egypt”. Kirolos also said that she chanted “people and the military are one hand” (*Trials of Spring 00-14-01*). This utopia did not last long as March 8, 2011, marked a new era in Tahrir Square, especially regarding the presence of women in the public sphere and the chant changed to “Down Down the fall of military rule”. The position of female activists, like Mama Khadiga and Mariam Kirolos, completely changed as the military started to oppress protests and brutally violate women’s rights.

Identification with the Islamists

The majority of the films portrayed that the main conflict in the post-Mubarak era is between Islam and secularism. The majority of the documentaries and media coverage of the Revolution (Allam) depicted the conflict in Egypt as a conflict between the Islamists and secularism. A documentary, like *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*, focused on the notion that Islamism is the cause of women’s struggle in Egypt in the post-revolutionary period. “Limiting one’s reading to an analysis of binaries generates a reductionist structuralist analysis that could turn the process of negotiating boundaries into a monolithic unit of meaning” (Abuelnaga 20). This

binary reading leads to an obscure understanding of the Egyptian's women's experience in postrevolutionary Egypt.

One can argue that both Islamists and some Western Orientalists equally contributed to the construction of this binary. Both Islamists and some Western Orientalists amalgamate Islam and political Islam. This inaccurate representation is constructed to serve their political agenda. It is defiantly obvious that both Islamists and Western Orientalists have completely different political agendas. However, in different occasions, both of them can adopt the same political tactics to achieve their agenda. There is no hegemonic understanding of what Islam is among Muslims, as Muslims are not only in Egypt but everywhere in the world. Saba Mahmoud posits that some Egyptians “understand Islam as a doctrinal system with a strong political and juridical implications for the organization of state and society” while other Egyptians “see Islam first and foremost as individual and collective practices of pious living” (35). Islamists adopt the doctrinal definition of Islam, perceived as a political project. Therefore, both religious practices and political tactics are inseparable and contribute to one another. In other words, Islamists make no distinction between the private and the public. Ironically, one can argue that the feminist understanding of the personal is political can be used as a framework to understand the perception of the Islamists. For them, Islam is not a personal issue but a political framework that is used to rule and control populations and organize citizens with a certain political structure.

The depiction of the conflict between the binary of political Islam and Madanyia (civil state) is depicted in most of the documentaries. The documentaries showed this conflict in various ways and at different levels. The efforts of various Islamists groups, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, to grab the power is shown both on the official level and the popular level. The documentaries showed how Islamists were trying to occupy physical spaces (Tahrir

Square and podiums at Mosques) and mediated spaces (mainly TV stations), in order to control the state and control people's personal life. The film showed that the people's reactions and the identification process of political Islam changed from the period of Mubarak's fall on February 11, 2011, until the outbreak of mass protests against the first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi, in the history June 30, 2013. There are two important factors that contributed highly to the evolution of the people's association/disassociation from Islamism: 1. Islamist parties winning the majority of parliamentary seats in November 2011; 2. The victory of Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate of the presidential elections in June 2012.

The Oscar-nominated documentary, *The Square*, by Jehane Noujaim, perfectly depicted that practicing Islam is not a private matter. Tahrir Square's space was always a battle between followers of different Islamist groups and non-Islamist protesters. This conflict turned around which political power could occupy Tahrir Square and which activities they could do/practice. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood occupied the Tahrir Square each Friday for the Noon prayer. Noujaim filmed the prayer with a wide shot showing thousands of men wearing the traditional dress (white short Ghalaybia) praying. The Muslim Brotherhood was delivering a message that they are the only political power that could mobilize people. Thus, praying was converted from being a private issue to a tool used to dominate and control the public sphere.

The battle with Islamism did not only take place in Tahrir Square but also in private spheres. Various documentaries depicted that different individuals adopted various identification processes with Islamist groups. The director of *The Trials of Spring* interviewed two of the main characters in the documentary a few weeks after the victory of Mohamed Morsi. The filmmaker interviewed both Mariam Kirillos and Mama Khadiga about their perspective of the Muslim Brotherhood winning. Both of them expressed their fear and concerns regarding Islamists.

The two women are completely different in terms of religion affiliation and age. Mariam Kirolos is in her early twenties. It can be assumed from Kirolos' last name that she belongs to the Coptic Christian community, the biggest religious minority in the Middle East; although, she never explicitly spoke about her religious identity. Mama Khadiga is a Muslim who used to wear a hijab before the Muslim Brotherhood took over power. In the interview with both women, they spoke about their feelings on Mohamed Morsi winning the presidential elections.

In the interview, Mariam expressed her concerns regarding the freedom of speech and expression under the Islamic rule. She said: "People were accused of blasphemy and many of them are Christians, so it was frightening when Morsi came to Power" (*The Trials of Spring* 00:25:1700:25:37) Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood taking over power pushed some Egyptians to identify themselves through their religion and not as equal Egyptian citizens, which was a stark contrast from the way they were acting at the beginning of the 18-day Revolution. Much of the film and media coverage for the 18 days, before the toppling of Mubarak, emphasized the unity between

Muslims and Christians by showing protests carrying a crescent (symbol of Islam) and a cross (symbol of Christianity). Many researchers and writers (Al-Asway; Allam; Amin; El Nagar and Abo-Dawood; Korany and El Mahdi; Louer) assert that protesters and activists neglected their differences in terms of gender, religion, and political ideologies and expressed unity. Capitalizing on the work of Gamson and Snow and Benford on framing theory, Allam asserts that protesters adopted a "citizen frame" (75) during the 18 days of the protests against Mubarak. The objective of this frame was aimed at building solidarity and legitimizing their demands. Mariam's comment in the interview reflects that the "citizen frame" is not valid anymore. The Muslim Brotherhood's policies and position towards women's issues and religious minorities created divisions among

Egyptians. The Muslim Brotherhood's actions made Egyptians choose not to identify themselves to the state as citizens but to identify themselves through their religion.

In the same scene, Mama Khadiga was interviewed. The filmmaker asked her the same question about her perspective on the Muslim Brotherhood taking over power. Mama Khadiga replied:

When the Brotherhood took power, it was the first time. I was afraid. They called us, and they told us what was permitted and what was forbidden. I took my headscarf off with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. I didn't want to like them. So, I took off the veil. I mean, those who say it's forbidden for a woman to speak to a man and so on, you are not dealing with someone who has principles. To them, you're a blasphemer, and so you must die. You can't object. (*The Trials of Spring* 00:25:39-00:25:59)

The footage that accompanies this interview was of members of the Muslim Brotherhood attacking some prominent female activists, like leftist veteran, Shahenda Maklad. The footage also shows Mama Khadiga herself, showing pictures of herself participating in different protests while she was wearing a hijab. However, the practices of the Muslim Brotherhood towards women and women's issues made many women, including Mama Khadiga, develop a novel identification strategy towards Islam. Mama Khadiga's removal of the hijab indicates two important elements in the process of self-identification. Firstly, identity is not static, but it changes overtime. Secondly, the political events that take place in public places play an important role in the identification process. Thirdly, the hijab has to be understood in three main contexts: religious, political, and historical. It is not clear why Mama Khadiga wore the hijab in the first place, but it can be argued that she wore it as a political statement as a form of resistance to Westernization and an assertion

to authenticity. But she removed the hijab to make a political statement against the political actions of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Islamist movements in Egypt, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, targeted the Egyptian middle-class by convincing them that they were providing an alternative modernization to the imperial one (Badran; Haddad; Hatem). Women's clothes were a crucial tool to express this alternative Islamic modernization. Numerous women, like Mama Khadiga, removed the hijab a few months after Morsi took over the presidency and stopped identifying themselves with the Islamist's modernization (Hafez). The violence practiced against female protesters by the supporters of the Islamists, post-Mubarak's resignation, in public places, which was widely posted in both mainstream media and social media, caused many Muslim women, like Mama Khadiga, to form a new identity for the hijab. Women, like Mama Khadiga, start to reconceptualize the hijab, not as an Islamic dress that is embodying culture authenticity against Western imperialism, but as embodiment of the control of Islamists over women's body.

The characters in the documentary, *I Am the People*, present another good example of the dynamics and evolution of the process of identification. The film, *I Am the People*, showed a very interesting perspective on the evolution of the identification of people who are not politically active or involved in the everyday politics of Tahrir Square. The film showed two interesting characters: Faraj, who is a peasant struggling economically to feed his family, and Harajiyyé Abdo, his female neighbour.

A significant tension appeared in the film between Anna (the filmmaker) and Faraj around supporting/opposing the Muslim Brotherhood. I would argue that this conflict broke out because both Anna and Faraj have a different perception of Islam. Anna perceived the Islamist President Mohamed Morsi, as a dictator, who was manipulating the people of Islam. On the other hand, Faraj

perceived Mohamed Morsi as the president of all Egyptians, and thought he did not belong to the Muslim Brotherhood anymore once he became the president of Egypt. Mahmoud's theory can be used to conceptualize Faraj's position towards Mohamed Morsi.

At the early stages of the film, Faraj believes that Islam is a political system exactly like democracy. In late November 2012, former President Mohamed Morsi issued a presidential decree giving himself unconstitutional power. Thus, Anna and Faraj had a heated debate on the impact of that presidential decree on the advancement of democracy in Egypt post-Revolution. Anna was debating with Faraj that the decree is an act against democracy. However, Faraj explicitly says that Islam as a political system and is better than democracy because Islam (as a political doctrine) will bring justice. By bringing justice, Egypt will be a strong nation that can compete with Western countries. Faraj did not perceive Anna's criticism to the actions of Morsi as a threat to the evolution of democracy after the Revolution, but as a worry about the Islamist president being able to build a stable Egypt that can stand in the face of Western countries.

In a very assertive voice, Faraj told Anna that "the Western countries didn't want justice for us" (*I Am the People 1:25:16*). Faraj not only emphasized the dichotomy of "us" (Arabs and Muslims) and "them" (the Westerners), but he also questioned the effectiveness of the Western political system. Faraj mentioned the example of the United States of America supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and their support of the corrupt Saudi Royal family, as examples of his doubt regarding Western countries and their role in the Arab World. This confrontational conversation between Anna and Faraj reflects the many complex issues related to the interpretation of the role of Islamism in politics.

Firstly, Anna is a French Egyptian. However, Faraj deals with her as a fellow Egyptian and does not give much attention to her being French as well. This identification changed when Anna

started criticizing Mohamed Morsi and his Islamist government. In that moment, Faraj identified Anna with the colonizer power. Thus, Faraj, at this stage, did not want to critically engage in a rational discussion on the effectiveness of the Muslim Brotherhood in power.

Secondly, capitalizing on the work of Saba Mahmoud, Islam is perceived by some as only a personal faith and by others as a political system. In the case of Faraj, these two positions toward Islam are not mutually exclusive. Muslims can change their position towards Islam based on the context. Faraj, at that specific moment, changed his perception towards Islam from perceiving it as a personal faith to a political project that can implement justice and challenge unjust Western political systems.

Thirdly, this scene can raise an analytical question regarding the best way to have a conversation that aims to challenge political Islamism, with citizens like Faraj, without being confrontational, and framed in a way that is perceived as an attack on Islam and not actually political. Anna and Faraj perceived the former presidential decree in a completely different and oppositional way. Anna's perspective was that this decree was a severe constitutional violation and that Morsi did that to protect himself and his political group (the Muslim Brotherhood). On the complete contrary, Faraj perceived this step as the only way to overcome the challenges the deep state and Western powers were producing to hinder Morsi's capacity to govern. That confrontational conversation between Anna and Faraj raise some questions about what was the best way to speak with citizens with limited education and limited access to technology about the disadvantages of Islamism. Anna constructed her arguments focusing on the undemocratic actions and deeds of Islamists. However, it could be argued that criticism should include an evaluation of their economic and political platforms and should go beyond how the followers of political Islam are using Islam to achieve personal benefits.

Faraj's support of Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood did not last long as daily life problems started to increase, like the food prices got higher and higher, electricity shortages increased, and various food items disappeared from the market. In June 30, mass protests broke out against Morsi everywhere in Egypt. Faraj participated in the mass protests against Morsi, justifying his participation by the fact that he felt that he should support the protests against Morsi, so the country could become more stable and the economy could improve. He was also convinced that Western countries would do anything to remove the current Islamist president of Egypt.

There are two major characters in Anna's film: Faraj, and his female neighbour. The interactions between Anna and that woman are very interesting as the relationship between them evolved in a very interesting way when factoring in the political public events. The film started with the woman sitting under a palm tree and Anna is filming her. The woman is calling Faraj and asking him to take Anna away as she doesn't want to be filmed. Then a development happens in the relationship between the two women. The woman starts to identify with Anna on the basis of gender. The woman starts asking Anna why she was not married and wishes that she gets married soon. Anna follows the woman to her place where the woman shepherds the goats, and during the evening, when the woman had to go bring a gas cylinder from the distributor. Bringing a gas cylinder home was a very hard process as the months and years after the toppling of Mubarak witnessed an energy crisis.

The relationship between Anna and the woman completely changed after Morsi won the presidential elections. She started to identify Anna as the foreigner concerned about Egypt being ruled by an Islamist. The woman who did not go vote (the reasons why she did not vote is discussed in the next chapter) was so happy and enthusiastic about Morsi's victory. She told Anna: "we finally elected a new president and you made fun of him? What matters is that we have a new

president. We'll see if he'll allow you to come here again, you bastard!" (*I Am the People* 00:039:)

However, this enthusiasm did not last long. In the winter of 2012, the country's economy was performing very badly. People who lived on the extreme periphery, like that woman and Faraj, were suffering the most. Anna interviewed that woman almost eight months after the inauguration of Mohamed Morsi. She was complaining and suffering from the economic hardship.

The "Blue Bra incident" was also another turning point as Islamists always portrayed women's clothes, not as a personal choice, but as a political tool to resist imperialism and the local government that they always claimed was blindly following the West. Therefore, for a long time, covering women's bodies was (and still is) a tool that Islamists depict as tool of resistance for both local government and imperialism. But it seems that this depiction was not valid when Islamists were in power. Islamist media and politicians decided not to condemn the military brutal action, but question if the girl hijab's was appropriate or not (Hafez). The irony is that after the mass protest that followed the stripping of the girl, the military spokesperson publicly apologized and promised to investigate the instance (Hafez). One can argue that the reaction of the "blue bra girl" impacted the perception of Egyptians (mainly women) in two major ways. Firstly, it clearly showed that they were using religion to serve their political agenda and interests and not as a matter of principle. Secondly, Kandiyoti asserted that Muslim women wear hijabs in Muslim-dominated countries as form of bargaining with the patriarchy. The deal was women would wear hijabs, and in return, they will be granted safety in public places. However, the reaction of Islamists could be considered as a breach of this deal. As a result, many women started to question their identification strategy regarding Islamist movements and even some religious practices, like wearing hijabs.

The attack on veteran leftist activist, Shahanda Maklad, by an Islamist in front the presidential place in the winter of 2013, was another important event that impacted the reputation of Islamists negatively. Older women in Muslim/Arab communities are a source of wisdom and authority within families (Jayawardena; Kandiyoti; Moghadam). Therefore, the picture of the Islamist man putting his hands on the mouth of Shahenda Maklad become very popular and even become more popular when famous female cartoonist, Doaa eL-Adl, reproduced this picture in one of her famous cartoons documenting various dissent activities. The documentary, *The Trials of Spring*, presented both the real picture and the cartoons while Mama Khadiga was speaking about her decision to remove her hijab. Therefore, the public acts of the Islamists contradicted these well-embedded beliefs in private spaces that led that some women, like Mama Khadiga, to perceive Islamists and her religious beliefs differently. A. Mhajne and Whetstone analyzed the different dissent strategies developed by women in the post-Mubarak era. A. Mhajne & Whetstone focused on the women who developed the political frame of motherhood in their activism. In their research, they analyzed various protests that took place against the Muslim Brotherhood and the Supreme Armed Forces. A. Mhajne & Whetstone interviewed many of these women who participated in the protests against the Muslim Brotherhood government. A. Mhajne & Whetstone asserts that these women perceived that:

The Muslim Brotherhood betrayed the Egyptian revolution, and women used their status as mothers of the nation to delegitimize and reduce public support, thereby putting the Brotherhood in a difficult position: they could not denigrate those whom they had promoted as respectable, hyper visible citizens, the bearers of Egyptian citizens and the nurturers of Egyptian culture. (63)

The position of the Muslim Brotherhood towards women and especially women's activism after they held power made many women change both their ideological and political positions towards them.

In summary, one can argue that what happened in Afghanistan by the Taliban's authority and "gendered management and control over public space subverted the power of the family-scale decision-making around various issues that involved gender, the body and mobility. And many Afghan families the Taliban's edicts in a variety of ways" (Fluri 244). Therefore, Egyptians who are very religious (whether they are Christians or Muslims) and dominantly conservative, rejected Islamists after they held power. They did so because the Islamists' public acts contradicted their long history of political discourse, related to women in private and public spheres. More importantly, their acts showed that their ideologies and actions are not capitalized on principles, but on political pragmatism.

Identification within the Protesters

Most of the documentaries focused on the binary of Islamism and Madaniya. However, it is important to question the relationship and identification strategies developed within activist groups that are not identified with Islamist movements. Hend Nafea, one of the major characters in *The Trials of Spring* decided to rebel against her family's patriarchal ideas and left her family's house in the suburbs to live by herself in Cairo to be able to practice her political activism. She worked as a researcher at Hisham Mubarak's Center for legal support. This center is established and managed by a group of radical leftists who present themselves as progressive. Hend experienced various forms of oppression and violence because of her political activism. The military police arrested and sexually assaulted her in late November 2011. She was then released

but continued to have a court case, as the military police accused her of vandalising government buildings.

Her employer appointed a lawyer from the center to follow her case. However, even though this lawyer was working for a progressive leftist organization, he identified his relationship to Hend, not only as a legal case, but also as a sister and daughter. In an interview with him, while going to the court to represent Hend in front of the court, he says:

This case is particularly difficult for me because Hend is my colleague first and foremost, before being her lawyer. The problem is that I felt like a doctor who's operating on a relative, or one of his children. I consider her like my little sister." (*The Trials of Spring* 00:23:24-00:23:40)

The lawyer's words can be conceptualized by using the term 'domestication of female public bravery'" (Allam 34). Allam suggests that this term "describes how women's participation has been framed and celebrated using domestic vocabulary.... The domestication of female activism serves to contain the effects of women's public activism and maintain gender hierarchies" (34). Thus, female protesters are not seen as equal to their male counterparts but as an extension to their male counterparts, even within activist and progressive communities in Egypt.

Several scholars (Al-Bady et al.; Al-Mansi; A. Ibrahim; O. Ibrahim; Saiid) who analyzed the representation of female activists in different media platforms concluded that in most of the coverage, women were presented as the "daughter of"; "wife of" and so forth. Allam posits that while "such representations may reflect culture norms in Egyptian society, they arguably contribute to reinforcing women's image as a dependent, particularly if the coverage places great and/or sole emphasis on them" (54). Thus, Hend, in both her private circles (her home and her work), is perceived by her domestic role as sister, daughter, etc. and not as equal to men. The story

of Hend Nafea and her lawyer who supposedly belongs to a leftist progressive organization represents the problem of dealing with women as an incomplete, dependent person who has to depend on a man is a common discourse, despite the political ideology.

The documentaries presented different identification strategies developed both by the protesters and state officials after the Revolution. For example, in the film, *The Trials of Spring*, Mariam Kirolos, one of the main three female characters in the film mentions that after the attack on the women's march on March 8 and 9, a high-ranking military officer told a TV reporter that "we shouldn't feel any sympathy or solidarity with these female protesters as they are not like our daughters, sisters or women at home" (*The Trials of Spring* 00:12:10-00:12:15). I argue that this military officer was trying to legitimize the attack by implicitly positing that these female protesters deviated from the "norm." Thus, at the same time maintaining a specific identification strategy. Consequently, from his perspective, it is legitimized to attack these women and discipline them, so they return to the "norm."

In the same context, Hend Nafea narrated that when she was arrested by a military force, the first thing they did before beating and sexually harassing her was remove the veil from her head. She mentions that they did the same with all the girls who were arrested. Thus, I argue that these soldiers needed first to strip the girls from the hijab to differentiate them from the women they encounter in their private sphere, mainly their home. However, the identification pattern with protesters continues with Hend, to her house, after she was released. Hend's family responded to her arrest and sexual assault by punishing her and imprisoning her within the house. She mentions in an interview that the male figures in her family (her uncle, brother, and grandfather) were very angry against her and not only blamed her but decided to ground her. Hend mentioned that her family told her "You brought us shame. You (...) My whole family was afraid, of course they

were. They were threatened. They could have lost their jobs. My aunt said, “I can't face people in the village” (*The Trials of Spring* 00:14:10-00:14:30). In this situation, patriarchy and oppression were both produced and maintained by men and women alike. However, the reaction of Hend’s family is two-fold. Firstly, the cultural aspect, as Hend’s presence in the public sphere and her political activism are considered as deviant to what the family considered as the “norm.” Thus, she should be punished on her deviance. Hend’s family did not blame the perpetrators. Hend’s family believed they were doing their role in disciplining these deviant women. Secondly, the security forces threatened Hend’s family in their work and private life if they did not discipline Hend. Thus, the military -the new authority- decided to threaten people in their private spheres to maintain its power in the public sphere. Hend’s family incarcerated her and confiscated her cell phone for 55 days.

Hend decided not to speak with anyone anymore and to organize a domestic protest in her house by posting papers with revolutionary chants and slogans all over the house. One of these chants was “Revolution in every house in Egypt.” Hend’s incarceration experience made her aware that women’s emancipation in the private sphere and the public sphere should happen simultaneously. Finally, Hend was able to leave the house and move to Cairo and live by herself and join her fellow activists to celebrate the first anniversary of the Revolution.

A girl’s honor in Arab and Muslim-dominated countries and communities is owned collectively by the family and community where she comes from (Kandiyoti; Miller). Thus, women and girls don’t have full control over their bodies and over their actions. The consequences of their actions will not only be applied to them but to the people around them. Kandiyoti argues that women develop different strategies in dealing with the patriarchy according to the available objective gains in each situation and based on the context. Women might collaborate with

patriarchy, develop various forms of passive and active resistance. Kandiyoti argues that it is important to distinguish between two crucial aspects: the degrees of patriarchal oppression vis-à-vis the complex nuanced position of women with respect to power/disempowerment. Patriarchy is definitely not monolithic (Anzilotti; Hardwick; Kandiyoti; Clark & Lee; Miller; Sa'ar) and women's responses also vary, not only from one woman to another, but also in the ways the same woman can respond to various forms and/or degrees of patriarchy differently based on the situation. Kandiyoti argues that some women benefit from unequal gender arrangements based on their age and familial situations. Kandiyoti asserts that mothers and mothers-in-laws hold a special place and power within the family. Therefore, women in these roles are likely to reproduce patriarchal discourses rather than resist them. This theoretical backdrop is important to analyze various examples presented in various documentaries.

2. Different Shades of Motherhood

Motherhood is a common theme in most of the documentaries on the Egyptian Revolution. In this analysis, motherhood is understood in two major forms: political motherhood (Mhajne & Whetstone) and motherhood in terms of the relationship between daughters and their mothers. Despite the fact that both forms were applied differently, there are commonalities between them. The first commonality is that by analyzing the two forms, a better understanding will happen of the complex power structures that constitute Egyptian women's experiences (both the ones who were politically active and the ones who are not). "Power relations are to be analyzed both via their intersections, for example, of racism and sexism, as well as across domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal" (Collins and Bilge 27). One can argue that the

motherhood framework deconstructs the different ways women navigate and negotiate with present power across various domains. Secondly, the framework of motherhood better explains the relationality of power domains.

Power is better conceptualized as a relationship, as in power relations, than a static entity.

Power is not a thing to be gained or lost as in the zero-sum conceptions of winners and losers on the football playing field. Rather, power constitutes a relationship. (Collins & Bilge 28)

The coming section on motherhood discusses how women, after the toppling of Mubarak, were navigating their agency within complex domains of power that are related to each other in both the private and public spheres. The second commonality between the two forms of motherhood is the constant bargaining. In the political motherhood, women are bargaining with the patriarchy by presenting themselves as mothers to be present in the public sphere. In the other form, the girls are constantly bargaining with their mothers who are reproducing complex oppressive patriarchal discourses.

The various documentaries on the Revolution showed that both patriarchy and masculinity are embedded in the culture. The various documentaries showed that Egyptian women are not homogenous. The documentaries showed that there were (and still are) some women fighting for freedom and an egalitarian society while other women are assisting men in maintaining oppressive and patriarchal structures. Stories of different young girls negotiating their agency within their households showed two important aspects in relation to the patriarchy: 1. In most of the cases, mothers are the ones maintaining the patriarchy and not fathers, 2. Class plays a vital role in shaping the power of the patriarchy and sometimes in a very paradoxical way. “Patriarchy in this specific instance becomes a social role which is endorsed by men and women alike” (Telmissany

4). Sa'ar & Younis asserts that masculinity is “never singular.” Masculinity constituted of various models that “coexist and inform one another” (Sa'ar & Younis 306). An important aspect of these models is that masculine ideologues “may be enacted by men and women, although at the level of individual experience they are likely to affect men more acutely” (Sa'ar & Younis 307). It is important to highlight that “masculinities are sustained and enacted by individuals, but also by groups and institutions and cultural forms such as mass media” (Sa'ar & Younis 307). Therefore, the fight for justice and egalitarianism not only took place in Tahrir Square but also in family homes.

Mama Khadiga

Mama Khadiga is a middle-aged woman who joined the protests. She decided to present herself as Mama Khadiga to the protesters and in the different interviews for TV stations, newspapers, and documentaries. Mama Khadiga was one of the main characters in the film, *The Trials of Spring*. Khadiga chose to frame herself as a mother to the young protesters. Mama Khadiga's strategy in negotiating her agency can be conceptualized by the concept of “political motherhood” developed by Mhajne and Whetstone. Mhajne and Whetstone define political motherhood as “women's negotiation and navigation of their feminine identities to legitimize their political participation. Political motherhood is a maternal framing of women's engagement with politics that makes use of traditional understandings of femininity and motherhood” (55). Mhajne and Whetstone assert that political motherhood can be state-led, imposed by the official power on women or can take a “bottom-up” approach, like the political motherhood developed by activists. Some women deliberately apply political motherhood as a sort of “bargaining with patriarchy” and invoking feminine, maternal identities to spark emancipatory gender norms that allow them access to the public sphere (Gentry; Carreon & Moghadam).

Carreon and Moghadam distinguished between “maternalism from above” (please refer to chapter 2 for the case of Suzanne Mubarak) and “maternalism from below” (3).

Maternalism from below refers to maternalistic frames and forms of mobilization deployed by actors that are separate from the state, government, or military power in an enactment of bottom-up self-empowerment. Often deployed by autonomous or grassroots groups situated at levels with less formal political power, they may nonetheless occasionally benefit from elite support. This type of mobilization may be more focused on expanding women’s participation and rights, but it may also include right-wing groups keen on conserving a certain way of life and opposed to change. (3)

Carreon and Moghadam developed the “maternalistic politics” framework based on a comprehensive study of various women’s rights movements mainly in the global south. They assert that are four elements that collectively reflect the complexity and fluidly of maternalistic politics. Firstly, both maternalism from above and maternalism from below can achieve either patriarchal or emancipatory goals (3). The ideology of the group/movement, the way the regime imposes and applies the motherhood trope determines the end goal of materialist politics.

Secondly, “maternalistic politics may reflect and serve feminist goals, whether in terms of women’s practical interests and basic needs or their strategic gender interests” (Carreon & Moghadam 3). Carreon and Moghadam posit that maternalistic politics do not have to be explicitly labeled as “feminist”. Not adopting the label of “feminism” does not necessarily reflect a connection with conservatism or patriarchy, but “rather a form of de facto feminism or a form of women’s collective action that effectively challenges women’s subordination” (4). Thirdly,

“maternalistic politics, especially in the form of maternalism-from-below and sometimes benefiting from a political opportunity for elite support, may expand women’s civil, political, and social rights of citizenship” (4). Fourthly, women who adopt maternalistic politics exhibit an antihegemonic tendency in their activism and political and legal demands.

Thus, one can argue that Mama Khadiga developed this maternalistic frame to gain access to the square and legitimize her presence in Tahrir Square. I would argue that Mama Khadiga used this maternal strategy to overcome three major obstacles to be able to actively be involved in the Revolution. Firstly, adopting this motherhood frame enabled her to bargain with the classic patriarchal ideas that women are not allowed to be present in the public sphere and to participate in radical politics that has been historically known to be a place for men. Secondly, the 18 days of the Revolution were framed as the “Youth Revolution.” This frame was very dominating during the 18 days and also after the ousting of Mubarak. Thus, identifying herself as a mother of the revolutionaries/protesters granted her access within the young protesters and provided her with a voice within the young people. Thirdly, this strategy might protect her from any potential violence, especially from the police. Kandiyoti asserts that in countries like Egypt, older women have more respect and authority inside their families and in the border community. Thus, Mama Khadiga could have assumed that the maternalistic frame would give her a sort of authority and therefore protection.

However, this maternity frame did not protect Mama Khadiga from state violence. In November 2011, Mama Khadiga responded to one of the soldiers who spoke with her in a very violent way by telling him that she is like his mother, and he should be more polite. He hit her very firmly in her face and caused a permanent injury. The adoption of the maternity frame by Khadiga reflects how women in Egypt expressed their agency in many ways to navigate various forms of

oppression. However, these strategies are always changing and developing based on the person's social identifiers and the context. Despite developing various strategies, there is no guarantee that women will be protected as their strategy might be rejected by the oppressor.

Heba and Her Mother

Motherhood can be used to liberate women but at the same it can also be imposed to apply more restrictions and constraints on women's movements and fights for liberation. A significant observation in most of the films is the change of the socio-economic class for the women present in Tahrir Square and the reason for their presence. In *Words of Witness*, Heba, the main character, was in Tahrir Square the following day of Mubarak's resignation, interviewing women about their feelings on the matter. The women spoke about their political activism and how the Revolution increased their sense of belonging to Egypt and that they feel that they are proud citizens. The way that these women spoke and dressed reflected that they came from a high socio-economic class. For example, they were able to express themselves in English as Heba told them that she works for an English newspaper.

A few months after that interview, Heba Afify was in Tahrir Square covering protests against the military rule. The women that Afify interviewed at Tahrir Square in the following weeks and months after the ousting of Mubarak were utterly different. These women were completely different in terms of their purpose and socio-economic class. All the women that Afify interviewed were at Tahrir Square trying to find a male relative (a son, a brother, fiancé, etc.) who disappeared either during the Revolution or immediately after it. Thus, in other words, the motivation of women represented in this film changed from political activism to a personal reason which was finding a male figure in their family. The second significant change is the change in the

social class. Women appeared to be more unfortunate and very primitive. The other difference is that we can see fewer women in Tahrir Square. In conclusion, the film documented the dramatic change that happened to women present in Tahrir Square during the 18 days of the Revolution in terms of the quantity, political agenda, and demographics. The film, *Words of Witness*, also showed different scenes for women speaking in the capacity of being mothers of imprisoned political activists, in political conferences, organized at the press syndicate.

Mhajne and Whetstone assert that women's agency and political motherhood should be understood in a larger context. Women would express their agency through redefining and transforming motherhood from a biological identity to a political concept. Scholars (Carreon & Moghadam; Fisher; Mhajne & Whetstone) showed that women in various countries, like the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo during Argentina's Dirty War (1976–83) and some women's movements in Iran and Turkey, developed the same strategy when the state blocked the public spaces for women's activism, exactly as the military and Islamists did in Egypt.

Women who decided to adopt maternalistic politics are mainly speaking in the oppressive language of the state of the nationalism and motherhood for the purpose of subverting oppression. The rhetoric of Egypt as a mother is the dominant rhetoric in Egypt since the mid-19th century (Baron). Historically, this rhetoric allowed marginalized women from various socio-economic classes to participate in anti-colonial resistance (Nelson & Khater; Baron). Mhajne and Whetstone asserts that "in contexts of injustice, women use political motherhood to become social change activists using bottom-up approaches that challenge the public/private divide" (59). The other important aspect in women's activism is that women's activists in the Egyptian Revolution showed that bargaining with the patriarchy (Kandiyoti) was not a linear process, but a dynamic one. They also showed that context really matters, and that women expressed their agency in various forms.

Developing parallels between the revolutionary strategies developed by Egyptian women in 2011 during the Egyptian Revolution, and the Algerian women's resistance to the French colonialism, is important to better understand the various mechanisms developed by Egyptian women in the context of 2011 Revolution. Frantz Fanon posits that women used their bodies in many ways during different phases of the Revolution to resist the French administration. The French administration used women's bodies to control and take over the Algerian nation. Hijabs and traditional Algerian women's clothes were framed by the French as tools to oppress women and thus, they needed to be liberated by removing the hijab.

In response to the French's discourse, Algerian women insisted on wearing hijabs and traditional Algerian women's clothes. Fanon focused on the aspect of women and violence. Women used their traditional clothes to hide weapons and bombs and messages among the National Liberation Front. The French then discovered the women's strategy. Consequently, women were put under severe scrutiny. When the revolution broke out, Algerian women decided to change their strategy and remove their hijabs and dress like European women, pretending to support the French discourse on liberation, but actually they were using their bodies to liberate their lands. Fanon highlighted the importance of women's bodies asserting that "the Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion" (52). Women's European appearance allowed them to smuggle weapons and bombs through the checkpoints. The French discovered these masquerades, so women returned to using hijabs and traditional clothes to hide weapons and bombs and make it appear as if they were not hiding anything.

In summary, there are three major aspects to learn from Fanon's discussion on the Algerian's women's resistance. Firstly, the role and meaning of women's bodies are never fixed

and change over time and with the type of tension (violent/non-violent) with the dominant oppressive power. Secondly, “gendered bodies have different meanings in different times and contexts, and the story of gender and bodies in Revolution is not one of linear “progress,” but one of messy and complex constellations of experiences, power, symbols, meanings, and violence” (Den Bogert 68). Thirdly, the veiling, or non-veiling, of women’s hair is more complex than just liberating or oppressing women and is sometimes paradoxical. These aspects can be helpful towards understanding the wide range of strategies developed by Egyptian women during the years of the Revolution to practice their agency and be present in the public sphere. The next section focuses on the different strategies women used to express their agency and bargain with patriarchy in their private sphere (mainly their homes).

The other important aspect that the film, *Words of Witness*, depicts is Afify’s struggle and resistance to the masculine and patriarchal ideology that her mother, and not her father, tries to impose on her. Afify and her mother are always in a conflict because Afify’s job is as a journalist. Her job as a journalist requires her to be present in the streets and sometimes, that includes the locations where violent confrontations are taking place. Afify’s mother is always lecturing and sometimes comforting her by reminding her that she is a girl who belongs to a “good family”. By a “good family”, she means a higher socio-economic class, so she has to act in a certain way. For example, she should not be late outside when it is dark. Afify says, “culturally in Egypt, the girl is to be protected and not put herself in dangerous situations, not to stay out late” (*Words of Witness* 00:15:56-00:16:05). This quote should be problematized and conceptualized; problematized in terms of what “culture” means to challenge the process of hegemonizing the culture. “Culture is a social construction, a powerful one; where social forces construct our understanding of the world

in powerful ways and frame how we act within it” (Nielsen & Hervik 89). In the private sphere, Afify is always confronting her mother, who is for the entire film, is lecturing her by telling her “you may be a journalist, [but] you are [above all] a girl” (Words of Witness 00:31:00-00:31:15). Afify’s is commenting that “you would expect that dad is the one who would be firm with the rules, who wants me to be back home before curfew. But my dad is the one talking to my mom that I can not abide by the rules of typical Egyptian girls if I want to be a good reporter” (Words of Witness 00:31:40-00:31:50). The father is not the one who is supporting or even trying to impose patriarchal ideas, but it is the mother who is doing that role and always confronting her daughter to follow socially constructed gender and class scripts.

Heba’s mother is not only maintaining patriarchy within the private sphere but also in the public sphere. A very interesting conversation took place between Heba’s mother and Heba and her sister, later in 2011, when SCAF was ruling the state. The mother entered their apartment to find both girls watching some videos posted on Facebook for a press conference, which was organized by the family members of political activists who were arrested by the military police.

Heba: Hi, Mother

Heba’s Sister: Did you watch the videos of military arresting and torturing the protesters?

Heba: I hope you believe (that the military is against democracy)

Heba’s mother: I’ve been convinced since yesterday and I’ve been fighting since yesterday. Whenever I see the army, I get pissed off.

Heba: I’m going to share on Facebook all the testimonials I filmed for the people who have tortured by the army so you can send them to whoever doesn’t believe.

Heba’s mother: And then what, Heba? If the army isn’t our father, then who is? Heba: We must learn how to live without a father; we have been dependent on someone for many decades. We have to take care of ourselves. (*Words of Witness* 00:48:1000:50:00)

This conversation unfolds many important aspects related to liberation within the public and private sphere. Firstly, power is not unidirectional. Both Afify and her sister challenge their mother's ideas regarding the military. The mother expressed her confusion and lack of knowledge and asked for Afify's opinion. One can argue that the success of the 18 days that led to the toppling of Mubarak, and the ability of young protesters to skillfully use ICTs, and made some parents think, during moments of confusion, that the young generation might have some wisdom and answers. Secondly, Afify and her mother had an utterly different perspective on the Revolution. To the mother, the Revolution was all about substituting a father figure (Mubarak) with another father figure (the military). However, the moment she realized that there was no difference between Mubarak and the military, she was so scared asking "and then what, Heba? If the army isn't our father, then who is?" (*Words of Witness* 00:48:10) Afify's response was "we don't need a father anymore" (*Words of Witness* 00:48:30). Al-Natour asserts that women participated in the Revolution to challenge the rituals of patriarchy and to "def[y] their performativity" (70), but the conversation between the mother and her daughters question Natour's argument as some women were just supporting the Revolution to substitute one father figure with another one.

2. Home Sweet Home?

Is home really a sweet place for girls and women? Most of the documentaries (*Trial of the Spring, The Square, I Am the People*) depicted the struggle and the various forms of violence that activists experienced in Tahrir Square. The documentaries also presented how those activists especially females, experienced domestic oppression, and that the fight for liberation, in both the private and public sphere, was inseparable.

One can argue that the best way to conceptualize the struggles and conflicts that took place in the activists' home is to use Judith Butler's work on gender performativity and Deniz Kandiyoti bargaining with the patriarchy. Butler explains that:

The performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration. (527)

However, there are other major attributes of Butler's theory, including its resistance to imposed rituals from different groups and individuals in different communities and societies. The theory posits that there is punishment for individuals who decide to deviate from imposed acts of gender. "Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all" (Butler 528). The other important aspect is that, unlike theatrical performances where the audience is aware that these performances are scripted, "gender performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions" (Butler 527). The various documentaries showed the family, especially the mothers, are imposing on their daughters to follow specific gender scripts. On the other side of the coin, the film showed most girls are resisting their scripts by developing various strategies.

Deniz Kandiyoti's concept of "bargaining with patriarchy" can be the other way to understand the various domestic conflicts that took place after the ousting of Mubarak. Kandiyoti asserts that age and motherhood bring power to women in countries, like Egypt. Thus, these women

would not resist patriarchy but maintain it and impose it on younger women in the house, mainly their daughters and daughters-in-law.

It can be argued that there are two major factors that contributed to the escalation of tension between young activists and their parents. Firstly, young Egyptians decided to claim the ownership of success after ousting Mubarak and their ability to end a tyrannical era that the older generations suffered from. Secondly, the children's ability and skills to use ICTs, mainly social media platforms, effectively precedes their parents. As a result, mothers felt they were powerless and needed their daughters to guide them and teach them how to use these new technologies. This subversion of power created tension that was depicted in various documentaries.

The Story of Sally Zahran

The story of Sally Zahran is a story that did not appear directly in any documentary but is mentioned indirectly in the film, *Words of Witness*. The story of Sally Zahran is an exciting example for the difficulties that women face in Egypt, in both the public and private sphere. Afify said that she wants to write a story on the martyrs of the Revolution and especially, Sally Zahran, the first martyr of the Revolution. Sally's story, according to Afify, is that Sally's mother locked her inside the apartment and banned her from joining the protests at Tahrir Square. However, Sally threatens her mother that she will access the street through jumping from the balcony. However, she lost her balance and fell from the balcony and died. Sally Zahran did lose her life, not in any violent confrontations in the streets, but because of patriarchy embodied by her mother.

The death of Sally Zahran represents a multifaceted, complex discourse on the Egyptian Revolution in general, but also on the discourse around women and Revolution. Protesters considered Sally Zahran as one the martyrs of the Revolution. They even hung her pictures beside

the pictures of other martyrs at Tahrir Square, as it appeared in the introduction of Iskander's film (Den Bogert). However, the other martyrs were killed by violent confrontations that took place between the police and the protesters. Sally Zahran lost her life because of the oppression in the private sphere and not in the public sphere. However, protesters considered anyone who was killed because he/she was trying to participate in the Revolution, regardless of the way the person was killed, a martyr.

The second complex layer about Sally Zahran is her representation after her death. The picture of her that was widely used was had her long curly hair defiantly out without any head covering whatsoever. However, tons her friends and family members launched a campaign on social media asking activists and media to use an old picture of her wearing a hijab. Her pictures on the streets were modified by pen (Abuelnaga). The films did not document the conflict over Zahran's picture and the public conflict of whether she should be called a martyr or not. Various scholarly (Abuelnaga; Armbrust; Den Bogert), and non-scholarly articles, discussed the controversy over Zahran's picture. Abuelnaga aptly asserts that "the appearance of the martyr became a terrain of conflict over identity and ideology" (113). Den Bogert asserts that the conflict over Zahran's head covering means that for some people that covering of her hair is the condition women must meet to be considered a martyr. Thus, the story of Sally Zahran serves well as an embodiment for the women's struggle in the private and public sphere, whether they are alive or dead. More importantly, her story represented that the patriarchal control over women's bodies lasts even after their deaths.

Faraj's Daughter and His Wife

It seems that class does not create a huge difference when it comes to mothers forcing their daughters to follow a certain gender script. The social and economic status of the mother and daughter presented in *I Am the People* is on the complete contrary to the mother and daughter (Heba) presented in *Words of Witness*. Faraj's family, presented in *I Am the People*, are poor and lack many basic life utilities. They don't have internet and they only got a cable TV weeks after Mubarak's resignation. On the other side, Heba's family, presented in *Words of Witness*, are upper middle-class who are living in a nice apartment in a middle-class neighbourhood who do have all the life utilities they need. However, the act of imposing certain gender scripts from the mothers on the daughters is common despite the giant economic discrepancy between the two families.

It is important to emphasize Butler's argument that gender performativity is "not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual" (49). Faraj's wife always makes her daughter assist her in the house tasks. The mother never asks the boys to help her. The mother is raising up the girl to follow certain gender scripts. This young girl is always seen in the film inside the house either assisting her mother in domestic work or studying or watching the news. Unlike her two male siblings, who are being filmed outside the house, either accompanying their father travelling to the nearest city to the village or working with him in the field. The father was always keen to have his two boys sitting beside him while reading the newspaper loudly and discussing politics with them, even if they are too young to fully comprehend the complexities of politics, but the daughter was never invited to these gatherings.

Faraj's daughter developed her ways of resistance and expression of agency despite her lacking basic resources, like a proper table to study on. She was always keen to study and does better at school more than her male siblings. She was always watching the news on the TV and

trying to understand the various political events taking place in Cairo. The filmmaker, Anna, had various short talks with her on camera and the young girl showed that she has good political and critical awareness of the current political events.

There are multiple commonalities between Heba (the girl in *Words of Witness*) and Faraj's young daughter, despite the huge discrepancy between them in terms of age, socio-economic class, education, geographic location, etc. Socially-constructed gender scripts are imposed on them by their mothers. Class plays a crucial role in the construction of the gender script imposed on them. Both girls expressed their agency through bargaining with the patriarchal structure they live within, which is protected by their mothers. Technology contributed to the development of the agency of the two girls. Social media platforms, in the case of Heba, helped her stay connected and form different kinds of activism (discussed in detail in chapter 8). The satellite TV channels, in the case of Faraj's daughter, allowed her to feel that she had some knowledge that others didn't have. There is no internet in the village, so Faraj's daughter did not use the technology the way Heba was able to use it. But still, both girls were able to actively use technology to learn about the various political events taking place and develop their political position which was different from their parents.

There are two other important aspects presented in the film, *I Am the People*, that are not necessarily related to Faraj's young daughter, but related to the interconnection between private and public sphere and gender performativity. Firstly, Faraj's female neighbour always comments on Anna's physical appearance. She says that she is so thin and need to gain some weight in order to look like a woman. In different occasions in the film, she tells Anna that she should get married and have kids. She would even ask God loudly to provide Anna with a husband. Faraj's neighbour thinks Anna is very odd as she is not following any of the socially-constructed gender norms because she is always outdoors, filming in male-dominated places, and does not have a husband

and kids.

Secondly, Faraj's wife's perception towards the trial of Mubarak is important. Anna filmed Faraj watching Mubarak's trial with his family on TV. Anna did a short interview with Faraj's wife while watching the trial. Faraj's wife said that they have to release Mubarak so he can continue raising his children and grandchildren. She disagreed with Faraj and Anna's argument that Mubarak should be punished because he killed the protesters in Tahrir Square. Faraj's wife replied that no one asked them to go to Tahrir Square and protest, saying "this is their fault" (*I Am the People* 00:30:13-00:30:15)). Faraj's wife's position can be analyzed from the intersection of gender and class. As a poor woman who lives on the periphery, she feels that no one is concerned about her voice. No one really cares about her demands. She did not perceive the protesters advocating on her behalf. She viewed the protesters as a group of residents of the urban area who are trying to gain more rights for themselves. She did not care if they had been killed or not. To her, Mubarak's role in politics and public life is exactly equal to his role in the private sphere. Thus, to Faraj's wife, if Mubarak cannot be present in the public sphere, he still has a role to fulfill in the private sphere as a father figure.

Khaled's Conflict with His Father

Filmmaker, Jehane Noujaim, showed another type of conflict in her film, *The Square*, through the character of the well-known actor, Khaled Abdalla. The filmmaker showed that Khaled Abdalla had two major conflicts between his father and veteran leftist activist, Mona Anis. Khaled's father, who lives in London, was one of the leaders of the student movement in the 1970s. He was hosted by the BBC immediately after Mubarak was ousted. He was very proud and excited about the future of Egypt. He did not go back to Egypt, but he was always speaking with his son (Khaled)

via Skype. The conversation between the son and the father in the first half of the film was completely different from the second half of the film. The father who fully supported Khaled and the Revolution had changed in the second half. He told Khaled and his friends that activism is useless and does not benefit anyone. The brutal and violent actions of SCAF and the dominance of the Muslim Brotherhood during the first parliamentary and presidential elections made Khaled's father lose hope in the establishment of a civil, progressive state. Khaled rejected his father's ideas and emphasized that the Revolution should continue, and that people should continue protesting until the demands of the Revolution are achieved: bread, freedom, social justice, and human dignity. The conflict between Khaled and his father showed that young revolutionaries had to fight father figures in the public sphere, namely the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, and at the same time, fight their real fathers, domestically, to fight patriarchal ideas. Thus, patriarchy is harmful to both men and women.

The second crucial, generational conflict is with Mona Anis. The conflict was mainly on what was next. Anis was adopting the position that the best way to proceed was with elections, either parliamentary or presidential elections. Anis was arguing that this is the best way to move forward. On the other hand, Khaled refutes this argument. He confirms that the secular, young people still need time to build their political organizations, and in order for this to happen, they need freedom and a democratic environment. Thus, according to Khaled, protesters should not leave Tahrir Square and should continue to pressure SCAF for rights and freedoms. In summary, this generational conflict somehow contributed to the struggle of Egypt toward real democracy and freedom. These intergenerational conflicts in the private sphere contributed to the deterioration of activism in the public sphere toward a new democratic state.

3. Domestic Squares: Beyond Tahrir

The popular discourse, around the 2011 Revolution, focused on Tahrir Square as the major place for the events. However, on the early morning of February 12, protesters left Tahrir Square. They went back on different occasions mainly in 2011 when Egypt was under the SCAF rule, and in various occasions in the following years. There are a few questions about protesters organizing themselves: Firstly, where were protesters meeting and organizing themselves to prepare for their various dissent activities? Secondly, what were the group dynamics like in these meetings? To what extent were women's voices heard in these meetings? One can argue that power dynamics in these private places is a reflection of the power dynamics in Tahrir Square and other public places. All the films that have been analyzed for this research did not film or depict formal political meetings or assemblies of political parties, human rights organizations, etc. The films focused on showing informal meetings and gatherings in the homes of protesters. It should be mentioned that it is very hard for women to be present in a private place (someone's house) if they are not familial, especially if they are young, as Egypt is dominantly a conservative country. Therefore, it is interesting how these spaces were developed and navigated different power dynamics.

It seems from these meetings that the protesters were gathering not only for political purposes but also to build a community. A community that can support each other in the private sphere but also advance political and social causes in the public sphere. Different documentary films (*The Trials of Spring*, *I Am the People*) briefly showed this aspect, but the film *The Square* mainly focused on showing this aspect of building a community. A major theme in *The Square* is that the young protesters were not keen to build a political party or a coalition, but a community. Community from a literary perspective "refers to either an unstructured community in which people are equal or to the very spirit of community" (Allam 147). Capitalizing on this definition,

Edith Turner, defines communities as "inspired fellowship, a group's unexpected joy in sharing the common experience" (xi), the "sense felt by a group when their life together takes on full meaning" (1). Thus, despite the fact that the film focuses on four characters, the filmmaker was always keen to show that despite the differences between them (age, gender, political ideology, socio-economic class, religion, etc.), the members of this community were always sharing together, not only their political demands, but also food and living spaces. Thus, the Revolution contributed to the development of a communal spirit that would not have been developed otherwise. The three communities/gatherings that appeared in different films are as follows:

An Inclusive Community: Pierre's Apartment

The first example of community building is the one depicted in *The Square*. A group of protesters of different genders, ages, levels of education, religions, and political ideologies, decided to gather at the apartment of Pierre, an Egyptian veteran leftist. Filmmaker, Jehane Noujaim, presented different spaces developed for and through the Revolution in the film. The principal space is Tahrir Square. The Revolution transformed Tahrir Square from just being a principal square in the capital of Egypt, to a symbol and the embodiment of liberation, and the heart of challenging different cultural and societal norms. Thus, the entire film is showing the contestation between the young revolutionaries who mainly belong to the left and the military, along with the Islamists. The last two camps were trying to occupy the space by any means, including the use of excessive violence, and were preventing anyone with political views different from their own to be present in the square.

Therefore, as a result of these contestations, protesters (who are typically not supporting the military or Islamists) decided to create other spaces that can be considered as "new territories

of contestation beyond established dichotomies of manhood versus womanhood" (Telmissany 256). Pierre's apartment was this new space. The apartment is located by Tahrir Square. This new space is not just a physical space that these protesters were using as shelter or a refuge from the violent attacks. This space was also able to bring people of diverse backgrounds together. Mainly young people were there, but also there were some older people. The social and gender difference between them is distinguished. They were all Egyptians, including the ones who have dual citizenships and who were raised outside Egypt, like Khaled Abdalla. Abdalla is one of the major characters in the film, trying to figure out how he can challenge the norms and develop a new Egypt where people have access to bread while enjoying freedom and social justice.

Developing a constructive discussion on how to advance with their advocacy and activism was the second primary use for this private space. Despite the many differences between these protesters, they were trying to create a utopian community where every opinion was equal. The sphere that they were trying to develop is similar to Habermas's ideal public sphere.

The other major attribute to the community at Pierre's apartment is the eagerness to develop rational, critical discussions and respect all opinions while providing a space for everyone, even the ones that they did not necessarily wish to adopt. Everyone's opinion is important and valid. They were always trying to have a rational conversation when analyzing the political events or their tactics. It was definitely not an easy task, but they were trying to do their best. However, it should be mentioned that the community at Pierre's was expectational, as the next two examples will show. There were some subjective reasons that enabled them to develop this community. Firstly, the level of education, as most of the members of that group have a decent amount of education. Secondly, Khaled Abdalla, one of the most influential characters in the group, was

mainly raised in London, England. Thus, this might provide him with a certain open-mindedness to deal with people from various cultures.

There are another two important aspects related to that group. Firstly, they were always seeking information they could use in rational discussions (an important characteristic to the formation of an ideal public sphere, according to Habermas). They were always actively involved in discussions with various groups and individuals in Tahrirf Square. The filmmaker also showed that were always listening to the political analysis, presented on various local and international TV stations. The scenes the filmmakers showed from the conversations taking place in Tahrir Square showed that men and women from different backgrounds and social economic classes were engaged in the discussions. Khaled Fahmy, Professor of Modern Arabic Studies at the University of Cambridge, said in a podcast, produced by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC), that a major aspect of the 2011 Revolution was meeting and conversing with people who belonged to different socio-economic classes and political ideologies that he would have never gotten the chance to meet, due to his profession and socio-economic class (Ayad). Therefore, the fact that the Revolution was able to remove objective and subjective barriers between people, even if was for a temporary period, can be considered as a revolutionary success.

Secondly, they were keen to maintain this community in the public sphere as well in the private sphere. Both male and female activists in the group shared the same tent during any sit-in that took place after Mubarak's resignation. The reason for highlighting this detail is that many of the attacks on the Revolution came from the fact that boys and girls were sleeping in the same tents. The opposition to the Revolution from the deep state was not discussing real issues. Instead, they were developing a moral discourse that is mainly related to private spheres. The counterRevolution focused their attack not on providing on a rational argument but developed a

discourse around “morality” instead (Telmissany). The military justified the virginity tests practiced on the girls in March 2011 to differentiate between the moral and immoral ones. They used the same morality discourse to address some female and male protesters using the same tents (Abuelnaga). Therefore, one can argue that Noujam was keen to show the scenes of this group of female and male protesters sharing the tent in a sit-in to help refute the claims that these tents are being utilized for purposes other than a shelter.

The unity of the group and the utopian status of Tahrir Square did not last after the late Islamist President Mohamed Morsi won the presidential election in mid-2012. Magdy Ashour, one of the major characters in the film, is an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood and one of the protesters that was part of the group that was always present at Pierre’s apartment. During the early stage of the film, Ashour was always present and involved in this group. Then, as the film advanced, the Muslim brotherhood began gaining more power by dominating the parliament, winning the presidential elections, dominating the constitutional writing committee, and Ashour became less involved with the group. We see Ashour more involved with the Muslim Brotherhood activities in the square. In one of the scenes, we see Ahmed Hassan, one of the major characters in the film, going to Tahrir Square on a Friday to find that Tahrir Square is occupied by members of an Islamist group wearing white Jalabiyia. He confronts them. In that moment, Ashour appears to calm him and to support Islamists. Ashour also joined the campaign of the Islamist President Mohamed Morsi, and appeared in many scenes to be wearing a white t-shirt with the picture of Mohamed Morsi on it, beside the logo of the Freedom and Justice Party. He would always defend Morsi’s decisions, even the ones that were perceived by the rest of the group, as against democracy.

Almost at the end of the film, the protests against the Islamist president Mohamed Morsi started to take place not in Tahrir Square but beside the presidential palace. Khaled Abdalla and

the group joined the protests against Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. The protesters were brutally attacked by supporters of the Islamists. A conversation at Pierre's apartment was captured between Ashour, Ashour's son (almost 15 years old), Abdalla, and Pierre. Pierre discovered that Ashour's son was helping the Muslim Brotherhood thugs in violently attacking the anti-Morsi protesters. Abdalla very politely blamed Ashour's son for being one of the people responsible for attacking the peaceful protesters and said he would have killed him. Ashour, in a very soft voice, instructed his son that he shouldn't have been associated with groups brutally attacking the protesters. Abdalla then started to explain to Ashour that the people who are in power either Mubarak, the military, or Islamists really don't care about the regular people like them, but they only care to satisfy their hunger to the power. Abdalla then explained that protesters should be united to stand behind the demands of Revolution: Bread, freedom, social justice, and human dignity (and not to protect people in power). This conversation reflects various aspects related to the Muslim Brotherhood's systemic usage of violence. The last scenes were for the massive protests that took place against the Islamist president. On July 3, the military under General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi performed a military coup against the late Islamist President Mohamed Morsi and ousted him from the office. Morsi's supporters organized a sit-in at Rab'a Square. The film showed that Ahmed Hassan and a couple of other people from the group went to the sit-in to check in on Ashour and to ask him to be safe.

The community of protesters represented in *The Square* showed the strong connections between politics of the public sphere and the private sphere. It showed that revolutionary acts must be consistent in both spheres. The development and evolution of the political events in the public sphere played an important role in the personal identification and group association in the private sphere. Therefore, it is very unfortunate that most of the films on the Revolution only focused on

the protesters' political activism in the public sphere. In summary, there are two important aspects related to the community at Pierre's from a gender perspective. Firstly, it demonstrated that not all female activists apply their agency in the same way. Some female activists, like the ones who were part of the group located at Pierre's, did not really care about various social constraints and were present in a private place with others with whom they do not have family connections. Other female activists could not do the same thing and had to negotiate their agency differently and be present in private spheres with other activists by applying different strategies. Secondly, one might argue that Jehane Noujaim, the female filmmaker of *The Square*, filmed the development and the interaction between the male activists and female activists to show that these protests were not only against a tyrant who has been in power but against an intersectional system of oppression that produced a complex system of social patriarchy. Thus, filming the activism of these activists in both the private and public sphere gave a nuanced perspective on the activism in both spheres.

Women-Led Communities

The film, *The Trials of Spring*, showed two major important communities. The first one is the gathering at Mama Khadiga's house and the second one is the community that Hend Nafea was trying to build with the survivors of torture. The filmmaker showed a big room in her wellfurnished apartment that has four couches attached to each other in a U-shape. Mama Khadijia stood in the middle of the room and said to the filmmaker. "This is Tahrir Square. I told the youth at the square to continue the Revolution in my house as the square started to be an unsafe space. I told them 'you are like my children and I'm like your mother'" (*The Trials of Spring* 1:26:36) Mama Khadiga is again adopting political motherhood (Mhajne & Whetstone) to navigate activism and political mobilization in the private sphere exactly as she did to navigate her political participation

in the public sphere. It is not clear if she has a family or not as she was always alone in the film. In a conservative society, Mama Khadiga developed a cognitive framing strategy to justify hosting a group of men and women who are not related to her to come and meet regularly in her house. One may argue that there is another reason for Mama Khadiga to develop the framing of political motherhood: to be accepted among the young protesters. The Revolution was mainly dominated by young people and for an older woman to join and be part of any group, she must negotiate her identity within the group. Therefore, the framing strategy of political motherhood for Mama Kadiga had served her political activism within the private sphere on various levels as she was able to give a legitimacy for the gathering of these young people in her home. In the group, she gained acceptance by sheltering herself with a sort of accepted authority from being their motherly figure.

The other community represented in the film, is the community of Egyptians Against Torture. Hend Nafea, one of the major characters, was brutally tortured by the police during the brutal violence conformations that took place on November 19 in Mohamed Mahmoud Street. Both the civil police and military attacked the male and female protesters. Hend was arrested and tortured with other girls as well, and one girl was stripped publicly from her clothes, the girl known as the “blue bra girl”. She was among other young people who were arrested and tortured by the police and military police during the various dissent events. The group was mainly doing three functions: documentation of torture cases, educating the general public through social media, street exhibitions, and presentations, and peer support. Hend, among other volunteers, was working on the documentation aspect at her office at the Human Rights Center. As for the peer support, the men and women who were part of the group met in a public coffee shop. It was clear that, because of the noise of meeting in a very crowded space, they couldn’t have a proper meeting. The film did not show any of other gatherings, so it is not clear if they had other meetings or not, but it is obvious

that they are privileged, like the group presented in *The Square* so they can have a private place to gather and meet. I would also argue that because of the controversy of their cause, other locations would have concern to allow them to hold their meetings.

Communities on the Periphery

The last gathering of the community is the one represented in the film *I Am the People*. This gathering was a male-only gathering. Faraj and his friends were gathering in a circle at the end of the election's day. There were only men present in that gathering; no women at all. They were talking about the different candidates. They were making fun of the possibility that the Islamist president could win the presidential elections and then all the men in their village would shorten their Jalabiya and grow a long beard. They were making fun about how the followers of political Islam gives lots of attention to outer appearances and not to important political issues. It is important to mention that Faraj -and his friends- are practicing Muslims. He starts his day by praying and he goes to the mosque every Friday to attend the Friday's noon prayer. Despite that, he and his friends mock followers of political Islam.

In conclusion, Kandiyoti's concept of bargaining with the patriarchy should be used to conceptualize and better understand the construction of these communities. Kandiyoti argues that women respond to the patriarchy in different ways: some act as devout guardians of patriarchy, others maneuver to collect some gains while avoiding overt confrontations with the patriarchy, and others resist and contribute to overt confrontations with the patriarchy. The construction of these communities adopted the same variants of dealing with the patriarchy. The community formed at Pierre's apartment did challenge various forms of the patriarchy. The communities developed by Mama Khadiga and Hend Nafea did some maneuvers to avoid any overt confrontations with

patriarchy. Faraj's community maintained the patriarchy by keeping only a gathering for men. Collins and Bilge argue that analyzing social context is extremely important in conducting any intersectional analysis. "Using intersectionality as an analytical tool means contextualizing one's argument, primarily by being aware that particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts shape what we think and do" (Collins & Bilge 28). The different variables determined by Collins and Bilge are very important to understand why each community was formed the way it was. Class, level of education, and previous experience in politics and activism are the reasons that enabled Khaled Abdalla and his group to develop the community that they did in Pierre's apartment. The same factors, in addition to the novelty of both Mama Khadiga and Hend to politics and activism, led them to develop their communities the way they did. Finally, revolutions taking places in the capital and other big cities will never be able to change very well-established patriarchal social structures that govern the daily life of the people, like Faraj and the women in his village, as they are living on the extreme periphery.

In conclusion to this chapter, I argue that regular people in general, and protesters in particular, understood oppression as a result of the practices of tyranny (like that of Mubarak), but not as a result of the structural, complicated, political system they live within (Young). Some people expected that life would become easier, but in reality, the Revolution brought hardship on a daily level. The film, *I Am the People*, showed that the Revolution did not bring the people on the periphery anything but more disappointments and hardship in their daily life. The film, *I Am the People*, showed these hardships. The documentary showed how Faraj, and his neighbour were struggling to get basic groceries and gas cylinders in order to turn on the oven and have hot water in the winter. Faraj's young daughter told Anna, the filmmaker, nothing happened there and Faraj's female neighbour told Anna that nothing would apply to them, expect poverty and hardship. In

different scenes, the film showed the negative economic impact of the Revolution on Faraj and his family, ranging from not finding basic groceries to power shortages and the scarcity of gas cylinders. Anna showed how these difficulties created disappointment on the domestic level, while Noujaim showed in her film how these disappointments fueled the counter revolution.

Jessica Greenberg suggests that in most revolutions, the general public and activists experience disappointment in the post-Revolution era. Greenberg defines disappointment as "a condition of living in contraction, of persisting in the interstitial spaces of expectation and regret" (8). Notwithstanding, those disappointments have different implications on people as it might lead to complete political detachment but at the same time disappointment can lead to pragmatic hope (Gould; Greenberg; Tarrow). "This sense of pragmatic hope is born out of confusion over what reform is and how it can be sustained amid a climate to authoritarianism" (Allam 143). However, disappointment does not mean the end of politics and activism; instead, it may motivate activists to work more and develop different strategies and have more pragmatic hope. The various documentaries show that both activists and non-activists were somewhat disappointed as everyday life became harder and everyone struggled to meet their daily needs. On the other hand, a coalition was formed between two non-democratic organizations, the Islamists and the military, in the early days after the toppling of Mubarak. Later on, when these two groups confronted each other, this coalition did not lead to freedom and social justice as the masses who went to Tahrir Square had hoped it would.

In the years following Mubarak's ousting, the military cooperated with the Islamists and cracked down on democracy. As one of the characters said in *The Square*, "In the 18 days we were able to oust Mubarak from the office but not to change the regime" (*The Square* 00:14:0400:14:06).

Tahrir Square used to be an inclusive space and became occupied by either the military, who banned anyone from being present there, or by the supporters of the Islamists.

The Square depicted two important aspects related to the status of disappointment — the first one is related to the group of the revolutionaries that the film is focusing on. The second aspect is related to the citizens who became disenchanted with the Revolution. It is imperative to highlight that the propaganda led by the counter revolution played an important role in transforming the Revolution and Tahrir Square from a utopian sphere to a dystopian one (Telmissany). During the first few months after the ousting of Mubarak, the young revolutionaries were still full of hope and proud of their achievements. However, they were soon disappointed as they could not effectively face the military crackdown on democracy. Then, this disappointment started to increase, as the Islamists started to control Tahrir Square and were able to win the majority of seats in the first parliamentary elections. The disappointments increased as Mohamed Morsi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, won the first presidential election after the Revolution. *The Square* recorded young revolutionaries' abilities to transform their disappointments into practical actions. These practical actions included having open conversations with the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, organizing filming groups, and organizing public concerts in Tahrir Square, among other things.

Documentaries, like *The Square*, show that the young revolutionaries were always criticizing the other, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. However, after Morsi came into power, the young revolutionaries' feeling of pragmatic hope started to decrease. More importantly, they were able to be self-critical. They discussed how they did not have a transparent political platform and how they were not able to mobilize people and gain their sympathy with their revolutionary ideas. On the other hand, the film documented different segments of the population who expressed

their frustrations with different protest activities. They showed their disappointments that the protesters still wanted to protest. They felt protests and sit-ins should stop as these protest activities also affected the economy. The film recorded that some people had a conversation with some of the active protesters in the film regarding the idea that protests should stop because people are tired of the economic and political burden of contention. Allam asserts that the detachment of some segments of the population leads to what is called "authoritarian confidence" (148). "Under authoritarian confidence, the government's violent response to political dissidence is largely justified and often unchecked" (Allam 148). Thus, it can be argued that the interaction of different factors, like the excessive use of violence by the military, which was justified by various Islamists groups, the economic hardship Egypt witnessed, and the lack of security in different places, among other factors, contributed to the suppression of women in both the private and public sphere. The suppression of the Revolution by the different groups (the military, the Islamists, and the beneficiaries of the old regime), known as the counter revolution, complicated women's experiences, not only in the activists' sphere, but also in everyday life. At the private sphere level, the economic hardship added more stress and confusion regarding the Revolution for women as they were worried about not being able to provide for themselves and their children's basic needs, like in *I Am the People*. The lack of security on the streets made women feel unsafe to go out, even for their daily needs, like going to work. A huge part of the tension depicted in the *Words of Witness* between Heba, and her mother, is mainly because Heba's mother was always concerned about Heba's safety. At the public sphere level, the documentary, *The Trials of Spring*, showed that because of the excessive violence against the protesters, Hend couldn't even go to Tahrir Square to celebrate the third anniversary of the Revolution. On January 25, 2011, women and men went down to Tahrir Square to demand bread, freedom, social justice, and human dignity.

However, the days after Mubarak's resignation produced the complete opposite.

Chapter 6: Women's Activism in Arts and Media

The utopia of Tahrir did not last long after the toppling of Mubarak. The 2011 International Women's Day marked a radical transformation toward a complete dystopia. The new power holders, mainly SCAF, transformed Tahrir Square both on a spatial level and a symbolic level. Tahrir Square transformed from an inclusive space to an unwelcoming space for any dissent activities and an unsafe space for women. On the symbolic level, the symbolism of Tahrir Square shifted from a symbol of liberation to a symbol of conspiracy aimed at destroying the Egyptian State and creating an intentional chaos. March 8, 2011, marked the beginning of this transformation, especially for the presence of women in the public sphere and also in regard to the fight for women's issues (Khamis; Elansary). On March 8, 2011, Egyptian women organized a march to celebrate International Women's Day to highlight women's demands and feminist-focused demands. Women went to the march carrying signs representing famous Egyptian feminists, like Hoda Shar'awi and Doria Shafic, as well as female fictional characters. Fuadha, a fictional character played by the famous Egyptian actress Shadia. Fuadha is the main female character of the 1969 Egyptian film, *Un Soupçon De Peur* (Shey Min el Khouf). The film is about a powerful male character, Atris, who controls a small village and oppresses its inhabitants. Atris imposes a tax on the village residents. When they refuse to pay it, he locks the irrigation sluice, so the water doesn't reach their farmland, in order to kill their crops. Fuadha, the major female character in the film, is the only one to challenge Atris and his powerful thugs. She opens that sluice so the water can reach the farmers' lands. Female protesters printed her pictures on huge banners and posters

and wrote on it “We [women] are the ones who opened the sluice of freedom”. In reality, March 8 marked the blocking of the sluice of freedom on various levels. On the spatial level, the march was brutally attacked by both Islamists and military police (the attack was documented in *The Trials of Spring* and in different scholarly pieces; see for example Hafez; Abuelnaga; Eileraas, and non-scholarly articles, for example, Davis; Bohn).

In response to the attack, some women decided to organize a sit-in at Tahrir Square. At dawn on March 9, the military police raided the sit-in and arrested 19 female protesters. The 19 female protesters had to go through virginity tests. That day marked the beginning of violent attacks on protesters present in Tahrir Square but women and women’s bodies had a special share of being targeted.

The attack on Tahrir was not only on the spatial level but also on the symbolic level. The media narratives on the domestic and international level started either to shift or even to neglect the events. Hamid Dabashi documented the short attention span of the international media for not only the protests in Egypt, but the different protests that were taking places in different Arab countries, like Morocco, Bahrain, and Yemen. Different Western events became the central focus of the international coverage (Dabashi). Events like, the British Royal wedding in late April 2011 and the announcement of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, among other international events, occupied the focus of international news and made the protests in the Arab countries marginalized. Thus, by mid-2011, “the unfolding revolutionary events in the Arab world seemingly become somewhat passe” (Dabashi 78). Dabashi argues that the major problem is that not only the short attention span but the fact that this short attention span was accompanied by shallow and unsubstantial analysis that could have reflected that the various complexities unfolded as a result of the various revolutionary events (Dabashi). “The slackening of the newsworthiness of events

for the front pages is oddly replicated by the weakening analytical frames people bring forth to read them” (Dabashi 78). A common critique developed by many scholarly works (Allam; Dabashi; El Mahdi; Sjoberg and Whooley; Mahdi) is that Western media did not provide enough coverage and should have produced more news stories. The criticism also included the quality of both the coverage and the analysis.

Different scholars (Allam; Mahdi; Sjoberg and Whooley) assert that Western media, mainly American media, were constructing an Orientalist discourse of the events in Egypt. Sjoberg and Whooley assert that Western media seemed to be conflicted in its portrayal of the uprising’s impact on women in Egypt. Sjoberg and Whooley analyzed the coverage of the most influential news sources in Europe and the United States. They assert that the coverage of the Western media is divided into two main camps: “one which characterizes the Arab Spring as a time of gender emancipation, and other which casts it as a time of gender oppression” (15). Sjoberg and Whooley’s analysis of this dichotomy in coverage states that during the 18 days of the uprising, male protesters were working to show that Egyptian women had leadership roles and challenged the Orientalist, Western gaze. Moreover, female activists and protesters attempted to construct a new liberation discourse that had its roots in Western liberal ideology. “One perspective understands the Arab Spring as a moment of successful protest that led to the implementation of Western liberal democracy in the States in which these (formerly oppressed) women lived” (17). El Nossery criticized the discourse constructed by both Western feminist organizations and Western media organizations that the January 25 Revolution did in fact “liberate” Egyptian women while dismissing the long history of Egyptian women’s activism and active participation in various protest activities that took place in Egypt during the decade prior to the 2011 revolution. “In fact,

many of the stories explicitly addressed pre-existing notions that the women in the protests were nothing like the prevalent western stereotypes: doe-eyed, veiled and submissive, exotically silent” (Sjoberg and Whooley 19). However, after Mubarak was toppled different barriers and practices were created to stop women from accessing the public space and consequently not took away their voice in the newly constructed private sphere, post-2011 Revolution (El Nossery; Sika; Sholokamy). The military was represented both in SCAF and Islamist groups, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood, and adopted different strategies from violence to not selecting women in the new constitutional writing committee (El Nossery; Sika; Sholokamy). The regression of women’s presence made Western media suggest that “after the Arab Spring, as before, Arab women are almost universally grievously oppressed by Arab men” (Sjoberg and Whooley 17). The Egyptian media, both private and public, started to attack the protesters by accusing them of wanting to stop the production wheel (Telmissany). In summary, the blockage of Tahrir Square and the fight over the space led by the military and various Islamists groups, along with the counter Revolution over Tahrir Square and the change in narrative in both Western media and local media, in terms of quantity and quality of the coverage, developed a new political reality. Consequently, “women felt that changing the confining views society has of them required working beneath the main revolution” (El Nossery 156). That novel reality forced protesters especially women to reconsider new forms of resilience.

Foucault asserts that power is not possessed, and each power domination is faced by resistance and the construction of counter-power. As a result, activists and protesters realized that they should develop their own narrative and to develop new ways to express their anger and frustration. However, women activists realized that not only did they need to develop a new way to deliver their political position, but also to develop a new discourse related to activism, especially

one regarding the place of their bodies within their activism. El Nossery asserts that women, after the toppling of Mubarak, had “sought access to the public sphere” and to “new means outside of the political channel” and finally, and more importantly, “in a manner sometimes less discernible and yet certainly more powerful for dismantling the overarching essentialist views on women” (156). Art production was the space where all these objectives could be achieved. The reason behind choosing art was because of its importance as a “tool for women to free themselves from social limitations that confine them to specific roles by allowing discursive interaction to reach hundreds of people within a democratic platform, thereby penetrating the public sphere” (El Nossery 144). Therefore, women decided to develop various cultural productions and artistic expressions as a new form of dissent.

The scholarly literature (Abaza; Abuelnaga; El Nossery; Sami) suggests that the various forms of artistic expressions created by women served different purposes: penetration of the public sphere through the dissemination of counter information about women’s activism, documenting the various forms of women’s activism and the various forms of violations that women experience because of their activism, and developing a counter identification strategy and constructing their own collective memory. Shereen Abuelnaga labeled the art produced by women (street art, poetry, etc.) as a “new language” that represented the authentic, diversified identity of Egyptian women. According to Stuart Hall, identification is a:

Process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not subsumption. There is always ‘too much’ or ‘too little’—an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the ‘play,’ of difference. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since, as a process, it operates across difference, it entails discursive

work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of ‘frontier-effects.’ It requires what is left outside, to consolidate the process. (4)

The notion of identification in the context of women, art, and the Egyptian Revolution, has two major folds. Firstly, at the local level, Egyptian women were creating a new identification discourse for local women to challenge prevalent identification strategies internalized by both men and women (Bahia; Abuelnaga). Secondly, women used art to dismantle the Western, Orientalist, and essentialist gaze placed upon Egyptian women (El Nossery). Social media and international satellite television stations played an important role not only in creating a transnational visibility for Egyptian women but in disseminating these novel identification strategies developed by Egyptian women through different forms of artistic productions.

Constructing alternative/counter narratives is crucial in developing a new discourse. The new discourse aims to serve many objectives: amplifying women’s voices, challenging official/ Islamist narratives presented as “received truth”, and very importantly, and creating an imaginary collective memory for the upcoming generation to learn about the Revolution from the perspective of the most vulnerable population: Women. Mohanty aptly asserts “in fact narratives of historical experiences are crucial to political thinking not because they present an unmediated version of “truth” but because they destabilize received truths and locate debate in the complexities and contradictions of historical life” (524). The other important aspect, as Kassem emphasized that the result of not documenting and incorporating women’s voices in these special historical moments, is that women “remain silent even as we speak and paralyzed even as we act” (Warwar 112). Allam defines collective memory as “the site of identification and conflict for a nation. It not only constructs the past but also organizes the experience of the present and the future” (26). Analyzing the various artistic forms of expression developed by women is beyond the capacity of this

dissertation. However, this chapter focuses on analyzing the various forms of artistic expression represented in the documentaries under analysis, in addition to analyzing to production of the documentaries itself.

1. Public Performances

Al-Fan Midan (Art is a Square):

In May 2011, a group of Egyptian artists decided to organize a monthly free festival on the first Saturday of each month (Helmy). The festival was called Al-Fan Midan (Art is a square) and was organized in a public square with free admission. In Cairo, the festival took place in Abdeen Square; a square that is near Tahrir Square. Simultaneously, a festival with the same concept took place in different cities across Egypt (Helmy; Mahmoud). Fifteen festivals were held monthly in Egypt from 2011-2014 (Helmy). Despite the importance of the festival in occupying public spaces and introducing various ideas in regard to civil society and democracy, it was not well researched in the scholarship on art and the Egyptian Revolution. The various documentaries did not film the Al-Fan Midan with the expectation of the last scene in *The Trials of Spring*.

The last scene of *The Trials of Spring* showed Hend participating in Al-Fan Midan by exhibiting pictures for victims of torture in addition to pictures for the military practicing violence in different occasions. Hend was doing this as part of her initiative “Nation without Torture.” The film documented the paradoxical nature of Al-Fan Midan. On the one hand, some musicians are playing Egyptian folklore music with women and men dancing around the musicians. There were also special performances for children including a puppet show and a painting area, among other activities. On the other hand, there were activists, like Hend, who were exhibiting shocking, violent

pictures, and Zein El Abedin Fouad, a famous leftist poet and one of the founders of Al-Fan Midan, reciting political poetry against the regime.

The previous scene in the documentary *The Trials of Spring* showed Hend, and her friends as they were trying to access Tahrir Square to celebrate the third anniversary (January 25, 2014) of the Revolution. However, they failed to reach the Square as the police were only allowing access to President El-Sisi's supporters. Thus, Hend, among other activists, had to go to another square called Mustafa Mahmoud to perform their political activities. However, the police brutally attacked and banned them. The paradox between the two scenes; one public space (Tahrir Square and Mohamed Mahmoud Street) and other public space (Abdeen Square where Al-Fan Midan was taking place) should be critically analyzed and unfolded. Hend couldn't be at Tahrir Square because of the excessive violence but she was able to be present and actively participate in Al-Fan Midan. These two consecutive themes must be understood within the framework of the struggle for both public spheres and spaces. Sack reminds us that "social power cannot exist without these territorial rules. Territorial and social rules are mutually constitutive" (14). Helmy developed an in-depth analysis of Al-Fin Midan. He asserts that Al-Fan Midan is a space of freedom in the true sense of the word, allowing different and even conflicting visions to come into contact, with no censorship over content and no restriction on any voice seeking self-expression. (Helmy 555).

In an interview with Daily News, Egypt's only independent newspaper in English, Zein El Abedin Fouad asserted that "unleashing creativity in young people for poetry, stories, plays, music, singing, acting, painting and photography through direct connection with the street, away from authorities or media" (Zein El Abedin Fouad quoted in Mahmoud, 2014). Thus, the organizers of Al-Fin Midan were not only trying to occupy a new territory but also trying to create the democratic public sphere they wanted to see in Tahrir Square as a public space but they couldn't, so they were

able to create that public sphere in another public space. Al-Fan Midan was a censorship-free zone. Thus, it can be considered as a revolutionary space. Therefore, Helmy posits that Al-Fan Midan can be considered a revolutionary phenomenon par excellence because of the lack of censorship. “Yes, Al-Fan Midan was one of the prizes of the revolution, a dazzling victory in one of its battles: the battle for public space” (Helmy 555). Therefore, Al-Fan Midan should be understood beyond its spatial characteristic and as an embodiment of the public sphere that the non-Islamist revolutionary forces wanted to have. A space where all forms of expressions are included.

The paradox between the two last scenes in the film *Trial of Springs* represented the real struggle in post-revolutionary Egypt. A struggle over both the public sphere and the public space. Hend and her friends could not reach Tahrir to celebrate the third anniversary of the toppling of Mubarak as only El-Sisi supporters were allowed to be present. On the other hand, Hend was able to exhibit pictures of different female and male protesters who were tortured by the different security apparatuses and to spread awareness for her campaign “Nation Without Torture” along with different artists presenting various forms of art. The end credits of the film mentioned that Hend had to flee to the U.S. and live there as a refugee because the military police wanted to put her in prison because of her political activism. In September 2014, Al-Fan Midan was completely banned. The same period witnessed the washing of walls in Tahrir Square and the removal of the graffiti (Mahmoud). “Al-Fan Midan was like the graffiti of the revolution: it was one of its most distinctive features, something you could recognize it by. It’s unsurprising that those who don’t want to remember the revolution— or who don’t want anyone else to remember it— should try to erase those features.” (Helmy 558). El-Sisi assumed office on June 8, 2014. Little after he assumed power, both the public sphere and the public space became unaccusable by revolutionary forces.

Cinema Tahrir

The other important, cultural public display is Cinema Tahrir. This initiative was started and mainly developed by Khaled Abdalla, one of the principal characters in the documentary, *The Square*. There are two important attributes to that initiative. Firstly, the process of doing the films and secondly, the public display of the films. Khaled Abdalla and his group of friends decided to collect all forms of cameras and document all the events and incidents that took place in Tahrir Square since the ousting of Mubarak. The collected footages were organized, and a short film was created. These films were publicly displayed on a big screen in Tahrir Square in an event known as Cinema Tahrir.

Khaled Abdalla was able to mobilize a group of protesters of different ages and genders to use any digital camera they have to film. The film reflected that the Revolution and the battle over freedom and dignity were not only in Tahrir, but in other territories. The Revolution become mediated through the different forms of media. Thus, Abdalla and his team were aware that they needed to create their media, so they could contribute to the resistance on the streets. In the meeting with a group of protesters, Khaled Abdalla said:

We decided to create a space which supports those fighting for the Revolution through video and various types of media. It is what is called "Popular Media" using websites, like YouTube. If you know anyone who has a digital camera, they are not using, tell us. We should film as much as we can. The truth is that things are moving quickly. We do not know when this footage can be used as evidence. (*The Square* 00:24:13)

Khaled was aware that documenting the events taking place in the streets by using video offered support to the protesters. More importantly, he was aware that contemporary social movements are a combination of online and offline activism. These protesters were aware of the

contemporary requirements of political activism. Thus, they produced videos to satisfy the function of constructing both a narrative and a collective memory to counter the one constructed by the military and the deep state, and at the same time, use videos as a tool of political activism. In a brief interview with the other major character in the film, Ahmed Hassan, after the meeting of kicking off the initiative of documenting the Revolution, he said: "If people are being fooled about what is happening here, we must film everything and show them the truth. As long as there is a camera, the Revolution will continue" (*The Square* 00:49:29). Khaled and his group produced short videos and decided to organize a public screening in Tahrir Square and called it "Cinema Tahrir." Before screening the film, Khaled said to the masses watching that they were doing this screening to challenge the lies and propaganda of the military and the deep state.

Thus, Cinema Tahrir was able to develop a novel power dynamic in both the public sphere and the private sphere. This initiative was able to remove various socially-constructed barriers and make people who are completely different come and work together to challenge dominant structures in knowledge production by developing accessible alternative narratives. At the same time, this initiative was able to challenge and dismantle various power structures in the public sphere.

2. Graffiti

Graffiti was the most popular form of artistic expression developed by artists since the ousting of Mubarak and lasted until General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi came to power in 2014. The walls of the American University Campus (AUC) were the hub of all the graffiti. AUC is located at the corner of Tahrir Square and Mohamed Mahmoud Street, where the Ministry of Interior is located. The AUC walls did not only become famous, prominent, and crucial on the domestic level, but also on the international level. Abaza asserts that:

The wall of the American University in Cairo in Mohamed Mahmoud Street has become iconic by constantly appearing on television, especially on private ONTV channel as symbolizing the stage of the ongoing revolutionary events, so that the epicenter has shifted from Tahrir Square to Mohamed Mahmoud Street. The wall was then turned into the new Mecca of foreign tourists. (Abaza 327)

There are major factors that made these walls the most appropriate place for graffiti. First, the walls themselves were high and surrounded the campus which allowed the graffiti artists and activists to convert this huge space into a public canvas for their art. Secondly, the physical location of the campus at the corner of Tahrir Square and the famous Mohamed Mahmoud street, where the brutal conflicts took place between the military and the peaceful protesters in late 2011, added another layer of centrality and prominence. In these confrontations, the girl known as “the blue bra girl” was stripped and Hend Hafez, one of the main characters of the documentary, *The Trials of the Spring*, was sexually assaulted and many protesters were killed by the police and military police. Therefore, both the space and the location of these walls provided good conditions for the artists, especially female artists, to use them to paint the graffiti that served many purposes. However, there were also other places, both in Cairo and other Egyptian cities, where artists painted graffiti. But the graffiti painted on the walls of the AUC remained the most prominent and well-documented in books, documentary films, and also virtual archives, which are available on the internet. The most prominent three books that documented the Tahrir graffiti are *Wall Talk: Graffiti of the Egyptian Revolution*, *Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt*, and *There is a Martyr in Me: Egyptian Revolution's Street Art*. These three books mainly contained pictures of Tahrir Square art accompanied by short texts, and in some cases, interviews with street artists, like the ones in *Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt* (El Nossery). It is important to mention

that both *Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt* and *There is a Martyr in Me: Egyptian Revolution's Street Art* are authored by female photographers, Mia Grondahl and Heba Helmy. Thus, again, women were always aware of the importance of not only developing a counter narrative but also maintaining a collective memory that was not male-dominated.

The graffiti that occupied Tahrir Square immediately after the ousting of Mubarak came in two mediums: stencils and murals (Abaza). The scholarly literature on street art argues that to develop a nuanced understanding of the graffiti, three important aspects should be unpacked: the context, the process of painting, and the impact. Collins and Bilge assert that context and relationality must be considered to better understand the complexities of contemporary power dynamics. However, a major critique to both the Western media and Western academia is their inability to contextualize and historicize both political activism and the history of cultural production in Egypt (Abaza). Abaza says:

This sudden gaze towards revolutionary street art could be interpreted as part of the Western euphoria in analyzing the Arab spring as an ahistorical unprecedented. And sudden revolt. While the January Revolution mesmerized the world through the impact of the velocity of information, through the fascinating circulation of images and photography, and the unprecedented usage of social media, mobile phones, and the role satellite channels, such analyses that focused on the Facebook Revolution often ignored the long cumulative history of political struggles, demonstrations, and numerous protests that took place prior to 2011. (318)

Abaza asserts that the same can be applied to the different cultural productions and artistic expression developed and produced after the ousting of Mubarak. Abaza named the various

underground music and independent art exhibitions, films, and film festivals. “The field of graffiti, much like the underground and alternative music scene was already quite vibrant in various Egyptian cities well before the revolution” (Abaza 318). Abaza argues that the “Tahrir Effect”⁸ led

to the explosion of art in public to create a novel understanding of public performances, like chanting, grieving, protesting, and communicating through redefining the role of public space.” (Abaza 318). The changes that took place in the public space after the toppling of Mubarak, and subsequently, the changes happened to the public spheres not only highlighted the importance of redefining the public space but more importantly, changes in the framing strategies developed by women. Gender was not a major dominator in first 18 days of the Revolution. Allam asserts that protesters did develop “citizen frame” in framing their demands. However, the abandonment and violence women experienced after the toppling of Mubarak led them to continue fighting for freedom, dignity, and social justice with their male counterparts but to include women’s issues and feminist demands at the same time (El Nossery). El Nossery argues that “the graffiti and street performances also contain signs of defiance against the stereotyped perceptions that the society has of women” (148). Therefore, context and relationality are extremely important in analyzing the street art created after the toppling of Mubarak. In summary, there are different factors that shaped both context and relationality. These are historical factors, the public relations within the people and with the authority before and after Mubarak, social conservatism, and Western essentialism towards Egyptian women. Consequently, there is a consensus in the scholarly literature that the Tahrir graffiti is a representation of the battle over both public space and the public sphere in a post-Mubarak era, in addition to the representation of women’s struggles in both

⁸ So named because this is perceived as the epicenter of the revolution.

the private and public sphere. Thus, it is crucial to understand the nature and process of painting this graffiti.

Tahrir's graffiti was not static, but it was always changing. The government wiping it away and the rapid change in political dynamic forced street artists to keep painting and repainting as a response to the political events and the cleaning of the graffiti (Telmissany; Johnston; Abaza; Shehab). The important attribute to the notion that the graffiti was dynamic is that artists were keen to have the input in the paintings. Johnston asserts that "they maintained a watchful eye on the political landscape, and as that changed so too did the content and meaning of the artworks. Artists who originally aimed their attention at the Mubarak regime moved to question the policies of the Muslim Brotherhood and then the actions of the Sisi government" (182). Both the process of painting the graffiti and its content made scholars and analysts recognize street artists as of equal importance to those of the street protesters (Johnston, 2015).

Many scholars (Abaza; Bayat; Hafez) described the 2011 Egyptian Revolution as an unfinished Revolution as it is true that protesters were able to remove Mubarak from office, but they were not actually able to change oppressive power structures. The various political events and violent confrontations that took place after the toppling of Mubarak generated various complex feelings in street artists, protesters, and the general public alike. These strong feelings and emotions became a crucial source of inspiration for artists. "Strong emotions brought about intense creativity, and in the process artists and laymen alike provided us with exceptional examples of how to express dissidence and solidarity aesthetically" (Shehab 163). Thus, the process of painting the graffiti has two folds: firstly, the process of the engagement between artists and protesters to develop the paintings. That interaction between the protesters and artists connects to the

importance of the graffiti. Johnston asserts that the engagement between artists and the public created a social bond that surpassed the materiality of the painting.

The practices of developing a dialogue in collaboration between artists and protesters highlighted novel power dynamics in Tahrir. “Such practices constitute a concrete form of intervention into the social and political arena that creates a new set of conditions based on democratic principles and amplifies the political potentiality of street art” (Johnston 186).

Secondly, the process of representing the different feelings and emotions that developed within the average Egyptian in a post-Mubarak era.

The unfinished Revolution did not only bring complex and inconvenient feelings and emotions but paradoxical feelings. The Revolution brought joy and pride, but it also brought pain, anger, and devastation. Street art portrayed these paradoxical and diametrically opposite emotions (such as satire, irony, insults, death, martyrdom, and pain) in various innovative artistic expressions. Tahrir graffiti did not only reflect these paradoxical feelings but also developed paintings that reflected paradoxical feelings to reflect the complex and paradoxical reality. “The Revolution was obviously not merely about irony and laughter. The unfinished revolution, marked by a scar that was deepening by the day through the toll of martyrs, killings, disfiguring, conscious mutilation, and torturing of young bodies, and humiliating and raping of women in public” (Abaza 324). Therefore, graffiti was able to capture an ongoing narrative in the form of ‘visual palimpsest’, with images continually overdrawn and reused to support the narrative and aesthetic of the next painting” (Johnston). This new dissent language developed by graffiti artists was not only aiming to introduce the ongoing political discussions in a novel way but also to honor the protesters killed during the different clashes by painting the faces of these martyrs. These paintings were important in creating an alternative narrative to the state narrative (Abaza; Elansary). “The graffiti and murals

portrayed the battles and killings against the police forces. These also portrayed the numerous martyrs of the Revolution who kept on growing in size through time, gender, and sexual harassment, as well as biting satire about the unfolding political events” (Abaza 320). However, graffiti did not just play a role in documenting and honoring the martyrs of the Revolution and subverting the male gaze, but also in educating the general public about gender issues.

Some scholars (Elansary; Johnston) assert that the graffiti acted as “conscious public pedagogy” (Johnston 183). This pedagogy was meant to teach the public to question various forms of authority, not only state authority, but any form of authority. Female artists used the walls to teach the general public about issues related to inequality and the right of women to have full control over their bodies (Elansary; Johnston). Thus, the graffiti painted in Tahrir Square or any other square in any other city in Egypt represented the complex power dynamics and different confronting political and social power structures in the post-Mubarak era. Artists were keen to educate people about the complexities of the struggle for freedom and teach people that the battle is not only against Mubarak but against interlocking systems of oppression.

The other attribute to the Tahrir graffiti is the wide range of impact of the graffiti beyond the walls of Tahrir Square. The paintings did not stay on the walls but were able to travel everywhere within Egypt and beyond its borders by being photographed and posted online. Paintings were photographed by artists themselves, protesters, international media, researchers, and even non-politicized pedestrians, and then posted online. Famous graffiti artist, Bahia Shehab, asserts that there are two major motivations for her to post her Tahrir graffiti online: Firstly, it gave a further new form of life and a new meaning (Shehab 165). Secondly, by posting the paintings online, it helped both artists and protesters maintain the ability to keep telling the story of the Revolution on the street in the hope that they might change our future and the future of a whole

nation (Shehab). Thus, the graffiti played a crucial role in maintaining a collective memory constructed by women. However, this was not an easy task, as El Nossery asserts that “women’s participation in the graffiti has not been massive, it is worth noting that their contribution to this artistic field remains significant, inasmuch as the access of Egyptian women to the relatively new and challenging” (148). But Egyptian women were able to transform this challenge into an opportunity to fight different forms of oppression.

The dissemination of the graffiti paintings either on various social media platforms or through mass media helped international viewers engage with international audiences and create what Johnston called the ‘participant viewer’. “A participant viewer remains engaged in the issues after the initial contact and becomes a further avenue of dissemination” (Johnston 181). Johnston asserts that the international media used the pictures of the graffiti as a backdrop for new reports, “a visual aid and a ‘translation’ of events that created an immediate context for the viewer.” (181). It also did provide women’s issues and struggles with an important transnational visibility (El Mossery).

Broadcasting the graffiti on international TV stations and posting them on various international social media pages made artists become aware that they need to integrate internationally-recognized symbols and captions in both English and Arabic, so a wider audience could be engaged. Abaza says:

A myriad of symbols derived from either mass culture like superman and superwoman with reversals, to borrowings from Banksy’s graffiti, often accompanied with Arabic slogans and text messages such as “no to military rule,” or simply by drawing the word “no” and a thousand times “no” in different calligraphic forms by art historian Bahia Shehab. (320)

Some of the slogans were also written in English as well. Thus, artists were obviously aware of the importance of the use of text and aesthetic languages and symbols that would not only be communicated with local audiences, but international audiences as well. The travel of the graffiti from the walls to different local and transnational spheres did not only benefit the fight for emancipation but also played a role in language and the applied artistic characteristics of the graffiti.

It should be mentioned that it was not only news reports that used graffiti as a backdrop but documentaries that did the same. In summary, the importance and contribution of graffiti must be understood within these three important attributes: the long history of the usage of art in political activism in Egypt, the various complex process of the creation of the paintings in terms of interactions between artists and non-artists in developing the paintings, and also in terms of the various languages used by artists, and finally, in terms of the various intentional objectives that artists were trying to achieve from their paintings.

This backdrop is important to understand and analyze the different ways that filmmakers included the graffiti in the different films. The position and centrality of the Tahrir Square graffiti varied from one documentary to another. The important role played by graffiti paintings and female protesters in the Revolution motivated filmmaker, Mark Nickolas, to direct and produce *Nefertiti's Daughters*. The documentary focuses merely on the different processes of painting graffiti during the different phases of the Revolution. The film focused on contextualizing the history of graffiti art in Egypt. Special attention was given to the paintings produced by female graffiti artists, like Bahia Shehab. *Nefertiti's Daughters* focused on the different ways that graffiti was used to educate the general public on gender issues. The tension between the protesters on one

side and Islamists and military on other side of the issue of “Dawala Madanyia” (Civil state) was also reflected on the paintings and shown in the documentary.

The other interesting way of representing graffiti in the documentary was the way filmmaker Jehane Noujaim did in the *The Square*⁹. Noujaim included Tahrir graffiti in two major

ways. Firstly, the graffiti was shown as the background of the frame when she was filming in the Tahrir Square. Secondly, the graffiti was used as a transition card between the different scenes in the film. The graffiti reflected the time period and the major attribute and/or major political conflict that took place during the period covered in that specific scene. Thus, the documentary did not focus on graffiti *per se*, but showed that graffiti played an important role in the formation of the documentary and in depicting each chapter correctly. Thirdly, the documentary was keen to show that graffiti art “represent[ed] a crucial means to comment on the political situation and publicly denounce political situation and publicly denounce political and judicial abuses” (Telmissany 124). In conclusion, Noujaim integrated the graffiti in her documentary to help the audience contextualize the events but also to better structure the film itself.

The graffiti was used in another way in the documentary, *Alyaa the Naked Revolutionary*. An interview was filmed with Laila Magued (the narrator introduced her as a feminist and a graphic designer who lives in Cairo). Beside the wall of the American University, the documentary showed a graffiti piece that combined both Samira Ibrahim (the girl who experienced a virginity test) and Alyaa El Mahdi (the activist who posted her nude picture online) to comment on what Alyaa did. Filming the interview with Laila beside the graffiti on the AUC walls, while she is comparing and contrasting Alyaa’s naked picture and Samira Ibrahim’s virginity test provided the audience with

⁹ The only documentary on the Egyptian Revolution that is available on Netflix.

better visualization and contextualization. Other documentaries did not include graffiti in the same way, but they were still in the background of the frame when filming was taking place in Tahrir Square.

The documentary, *Nefertiti's Daughters*, was constructed around the Tahrir Square graffiti. Therefore, a special focus analyzing the various forms of graffiti is provided in this section. The documentary was titled after one of the graffiti pieces which features ancient Queen Nefertiti wearing a gas mask. This documentary was keen to overcome two major limitations in the narrative and discourse around the Revolution. Firstly, *Nefertiti's Daughters* provided a very important historical contextualization to the graffiti art in Egypt. One could argue that one of the major objectives of this documentary is to show that graffiti art has a long history in Egyptian culture that can be traced back to ancient civilization. The historical discourse around the Tahrir Square graffiti is one of the major critiques of the Western media coverage of Tahrir Square graffiti (Abaza). Thus, the documentary was keen to respond to this critique by historicizing both the usage of wall paintings and women's activism. The filmmakers focus on a specific graffiti piece which is the picture of Nefertiti wearing a gas mask. Graffiti artist and scholar, Bahia Shehab, commented on the graffiti painting for Nefertiti wearing a mask saying:

Nefertiti wearing a gas mask is a call, it says to build on history so not necessary with a gas mask as I called it says to build on history, so it's building on a very iconic historical image of women of Egyptian women and again adding the gas mask. Immediately tells you that she came to life. She's part of this Revolution. (*Nefertiti's Daughters* 00:28:15)

However one could argue that the filmmakers decided to focus on Nefertiti to serve two purposes. First, to historicize both the role of Egyptian women in politics and governance, and secondly, to attract non-Arab viewers by using a pharaonic icon that easily resonates with

Westerners, who find Pharaonic culture mysterious and exotic. In addition to the notion of historicizing women's activism and art, the documentary perfectly depicted the interlocking systems of the oppression and stressed that the fight for emancipation is beyond the binary of the Islamism and secularism.

The documentary was keen to respond to the historicizing and contextualizing of graffiti in Egypt. Therefore, Ammar Abo Bakr, a university professor and one of the most active graffiti artists during the Revolution, was one of the major characters interviewed in the documentary. The documentary filmed Ammar Abo Bakr in front of Egyptian temples in Upper Egypt (the southern part of Egypt) as he spoke of how the Egyptians painted their different stories on the walls. Ammar Abo Bakr also showed graffiti on the walls of current homes in different villages where Muslims did pilgrimage in Mecca with drawings of El Ka'ba (a sacred Islamic site) on the walls of their homes. Christians do the same thing as Christian peasants in some villages will draw a big graffiti for Saint Mary or Saint George on the walls of their houses. The graffiti is not a new form of art for Egyptians. However, the Revolution and the closure of the public sphere and the transformation of public spaces from a safe, inclusive space to a dangerous, exclusive space made both people and artists use graffiti on a wider scale and to serve political purposes.

The documentary was not only keen to historicize the graffiti art in Egypt, but also to show the cultural diversity in Egypt through showing the art of Ammar Abo Bakr. Late feminist scholar, Mona Abaza, did analyze the work of Ammar Abo Bakr to conclude that:

While Ammar Abo Bakr is who is a highly prolific muralist, became famous for painting over dimensional fantastic portraits. He often shifted in styles ranging from resorting to Islamic symbols like the buraq,³ and to reproducing traditional murals of the returning Hajjis (those who go to the pilgrimage), popular in the countryside, to Quranic calligraphy

to counteract the Islamists by combating them on their own ground, to portrayals of police soldiers in demonstrations. However, Abo Bakr constantly borrows from a myriad of Western and non-Western traditions. For instance, he recently painted the Mohamed Mahmoud Wall in pink to ponder about the complex relationship between the people and the army, while remaining satirical. Abo Bakr states that his recent wall was inspired from Andy Warhol. (Abaza 321)

Abo Bakr's interviews and works appeared in the film, in addition to Abaza's, and reflects two important aspects. Firstly, Abo Bakr mentioned many times in his interviews that he is against the Muslim Brotherhood and against Islamists. However, he painted a huge number of graffiti pieces that reflected diversity in Egyptian society. The fact that he is against Islamists doesn't mean that he does not celebrate his Islamic culture and use Quranic calligraphy to counteract to Islamist discourses. Therefore, Abo Bakr's work in this case acted as "conscious public pedagogy" (Johnston 183), teaching the public both in Egypt and abroad that there is difference between Islam as both a religion and culture on one side and political Islam on the other side.

The other important aspect is that graffiti artists were not only keen to reflect on the diversity of the various elements that constitute the Egyptian culture but also to borrow from other forms of art, especially cinema. Graffiti artists reprinted some of the famous female characters in Egyptian films to confirm a certain message. Sometimes, the fictional characters would be painted but with changes either to the character or by adding a certain message for empowerment and in many cases subverting the male gaze. The graffiti image of El Sat Amina is a very good example of the reproduction of fictional characters to empower women. The "graffiti of Amina" is a very good example of how female artists created some paintings to claim their voices and to reorient the male gaze. Amina is a fictional character that appeared in a 1964 Egyptian film, based on the

Cairo Trilogy, written by Nobel prize winner, Naguib Mahfouz (*Palace Walk, Palace of Desire, Sugar Street*). Amina is a very passive, obedient character, who is not allowed to leave her house without the permission of Mr. Sayed, her husband. After the attack on the women's march in 2011, female artists mobilized and drew graffiti in Cairo and in various cities across Egypt. Their main objective was to spread the revolutionary spirit from the capital city of Cairo all over Egypt, with a special focus on women's issues. One of the most significant works is a piece of graffiti they painted on a big wall in the city of Alexandria; a huge picture of Amina with the text, "Enough shit, Mr. Sayed / my lord / my master". Beside her, on a smaller scale, are painted the faces of influential and prominent Egyptian women. However, "on the wall, and contrary to the character in the novel and film, Amina is portrayed, in accordance with the project's objective, as master of the whole scene and occupying center stage" (Sami 99). Sami asserts that in this graffiti, "Amina materializes as an empowered women who breaks her silence and strikes back at her master, saying 'Enough shit'" (100). Scholars who analyze female representation in graffiti (Abuelnaga, Assaad, Sami) conclude that these works of street art reorient the male gaze and destabilize women's stereotypical roles.

Bahia Shehab was one the major characters in the documentary. Shehab's work reflected the different applications of graffiti raging from empowering women through subverting the male gaze, honoring victims/survivors of sexual violence in Tahrir Square, and more importantly, claiming women's bodies. The different artwork presented for Shehab reflected the complexity of fighting for women's liberation beyond the binary of secularism and Islamism. Shehab expressed in multiple of her interviews that the wall was a place to communicate with other women to encourage them to rebel but also to communicate with men telling them that the Revolution transformed women as they are no longer passive, obedient, and mainly located in the private

sphere. Shehab asserts that the graffiti paintings are not only a reflection of the political and social reality of women, but a reflection to the “position and status of women in different walks of life” (Shehab 173). The different attacks on women in Tahrir Square especially the incident of virginity tests and the public stripping of the girl, known as the “blue bra” incident, informed the different artistic initiatives/campaigns developed by Shehab. The documentary focused on three major artistic campaigns created by Bahia Shehab, including “Different forms of No”, “Rebel Cat”, and “the Azan”. The escalation of violence women in Tahrir Square experienced in general, along with the two most famous incidents: “the Blue Bra” and the virginity test”, informed and contributed to Shehab’s artistic line. It is important to mention that the military was the perpetrator in both events and that Islamists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, who supported the perpetrator in both incidents, which highly contributed to the way Shehab developed her art.

Shehab decided to paint the word “No” in Arabic, in many the different forms and in different Arabic calligraphy. Underneath, she wrote the issue that she is refusing. For example “No” to sexual harassment, “No” to military trials, “No” to stripping the girls, etc. The documentary presented the different ways Shehab wrote “No”. Shehab did numerous paintings of “No” to girls stripped of their clothing and under it, she painted a blue bra in reference to the veiled woman stripped by the military (Shehab). Shehab did perceive her paintings as the way she can contribute to the conversation that both the police and the military are criminals and corrupt (Shehab). Thus, Shehab’s “No” paintings reflected the diversity of Arab culture paralleled by the diverse calligraphy she used. The paintings were able to keep the conversation regarding women’s control over their bodies alive and present, not only in Egypt, but beyond its borders as the pictures for Shehab’s painting traveled everywhere.

The second major campaign developed by Shehab was “Rebel Cat”. Shehab painted cats on the different walls of Tahrir Square and under the picture of the cat, she wrote “تمردى يا قطة”, meaning Rebel Cat. Men in Egypt will call women “cats” and they will cat-call them when they harass them on the streets. Shehab’s paintings used the cat in a different way than the way men use it to humiliate women. She subverted the male gaze and empowered women by asking them to rebel. Bahia says:

Intended to feminize the act of rebellion, my تمردى يا قطة (‘Rebel Cat’) campaign was a call to women to join the revolution. I used the feminine form of the verb ‘rebel’ to ensure women understood that the campaign was addressing them, and قطة (‘cat’) because it was a recognizable ‘howl’ that men sometimes used as a term of flirtation in addressing women on the street.(173)

Bahia Shehab, and other women, used graffiti to communicate and express their demands for liberation and claim ownership over their bodies through reorientating the male gaze. The parallels they developed between Samira Ibrahim and Alyaa El Mahdi delivered the strong message that women’s bodies are not docile and that women are the only owners of their bodies. The graffiti of the “blue bra girl” with encouraging words on it is a good example, not only for the reclaiming of their bodies but also as a form of solidarity between women.

Islamists shamed the girl and questioned her presence in the conflicts and commented that she was not wearing anything under her abayia (long dress). But the artists refuted these victimblaming efforts and supported her in her activism. Many women and girls couldn’t be present in Tahrir Square because of the sexual violence, but they were able to present and claim their bodies and freedom via graffiti.

The filmmaker did not only focus on presenting the work of different street artists but focused on contextualizing it and developing analytical frameworks for the art. The filmmaker interviewed Christiane Gruber, Professor of Islamic Art at the University of Michigan, to analyze the graffiti by female artists, like Bahia Shehab. Gruber asserts that artists used street art as a weapon to defend their freedom. The military uses tanks and guns to oppress people and artists create street art to counter them. Gruber describes street art as a “rhetoric device.” Shehab describes street art as a “canvas to speak to people.” Both male and female artists assert that they were trying to present an alternative voice to the voice of the state officials, politicians, and media, through street art. Thus, young men and women during the Revolution were not only rebelling against the state power but also against politicians including the opposition led by the elite. Thus, the interviewed artists assert that because street art is “accessible and universal”, they were able to create alternative voices to the dominant voices.

Different factors converged together to lead to the disappearance of graffiti from Tahrir Square. Generally, the surge of violence against female protesters in Tahrir started to include female artists. The streets became unsafe for them. Johnston documented that some male activists and artists bothered a group of female artists who were working on feminist paintings. Similarly, to Al-Fan Midan, a deep process of cleansing and washing all the graffiti paintings took place when General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected as the president of Egypt in June 2014 (Shehab). Shehab expressed concerns over her personal safety after a 19-year-old street artist, Hisham Rizk, was found dead in mysterious circumstances (Shehab). The complete removal of the street art by the El-Sisi regime was an obvious message that artists and activists are no longer welcomed on the streets. “The regime’s message rang loud and clear: artists are no longer welcome on the street. The city does not belong to us anymore; we are strangers here again” (Shehab 175). Egypt’s new

administration under El-Sisi recognized the power of the graffiti and perceived it as a threat, not only in political mobilization but also in maintaining specific revolutionary discourse within Egypt's collective memory through pictures of martyrs. Thus, Telmissany argues that "street art has become a threat to the centers of power that systematically wipe out the graffiti as if to wipe out the martyrs' memory and state violence against protesters" (125). Therefore, the new El-Sisi administration not only blocked the protesters to reach Tahrir Square but also blocked all the creative ways and means to express dissent.

In the last scene of the documentary, *Daughters of Nefertiti*, Shehab spoke about one of the exhibitions she is curating in Berlin. The exhibition showed paintings of mosques minarets. Shehab explains that the minarets are crucial in Islam as they are the place to do the call for prayers (Azan). She explains that men are always the only ones allowed to call for prayers. Thus, she got a female soprano to record the call for prayers. She then integrated the recording with her Berlin exhibition. The film ended by playing this song. It seems to me that the filmmakers end the film with the Azan to say that women did not participate in the 2011 Revolution to only advance political change but also to call for social and religious reforms. The documentary, *Daughters of Nefertiti*, ended by an extreme wide shot for Cairo and the voice of Bahia Shehab reciting the Azan (the Islamic Call for prayers). The way the documentary ended was with a message that women's voices will always be present in the public sphere despite the various forms of oppression that they experience and that neither the military nor the Islamists would be able to silence women.

3. Information Communication Technologies

The 2011 Revolution was known as the Facebook Revolution because of the important role the different social media platforms played in mobilization for the Revolution. Therefore, the 2011 Egyptian Revolution should be understood as a sort of hybrid Revolution. David Brake, Zeynep

Tufekci, and Patrick McCurdy are three communication scholars who collectively created an opensource list, compiling all the scholarly and non-scholarly work related to media and communication in the context of the Egyptian uprising. The document titled “A (Working) Arab Spring Reading” contains hundreds of scholarly and non-scholarly references analyzing the role of social media and the different uses of ICTs during the Egyptian Revolution. Only one out of all these hundreds of references integrated gender in its analysis. Newsom and Lenger applied the framework of digital reflexivity in analyzing gender and online activism. Thus, female voices are not oppressed in both activism and scholarly aspects because of a huge blind spot for women who are both political activists and who are not using social media in the context of the revolution. Allam asserts that ICTs, particularly social media, allowed different women to participate in the mobilization process for the Revolution and be safe at the same time. Therefore, a documentary, like *Words of Witness*, showed how social media played an important role in the Revolution and in changing the power dynamics in both the private and public sphere. On the contrary, a documentary, like *I Am the People*, showed that social media did not play any role in how people on the extreme margin perceived and reacted with the Revolution simply because they don’t have internet where they live.

One could argue that applying framing theory as a theoretical concept to conceptualize the contribution or the lack of contribution of social media would provide a nuanced understanding of the different dynamics in challenging the power relations within the private and public spheres.

Vliegthart defines framing in a very general sense as follows: “Framing in mass communication is about how [political] issues are presented” (937). From a communications perspective, framing is “a central organizing idea, suggesting what is at issue” (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 118), and “frames are expressed over time as a storyline” (118). However, media frames have been defined

by Gitlin as “... persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” (7). Thus, it is important to compare and contrast how the frames developed by the mass media in the absence of social media contributed to the people’s reaction to the existing power dynamics to the ones developed in the presence of social media.

It is beyond the scope of this project to fill the gap in the literature related to gender and social media within the context of the Egyptian Revolution. However, it is important to develop some contrasts between the use of Heba to social media and the absence of the internet in some places. Castells aptly asserts that the Egyptian Revolution is an excellent application to “networked social movements” where the movement is connected with each other horizontally without any form of formal or informal leadership. Therefore, Newsom and Lengel assert that “online activism provides the potential for empowerment to marginalized voices, provides the opportunity for crossboundary dialogue, and provides an impetus for social change” (33). Thus, it is important to analyze the existence of social media and the different ways young Egyptians used it when developing social change in different spheres. On the other hand, people who don’t have access to internet and social media were deprived from being able to actively participate in creating social change in many spheres.

The documentary *Words of Witness* showed that social media, especially Twitter, not only represents an alternative independent source of news, unlike the TV stations who are doing propaganda for SCAF as shown in many scenes during the film, but also as a source of support and solidarity. The change in the power dynamics between Heba and her mother as presented in *Words of Witness* is a good example. The mother who is always giving the daughter hard times and maintaining her authority over her by instructing Afify what to do and not to do- is always

asking Afify to teach her how to use social media. This can be analyzed in two ways. Firstly, that the social media enables young people to gain a sort of power over the elders of their family and in different communities. Secondly, Afify and other young people who have a presence on social media seem more knowledgeable to their parents and have solutions to the political complexities that took place after the ousting of Mubarak. For example, the mother went to Afify after one of the protests where the military used excessive violence against the protesters. She said the following:

Heba: Hi, Mother

Heba's Sister: Did you watch the videos of military arresting and torturing the protesters?

Heba: I hope you believe (that the military is against democracy)

Heba's mother: I've been convinced since yesterday and I've been fighting since yesterday.

Whenever I see the Army, I get pissed off.

Heba: I'm going to share on Facebook all the testimonials I filmed for the people who have tortured by the Army so you can send them to whoever doesn't believe.

Heba's mother: And then what, Heba? If the Army isn't our father, then who is? Heba:

We must learn how to live without a father; we have to be dependent on someone for many decades. We have to take care of ourselves. (*Words of Witness* 00:48:1000:50:00)

This short conversation between the mother, Afify, and her sister highlights the complexity of the power structure that Heba is both living within and challenging at the same time. This short conversation provides a three-dimensional fold to the structure of the power. Firstly, the disciplinary power practiced by military on the protesters. Secondly, the cultural and interpersonal domains of power manifested in the mother's responses to Heba and her emphasis on the

importance of following a father figure. Thirdly, the structural domain of power. There are many ways to define the structural domain of power, but in this context, it is important to highlight the element of knowledge production and producing knowledge that support certain forms of framing strategy. Collins and Bilge assert that “these are the structural, cultural, disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power, respectively. Looking at how power works in each domain can shed light on the dynamics of a larger social phenomenon” (27). Therefore, it could be argued that the conversation that took place between Heba, her mother, and her sister reflect a larger phenomenon at that time. The larger phenomenon is that the military is trying to impose disciplinary power to impose on them certain path. “In essence, power operates by disciplining people in ways that put people’s lives on paths that make some options seem viable and others out of reach” (9). But the other major aspect is that these power domains are also reproduced by the mothers in the private sphere. But, as Foucault asserts, that power is not possessed. Heba was able to use the social media to challenge the combined effort of different domains of power and at the same time challenge the institutional limitations imposed on her by the media organization she was working for by using social media as a space where she can publish whatever she wants to publish. Through social media, she was able to challenge disciplinary domain of power imposed both by the military and her mother by publishing stories about the testimonials for the people who were tortured by the military. Publishing these testimonials contributed to the construction of different frames related to role of the military in protecting the people, the country, and the Revolution.

The protagonists of the documentary, *I Am the People*, are in contrast to the protagonists in *Words of Witness* because they don’t have internet in the village where they are living. However, there are two important framing processes that should be unfolded in analyzing the construction of frames in *I Am the People*. The first one is the framing process adopted by the filmmaker while

making the film and the second is the framing process developed by the mainstream media (firstly by the state-owned TV, then by private TV stations later in the film). The film's title is taken from the name of one of Umm Kulthum's songs. Umm Kulthum is one of the most famous Egyptian singers since the late 1940's. The lyrics are "The people shouted very loudly, strongly, and deeply say we can do miracles and we do not know the impossible." Umm Kulthum sang it in 1964.

Although it is an old song, it was extensively used after the ousting of Mubarak. The words of the song are praising Egyptians and their ability to fight various forms of injustice and perform miracles. However, the film developed a representation for the people who are not politically involved and who did not feel that the Revolution contributed to their lives in any positive way. On the contrary, the documentary portrays the hardship and the uncertainty that the Revolution brought as the financial situation became harder. The prices of the food become expensive. The gas cylinders that they use to cook and warm the houses become very hard to find. In one of the interviews, Faraj's little daughter responds to Anna's question on if the Revolution changed anything in the village by saying "Nothing at all. As if nothing had ever happened". Thus, one could argue that the frame of "I'm the people" from the perspective of the filmmaker is completely different than the one from the perspective of the main protagonists. The filmmaker perceived it from a victorious sway by using the part of Umm Kulthum singing "I'm the people who can do anything". On the other hand, the protagonists perceive themselves as the ones who can't do anything.

Anna was trying to develop a certain frame of the Egyptian people by using this title and by starting the film with that part of the song. For the entire film, Anna was trying to develop and create persistent frames to glorify the Revolution. However, the reality was more complicated and miserable than the romantic frames that Anna was trying to establish. The film came to criticize

the Revolution and not to glorify it. For the entire film, the audience learns about the Revolution from the TV. Faraj was always watching the news and Anna was filming what was showing on the TV. There is an essential aspect of what was screened on the TV. The change in the representation of the protests and other political events between the coverage of state-owned TV and private/foreign TV stations. Early in the film, a conversation via Skype took place between Anna (in Paris, France) and Faraj (in Luxor, Egypt) about the protests taking place in Cairo, Egypt.

Anna, who was watching the demonstrations through the lens of the private TV station, like AlJazeera, was happy about the events taking place at Tahrir Square.

On the contrary, Faraj thought that all these protests would be over soon and Mubarak would not be ousted. There are two major factors that contributed to the development of Faraj's early position toward the Revolution. The first one is the existence of protests supporting Mubarak's regime that took place in Luxor (the nearest city to Faraj's village). These protests were not covered by private TV stations that Anna and the West were watching. The second important factor is that state-owned TV that he was watching claimed that the protests will end soon. It is important to mention that at this point, Faraj did not have access to any other alternative news sources either through the internet or non-state-owned TV stations. Consequently, the different representations of the Revolution made Anna and Faraj adopt different positions towards the events taking place mainly in Tahrir Square as they were exposed to different frames.

The absence of internet and various forms of ICTs in the village played an extremely important role in the way the residents of the village interacted and communicated with each other and the way they interacted with politics. The people in the village still use very primitive, traditional ways to announce any news related to the village like announcing the death of someone or the opening of a new store by hiring a person who walks the village with a megaphone to make

the announcement. Men meet at the end of the day speak about issues of public interest. They do not discuss issues via Facebook or Whatsapp as the residents of the urban areas do. Thus, their only connection to the revolutionary events taking place, mainly in Tahrir Square, is through the representation that they see on TV. The conversation between Faraj and the other men in the village show that almost all of them only have access to the state-owned TV and don't have access to satellite TV.

Habermas determined specific conditions for the ideal public sphere. These conditions are: equal access, rationality, voices of common people as opposed to experts, and value given to the opinion (message) despite the social position of the speaker (sender). However, all these conditions are not available in case of Faraj or the residents of the village. The situation of women is even worse as they don't have access to the male gatherings where they speak about politics. They are even afraid to vote in the election as they think that the police might torture them if they voted for someone unwanted by the police. This explains Faraj's wife's position regarding the people who were killed in Tahrir Square. She did not express any sympathy toward them, saying "no one told them to go there". She felt that she was not part of this public sphere because her voice was absent and there was no way for her to make her voice heard. It could be argued that Faraj's wife was deprived from being able to physically participate in the Revolution because of the intersection of gender and her residential location and also from being able to virtually participate through the internet. Consequently, it could be argued that because of her inability to participate in the Revolution in any form, she did not feel that the Revolution represented her.

The comparison of the role of the internet between the two documentaries show that social media did contribute to the Revolution in many ways. Only social media was able to provide an

alternative source of information that enabled different people to challenge the different frames constructed by mainstream media (regardless of who owns them) and to develop their own frames. Social media enabled women to be part of the political conversation as women couldn't physically be a part of the public conversation either because of safety concerns, as in Tahrir Square, or because of social conservatism and embedded patriarchy for women on the physical periphery and in marginalized communities. Social media also provided women, especially young women, with tools that they could use to gain power within their very close private sphere, the family. Finally, access/lack of access to social media played a crucial role in presence or absence of strong feelings towards the importance of the Revolution and the different values the Revolution was trying to represent.

4. Activism Through Film

It is important to highlight that filming and documenting the Revolution was a difficult and dangerous task because of many complex factors. These factors vary from personal safety as many of the documentaries filmed brutal tensions that took place in Tahrir and beyond. It could be argued that female filmmakers faced social conservatism and embedded patriarchy as an extra layer of complexity in their work. Social conservatism as a barrier was very clear and explicit in the documentary, *I Am the People*, by Anna Roussillon.

Roussillon reflected on the complexity of doing such a film from the first second of the film. The film started with Faraj's female neighbor telling Anna that she doesn't want to be shot and then makes fun of her body because she thinks Anna is very thin. Faraj's female neighbour always commented on Anna's body by telling her that she will not be able to find someone to marry because of her very thin body. In different parts of the film, Faraj's friends question Anna's ability to do certain things, like go to Cairo and film the protests taking place in Tahrir Square. The

other important aspect is the police stopping her from filming specific events. In a conversation about the elections, Faraj told one of his friends that Anna couldn't shoot him while he is voting because she didn't have permits from the police. The cultural nature of this village as a conservative place- could have also contributed to the complexity of filming such a documentary given the fact that Anna doesn't look the way the women of the village look.

Therefore, Anna had to negotiate different imposed social codes in order to be able to film the documentary.

On the other hand, documentaries filmed in Cairo might not have faced social conservatism explicitly, like documentaries filmed far from the center, but there were definitely risks of violence and personal safety. A very good example is from the documentary, *Words of Witness*, by Mai Iskander. Unlike *I Am the People*, Mai chose not to have a conversation with her characters. Mai is always behind the camera. Heba, the main character, speaks looking directly to the camera for some occasions but Heba never directs her words toward Mai. Exceptionally, Heba did speak directly to Mai while Mai was following Heba joining the protesters raiding on the building of national security. Heba directed her words to Mai and told her not to be afraid and to come and walk beside her. This scene reflects the fact that female filmmakers put themselves in dangerous positions in order to document very special moments in the history of Egypt and women's deviance. Therefore, the female filmmakers were not only keen to document the Revolution but also to challenge various forms of epistemological injustices. Telmissany asserts the various transnational filmmakers who were present in Tahrir Square and were filming are "themselves instances of defiance against the dominance of male filmmakers and traditional patriarchy in Egyptian cinema (3). Telmissany argues that these female filmmakers were contributing to the establishment of epistemic defiance. "An epistemic defiance is, therefore, a form of cultural

resistance through the process of knowledge production and circulation; it defies conservative norms and perceptions of gendered identities and destabilizes the common understanding of women's participation (or lack thereof) in the revolution” (2). Thus, the film itself and the various stories in the film show that this Revolution is not only about Mubarak and his political regime but also against the hegemonic ways of producing knowledge.

The second important issue in this film is the reconstruction of the dichotomy between the east and west. Both Jehane Noujaim (the filmmaker) and Khaled Abdalla (the main character in the documentary) are dual citizens. Noujaim is an American and of Egyptian origin, and Abdalla is British and of Egyptian origin. The filmmaker was keen on making sure that the audience knew that Abdalla was living abroad and that he came back to Egypt to participate in the Revolution. Thus, two essential aspects should unfold here. Firstly, the role of transnational filmmakers, like Noujaim, or transnational activists, like Abdalla, challenged the meaning and the impact of public defiance. Telmissany posits that films produced by transnational filmmakers “allow us to expand the meaning and the impact of civic defiance outside the borders of one country (Egypt) and beyond dichotomous regimes of knowledge (western versus Middle Eastern; global versus local)” (2). Thus, this adds a layer of complexity to the Revolution in Egypt because even though it was a very local event, it had a global impact. However, the role of transnational people in the protests and how they were represented by the media in either documentaries like this one or in the coverage of the Western press should be problematized. Allam analyzed all the New York Times news stories on the 18 days of the Revolution. She found that highlighting the Western-Egyptian citizenship for some female activists is very common in the coverage. Thus, Allam argues that either intentionally or unintentionally, the reports were trying to suggest that these women were more emancipated by constructing this representation.

On the other side, Allam asserts "while I acknowledge that the inclusion of these activists in the coverage reflects a positive development, the approach is inadequate for capturing women's experience and for deconstructing the legacy of old misrepresentations" (40). Thus, the emphasis on the dual citizenship of the activists could be interpreted in different ways and develop different consequences on different levels. Some might argue that the Revolution was not an exceptional moment where diverse people came together to fight for freedom, but instead, was a Western conspiracy lead by dual citizens. Allam asserts that "it can be denounced as an attempt to rearrange rather than reject the vocabulary of western supremacy" (148). In summary, regardless of how the role of the transnational people can be interpreted, the Egyptian Revolution provided dual citizens with an opportunity for them to feel that they could effectively contribute to their home country. Thus, this was another layer in the relationship between the private and public as was the fact that they had another citizenship that came with different privileges, like freedom of speech, mobility, and more access to funding (Telmissany). However, they decided to use these privileges to challenge binary thinking and contribute to building bridges between various cultures. Telmissany argues that transnational filmmakers have:

The opportunity to move freely across geographic, cultural and cinematic borders, filmmakers are compelled to build bridges between homeland and host land, articulating Arab aspirations for change and liberation and deconstructing conventional representations of gendered and nationalist identities through processes of diaspora-building and acculturation. (329)

Therefore, the female transnational filmmakers who made these documentaries were conscious of their own position and of the importance of their role in challenging binary thinking.

A major task for transnational filmmakers is to “challenge their colonial past and their neo-colonial present by critically engaging with the history of (post) colonization between male and female, centers and peripheries, local circuits and global networks” (Telmissany 329). Thus, the documentaries were able to represent the complexity of the Egyptian Revolution beyond the binary frame and construct a representation that reflected different nuances and the interlocking systems of oppression that Egyptian women experience on a daily basis in both the private and public spheres.

The movement between different cultures not only manifested in the fact that some of the filmmakers and protagonists were holding other nationalities beside the Egyptian citizenship, like Khaled Abdalla in *The Square*, but also manifested in showing some characters who are only Egyptian but move within different cultures on a daily basis. The example of Heba Afify and her sister in the documentary, *Words of Witness*, is a very good example. I would argue that Afify is present and moving between different cultures. The first one is the Islamic, patriarchal, masculine culture imposed by her parents, her mother in particular. The second one is the work culture. AlMasry El-Youm English where Heba works is owned by a well-established independent newspaper called Al-Masry El-Youm. The majority of reporters who work with Heba are women. Afify is the only girl wearing a hijab among her co-workers. Most of them are also of non-Egyptian origin. Thus, they are always speaking English. The dominant culture at Afify’s workplace is more liberal, open, and westernized. The third culture is more of a global culture coming mainly from the internet. For example, Afify’s sister, who is one year older than her, is not a political person, who has a good income, loves cooking, and chooses to wear a hijab, but she is always on Youtube, watching American cooking shows learning how to cook American cuisine. Consequently, Afify’s exposure to all these cultures, in addition to the revolutionary spirit in the country, contributed to

her rebelling against the patriarchal and masculine values her mother wanted to impose on her and helped her have a hyphenated culture identity. Therefore, transnational filmmakers who did documentaries, like in the case of Mai Iskander, Jehane Noujaim, and Anna Roussillon, were keen to represent the Revolution in their documentaries beyond any binary form. Telmissany argues that “expressions of subversive revolutionary discourses that dispense with dualisms and rifts such as male/female agencies, east/west divides, successful/failed revolutions inspire the secularist views of transnational film-makers and Egyptian women activists/revolutionaries” (124). The same argument can be applied to the graffiti artists that were keen to move beyond this binary of artists/revolutionaries by engaging with the protesters in the painting process.

5. Conclusion

A major limitation to this chapter is that it only covered the analysis of the different artistic manifestations presented in the documentaries. However, it has to be mentioned that there are much more cultural and artistic productions created and developed by women and about women in relation to the 2011 Revolution and the years that followed it. Different women decided to participate in the Revolution through art. Women produced films in various genres, designed choreographies, authored songs, wrote books (both fictional and autobiographies), painted graffiti, etc. The Revolution also encouraged different female artists and writers to complete projects that were almost finished before the Revolution but were either stopped or couldn't be published because of Mubarak's oppressive regime.

There are two examples for these projects: the women of the family of the late President Nasser were encouraged to publish the autobiography of the late Tahia Abd El Nasser, the wife of the late President Abd El Nasser. Nasser finished writing her autobiography almost forty years ago

but the family never had the nerve to publish it. The 2011 Revolution encouraged them to publish it. In the forward to the book, Hoda Abd El Nassar, the eldest child of Nasser wrote:

The publication of my mother's memoir was delayed because the prevailing political mood was hostile to Nasser in Egypt under the Sadat regime and to lesser extent during Mubarak's rule. Two months before the 25 January Revolution of 2011, we decided to publish the memoir, as a different mood was just beginning to form. (xi)

The 2011 Revolution defiantly developed a different mood on all levels and a different front. The Revolution motivated women not only to challenge the present political discourses but also to challenge the discourse about the past and subvert the masculine patriarchal construction of the nation's collective memory. Secondly, the famous Egyptian actress and producer, Elham Shahin, was inspired by the Revolution to finish the production of a film called "Youm lel Satat" (a day for women). The film was partially filmed under Mubarak. The production stopped as it was very critical to the regime. Similarly to the memoir of Tahia Abd El Nassar, Elham Shahin found that new mood created by the Revolution encouraged her to complete the film.

The other important artistic moment for women in the context of the Revolution was in 2012 when female ballet dancers performed ballet in public. As discussed in chapter 4, controlling women's bodies has long been a major preoccupation of Islamist groups. In 2012, shortly after the first elected president, Mohamed Morsi took office, he appointed Dr. Mohamed Saber Ibrahim Arab, a very conservative university professor, to be the Minister of Culture. One of the first things this new minister tried to do was to ban the art of ballet from Egypt. His justification was that women's bodies are sacred, and that practicing ballet is shameful to women's bodies (Abuelnaga; El Nossery). Female dancers quickly responded by organizing free public ballet performances in the streets surrounding the office of the Ministry of Culture. Abuelnaga asserts that the intention

of banning ballet was met by “the most radical form of resistance: performing ballet on the street” (53). One can argue this incident demonstrates that these Egyptian women refused to be the victims of misogyny and patriarchy and challenged power structures that attempted to dominate their bodies. This example also reflects the ability of Egyptian women in using arts as an activism tool toward their emancipation.

The Revolution also encouraged both filmmakers and documentary makers not to speak about the Revolution per se to reflect on the daily life oppression they face, especially in the private sphere, but also within the relationships between women from different generations and the complicated dynamics between them. *The Cactus Flower*, by filmmaker Hala El Koussy, is a good example of a film made by women for women in a post-Mubarak era that focuses on the development of new connections between women who don't have connections but because of the oppression they face, they form a sort of bond and collectively express their agency in fighting oppression. Another good example is the documentary by filmmaker and producer, Marianne Khoury. Khoury directed and produced, *Let Us Talk*, in 2019, to share her personal story and the relationship between herself and her daughter and her mother. The Revolution did create a new mood for women to reflect on themselves and analyze the power dynamics that shape their daily lives in both the private and public spheres and the various factors that control their bodies. They decided to liberate themselves in both spheres not only by actively participating in popular and official politics but by creating various forms of art and cultural productions.

Thus, it is important to highlight the aspects of the process and continuous activism to better understand these examples alongside the different and various cultural productions developed by female artists to fight interlocking systems of oppression. El Nossery asserts that “gendered art” (her research mainly focused on graffiti and street performance) should

be understood as “performative- contentious model of the public sphere, in which women are not only present but also defy the formulaic views that society and patriarchy impose on them” (145). The Revolution motivated more women to be present in the public space and to have a loud voice in the public sphere. Therefore, scholars like Telmissany and El Nossery argue that it is important to apply the Deleuze and Guattari notion of “becoming” and to understand the different art and culture productions as a rhizome and not a tree. “The tree is filiation, but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction...and this conjunction varies enough fore to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be’” (Deleuze and Guattari 24). In the same realm, Telmissany argues the same in regards to the cinematic pictures developed by female transnational filmmakers that “it is useful “to emphasize the process of becoming inherent to both the art of film-making and the movement of the Revolution” (123). Therefore, the evolution of the analyzed documentaries and the evaluation of the different forms of culture productions presented in the analyzed documentaries should be understood in the context of the evolution of the Revolution. The protesters did discover that toppling Mubarak was not going to achieve the demands of the Revolution – “Freedom, Bread, Social Justice and Human Dignity”- and that the Revolution should continue. Women discovered that toppling Mubarak, the main fatherhood figure in Egypt, would not dismantle patriarchy as there is a fatherhood figure in every home and every street. Therefore, they have to become revolutionaries and continue fighting against the patriarchy which produces interlocking systems of oppression. That process of “becoming” in real life was aptly reflected in all the art and cultural productions made by women. In conclusion, this chapter, echo Beseiso, argues that: The Egyptian Revolution did not simply add labels to subversive cultural forms (that is, “revolutionary” art, “revolutionary” music, and “revolutionary” film). Instead, its cultural producers altered the very way art was

thought of and approached -that is the process of creation, thereby revolutionizing and liberating the very practice of controlled cultural production that favored modernist art, which characterized the Egyptian cultural field prior to the revolution. (351)

It is important to conclude that activism through art and culture is not something that the

January 25 Revolution brought to Egypt but rather that the Revolution was able to amplify the role of art and culture production in the fight for freedom and social justice.

Conclusion: Not Really a Conclusion

It is very hard to conclude this research as the events related to the Revolution, not only in Egypt, but in other Arab countries, are still unfolding. The fact that 10 years had passed does not mean that anyone can conclude or even fully understand what happened, why it happened, and where things are going to go. The success of the Tunisians in forcing a well-established dictator and tyrant, Ben Ali, to escape the country and seek refuge in Saudi Arabia lit a global spark. Mass protests took place around the globe, not only to fight against a tyrant that could have easily been named Mubarak, Ben Ali, Gaddafi, etc., but also to fight oppressive, capitalist, neoliberal structures, for instance, the Occupy Movement. The mass protests that took place in 2011, in both Arab countries and non-Arab countries, had different trajectories. Some countries ended up in a civil war, like Libya. Other Arab countries, like Syria and Yemen, ended up with not only a civil war, but also wars with other countries, and with well-organized, Islamist militia, like ISIS in Syria. Therefore, it is important to highlight that the term “Arab Spring” does not reflect either a homogenous or monolithic reality and does not reflect a linear path to freedom and democracy. In Egypt, the overthrowing of Mubarak did not mark the end of the Revolution but the start of new era that is full of confrontations. Women did start the Revolution with the video of Asma Mahfouz and continued to be at the frontlines during the 18 days. Tahrir Square transformed from a symbol of liberation to a place of oppression. Violence become substantial in both the private and public sphere. As a result, women had to fight interlocking systems of oppression in both the public and private spheres simultaneously. The massive volume of violence and its brutality forced women to diversify their activist approaches and develop creative activist styles. Documentaries were one of these important of creative activism tools. Documentaries acted like important legal documents

that portrayed the diversified women's activism in both the private and public spheres to subvert interlocking systems of oppression and to claim ownership over their bodies. Intersectionality, both as a theory and analytical framework, especially the one developed by Collins and Bilge, was a very appropriate theoretical and analytical framework in analyzing women's activism depicted in these documentaries. Collins and Bilge's Model facilitated the analysis of the documentaries and enabled the researcher to be able to develop a nuanced understanding of the complex, and in some cases, paradoxical status of Egyptian women. However, the expectational, and very important, women's activism motivated me to propose a new analytical framework that might fill some of the analytical gaps present in different analytical models. The new proposed model is called "The Triple C" model. The model is constructed around three analytical aspects: Context, Contradictions, and Commonalties. The proposed "Triple C" model is explained in detail after a detailed discussion on the contribution of the Collins and Bilge's model in analyzing Egyptian women's activism during the 2011 Revolution as represented in some documentaries.

The film analysis conducted in this dissertation is mainly based on the intersectional framework developed by Collins and Bilge including the following six analytical aspects: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, and social injustice. The first aspect of the framework is social inequality. "Intersectionality exists because many people were deeply concerned by the forms of social inequality, they either experienced themselves or saw around the intersectionality encourages understandings of social inequality based on interactions among various categories" (Collins and Bilge 26). The documentaries showed that the Revolution did not bring any adjustments or any economic reforms to the country. On the contrary, the Revolution brought more economic hardship to the people. The Revolution trajectory did not bring any economic reform as the ruling elite wanted to maintain the status quo and made sure that their

interests were being served. That's why it was very important for Anna Roussillon to film the daily life experiences of Egyptians who were living on the extreme periphery by documenting Faraj's family and his neighbour's daily life.

It is equally important to highlight that it is impossible to understand the repercussions of the Revolution without understanding the intersection of location, class, and gender in shaping the daily life of the characters. Faraj's neighbour and Faraj's daughter said that they did not benefit at all from the Revolution but became more damaged. Faraj's female neighbour had more difficulties doing the domestic work because of the economic hardship Egypt witnessed after the toppling of Mubarak. The trajectory of the Revolution and the inability of the protagonists of the Revolution to develop an alternative system of governance did not only lead to an increase in the gap of economic injustice but also led people to support reforms from within and support activities like electing a new parliament and condemning revolutionary activities. The scene of Heba Afify covering the elections in *Words of Witness* and interviewing women lining up in masses to vote is in contrast to the scene in the documentary, *The Square*, when the people in the streets confronted some of the protesters and asserted that protests and revolutionary actions should stop so the new regime (mainly the military and Islamists) can create real reforms. Ironically, the Revolution that broke out to condemn the social inequality became accused of being a new source of social inequality.

Power is the second aspect in the Collins and Bilge intersectional model. Collins and Bilge argue that:

Intersectional frameworks understand power relations through the lens of mutual construction” and that power relations are to be analyzed both via their intersections, for

example, of racism and sexism, as well as across domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal. (Collins and Bilge 26-27)

The documentaries reflected the complicated struggles and the different forms of resistance developed by women to challenge different forms of power. The documentaries showed that the four forms of power are interconnected and feed and support each other. As a result, Egyptian women who participated in the Revolution were not only fighting against Mubarak but against every father figure in both the private and the public spheres. However, these women fighting for liberation and egalitarianism not only faced classic patriarchal protagonists, the military, and the Islamists, but also mothers who would perpetuate oppression and patriarchal discourses. The documentaries showed different examples of mothers practicing what can be considered as disciplinary power: Heba's mother (*Words of Witness*), the family of Hend Nafea (*The Trials of Spring*), the family of Alyaa El Mahdi (*Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*).

These disciplinary powers were interacting together as both the military and the Islamists were occupying both the public space and public sphere and, through structural power, trying to contribute to the domains of power through coercive efforts and developing negative depictions of the Revolution and the revolutionaries. The excessive violence that protesters experienced in public space must be looked at "how power works in each domain can shed light on the dynamics of a larger social phenomenon" (Collins and Bilge 27). Therefore, the excessive violence that female protesters experienced in public spaces is connected to other forms of power domains. Cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains of power interact together to serve a larger social discourse that aims to maintain the socially constructed, patriarchal society.

As a result, most of the stories documented in the films were conscious that they were fighting an intersectional domain of power simultaneously in both the private and public spheres.

Women's bodies were the battlefield. The surge of sexual violence supported and practiced by both the military and Islamists was intentional and deliberate because they were aware that the path to controlling the public sphere started with controlling the private sphere. In a collectivist culture, like the Egyptian culture, a woman's honor is simplified in her body and is collectively owned (Abuelnaga). Consequently, controlling women's bodies will not only lead to women stopped from being present in the public space but will also stop men as well. The reaction of Hend Nafea's family to her torture is an embodiment of that discourse. However, the documentaries showed that women were conscious of that discourse and developed various forms of resistance and claimed their own bodies. The power over knowledge is the other important aspect in relation to understanding power dynamics in a post-Mubarak era. Foucault asserts that "we should admit that power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nonknowledge that does not presuppose and constitute...power relations" (27). One can argue that the attack on the Women's March on International Women's Day in March 2011 unfolded two major aspects in relation to women's issues in Egypt. Firstly, that protagonists of the new power structure (the military and the Islamists) used physical violence to control the public space. Secondly, they (the military and the Islamists) developed and maintained the discourse against the Revolution in order to maintain the patriarchal structure of the society. A military general did a television interview after the military intelligence practiced virginity tests, justifying it by saying that girls and women present in Tahrir Square are not like "my sister, my wife, and yours". Abuelnaga asserts that this general was bringing ideas from the private sphere to control the public sphere. Mariam Kirolos, one of the main characters in the documentary, *The Trials of Spring*, commented on that general's

interview saying that she participated in the Revolution to be treated as an independent citizen with full rights, not to be identified in relation to men.

Within this context, female activists and artists became aware that they did not only have to participate in direct political action to also be involved in various forms of artistic activism in order to achieve their main objectives: to create a safe space for women to voice their demands, to educate the general public both in Egypt, and globally, about women's issues in Egypt, and more importantly, to develop a new identification strategy to subvert patriarchal identification strategies. In summary, Egyptian female activists were conscious that they had to fight the power over controlling public spaces but also over controlling knowledge and consciousness over women's issues and positions.

The third important aspect is relationality. Collins and Bilge assert that "the focus of relationality shifts from analyzing what distinguishes entities, for example, the differences between race and gender, to examining their interconnections. The shift in perspective opens up intellectual and political possibilities" (27-28). The most important attribute to relationality is that "relational thinking rejects *either/or* binary thinking, for example opposing theory to practice, scholarship to activism, or blacks to whites. Instead, relationality embraces a *both/and* frame" (Collins and Bilge 27). The different stories documented in the various documentaries highlighted the aspect of relationality. The most obvious two inaccurate binaries are art/activism and secularism/Islamism. The processes of producing and filming the documentaries and all the different forms of art documented in the films showed that art and activism are non-binary, but do complement each other. Actually, it is impossible to understand the different art pieces (documentaries, graffiti, fiction films, public performances, poems, autobiographies, etc.) in isolation and apart from the different films of activism that took place during and after the 18 days of the Revolution. At the

same time, one can argue that it is almost impossible to understand the complexities and contradictions of the activism that took place without utilizing the different forms of art. The second inaccurate binary is to claim that the major conflicts in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era were between secularism and Islamism. That binary framing is not only inaccurate but also very problematic in various levels. On one level, this binary thinking doesn't reflect the complex role that religion (both Islam and Christianity) played in both the private and public spheres in Egypt. On the other level, this binary does not reflect the appropriate contextualization and historicizing of the role of religious institutions in Egypt in the development of consciousness among issues related to the perception of the self, the meaning of political involvement, gender issues, etc.

Collins and Bilge remind us that “power is better conceptualized as in relationship, as in power relations, than a static entity. Power is not a thing to be gained or lost as in the zero-sum conceptions of winners and losers on the football playing field. Rather, power constitutes a relationship” (28). The documentaries showed that Islam as a power constitutes a relationship that can be used for both liberation and oppression. The evolution/change in Faraj's position toward the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic rule is presented in the documentary, *I Am the People*. The change of Mama Khadiga's position toward the hijab as presented in the documentary, *The Trials of Spring*, is also a good example of the importance of understanding power in a relationship.

Social context is the fourth aspect identified by Collins and Bilge while applying the intersectional analytical framework. One major common critique of the coverage by Western media (Abaza; Allam; Dabashi; El Mahdi) is the lack of proper contextualization to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. The documentaries highlighted the importance of social context. Different aspects played an important role in constructing the different contexts that were represented in the various documentaries. Time and the evolution of the struggle over power after the toppling of

Mubarak played a very important role in the development of the events and also the personal, national, and international position towards the Revolution. It is very difficult, almost impossible to understand the change of the position in a massive way toward the Muslim Brotherhood without understanding the complexity of the social context in regard to women and the Islamist discourse towards women. The “Blue Bra girl” incident played an important role in changing the position. The position of the Islamists from this incident was very contradictory to their long history of presenting women’s bodies as sacred that should be covered and collectively protected. Islamists media outlet blamed the victim and justified the attack of the military police on that girl. The other important aspect related to that incident is the fact that women are always represented in a national discourse and Egypt is always represented as a woman that should be always protected by men and more specifically, the military. Therefore, the mass protests led by women after the stripping incident cannot be fully understood without understanding the social context. The same applies to the different kinds of attacks Alyaa experienced after posting her naked picture on the internet. The other important aspect highlighted in the documentaries is the aspect of location. The residents of the rural areas and cities far from the center interacted with the Revolution differently. Understanding the social context is crucial to fully understanding the response of Hend Nafea’s family, as represented in *The Trials of Spring*, after she was released from detention. The position of Faraj’s wife, daughter, and neighbour from the Revolution, and how it is different from the other women depicted in the other documentaries, cannot be understood without understanding the social context and power dynamics in regions that are far from the capital.

Complexity is the fifth analytical aspect identified by Collins and Bilge. “These core themes of social inequality, power, relationality, and social context are intertwined, introducing an element of complexity into intersectional analysis” (29). The documentaries reflected various

complexities within both the private and public spheres. The trajectory to democracy after the toppling of Mubarak faced different complex obstacles. The structure of the state itself, the lack of clear leadership to the 2011 Revolution, the absence of a political ideology or any intellectual efforts for the transition period, are all factors, among other factors, that played a crucial role in developing these complexities. Women, especially women who participated in the mass protests, had to deal with these factors in addition to the ones related to women and gender issues in both the private and public spheres. The documentaries showed the consequences of the rooted patriarchal discourses in limiting their movements in the public spaces. Women realized after the toppling of Mubarak that they had to fight multiple, intertwined battles against interlocking systems of oppression.

The documentaries showed that women had to fight for democracy and human rights with their male peers but they also had to fight for different women-and-gender-related issues, both in the private and public spheres, while simultaneously protecting their bodies and challenging the discourse that women's bodies are docile that can be controlled via physical violence. Egyptian women, especially the ones who were active during the different phases of the Revolution either through participating in direct political actions or through producing art, also had to fight against different complexities imposed on them from the international community. The complex battles that women had to fight against in a long history of Orientalism, in which feminist discourses were imposed on them by white, European feminists, also comes into play. It is important to remember that all these fights were taking place at the time that the major powers were controlling Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood and the military are very hierarchical, masculine organizations. The other important aspect related to intersectionality is that it is a complex, analytical framework in itself. Collins and Bilge argue "using intersectionality as an analytic tool is difficult, precisely because

intersectionality itself is complex” (29). Therefore, the scholarly literature (Abaza; Allam; Dabashi; El Mahdi) criticized the international media coverage to the Egyptian Revolution in general, but also for women and gender issues in particular. One can argue that the international media coverage was not able to develop an intersectional approach as intersectionality is complex and that because of the production pressure to deliver the news story in a very short timeframe.

Social justice is the sixth analytical aspect suggested by Collins and Bilge. They are very critical on the concept of fairness. Collins and Bilge assert that “fairness is also elusive where the rules themselves may appear to be equally applied to everyone yet still produce unequal and unfair outcomes” (29). Collins and Bilge gave the example of elections in democratic societies where everyone has the “right” to vote but not everyone can access it. Social justice is one of the main demands of the Revolution. Masses went to the streets, chanting “bread, freedom, and social justice”. The documentaries showed that the implementation of social justice in Egypt does require more than fairness. Faraj’s female neighbour did not go to vote in the first presidential elections after the toppling of Mubarak because of her mistrust of the whole process but also because she thought she might get punished by the security apparatuses if she voted for a candidate that they did not want to win. On the other hand, the documentary, *Words of Witness*, showed that women in Cairo were lining up in big numbers to vote in the elections. The parallels between the two different positions illustrates the complexity of applying social justice. The different documentaries showed the difficulty of implementing social justice because of different factors related to the structure of the state, the long history of corruption, in addition to the implementation of neoliberal policies. Thus, the documentaries showed that fighting for social justice, especially of women, requires fighting on different fronts at the same time.

The FIFA World Cup, the global social inequality, and the black, Brazilian, feminist social movement were the events that inspired Collins and Bilge to structure the previous intersectional analytical framework. Following the same steps, I argued in this dissertation that the active participation of women in the Egyptian Revolution, either during the first 18 days or the different conflicts after the toppling of Mubarak, can be analyzed through an intersectional framework that is structured by commonality, context, and contractions. I call this framework “The triple C Model”. This Model can be used to provide a critical inclusive analysis of the status of women residing in non-European, non-Christian majority countries.

In terms of commonality, the discourse on the differences between women in the West and the East is very precise in both academic and non-academic discourses. The documentaries highlighted the aspect of commonality between women from different cultures, classes, and religion. It could be argued that the aspect of commonality was manifested in different ways. Solidarity campaigns were organized by different girls and women, especially the ones from other Arab countries and Muslim-majority countries, to show their support for Alyaa El Mahdi. Women and girls posted nude pictures for them on different social media platforms. This action reflects the girls and women’s fight for full control over their bodies and that they use social media and online platforms as tools for their activism. The other important aspect is because of globalization and the advancement of the ICTs (satellite television and Internet), it became very hard to differentiate the East and the West. Heba Afify’s sister was watching a Western cooking show and then she cooked the recipes she learned from that show. The use of social media and Western cooking shows could be perceived as indicators that the difference between the East and West was becoming very blurry. Female filmmakers with dual citizenship who decided to go to Egypt to use the cinematic language to empower other women is also a manifestation of communality. The trip of Asmaa Mahfouz to

New York City to participate in the Occupy Movement is also another important indicator of the aspect of commonality. The trip was not documented or mentioned in any of the documentaries, but Asmaa Mahfouz's trip to New York was mentioned in Judy Rebick's book, *Occupy This*. The fact that Asmaa Mahfouz, who inspired Egyptians to go to Tahrir Square on January 25, led some of the protest activities in Manhattan (Rebick) posits that the youth in Egypt and the United States of America are commonly upset and angry about dominant, capitalist politics and neoliberal, economic practices.

I do not discard these differences. I rather contend that in some cases, differences come with privileges which empower some women and de-power others. However, it could be argued that giving attention to the commonalities between women might provide an analysis that provides solutions for some of the issues that would not be solved if the focus was only on the differences.

The issue of highlighting the context has always been a critical aspect in feminist theory. Feminist theorists, such as Judith Butler, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, and others, emphasize the importance of defining women's struggles and the different tools developed by women to express their agency and define their identity within different contexts. Butler criticized the notion of universal feminism. Butler asserts that:

The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. (5)

Butler highlighted the wide range of criticism toward the notion of universal patriarchy, especially in what is known as the "Third World" or the "Orient". Butler explains:

That form of feminist theorizing has come under criticism for its efforts to colonize and appropriate non-Western cultures to support highly Western notions of oppression, but because they tend as well to construct a “Third World” or even an “Orient” in which gender oppression is subtly explained as symptomatic of an essential, non-Western barbarism. (5)

Collins and Bilge posit that analyzing the context is mandatory in conducting any intersectional, feminist analysis. There is no doubt that analyzing the context is very important. However, one can argue that the mass participation of women in the 18 days of the Revolution and the post-Mubarak activism to subvert oppression in both the private and public sphere problematized the notion of context.

The notion of context can be used for both liberating women but also oppressing women. It could be concluded that the notion of women developing feminist discourses inspired by their own context, like the case of Islamic feminism, is one way to see how context can empower women. The other way to look at it is to see how different conservative powers, like the Islamists power, would deny women their rights, claiming that conversation over women’s rights and feminism is not appropriate to their context. The problem is that sometimes the discourse over the notion of context draws a huge attention on what I call the “micro aspect” of the context. The reviewed scholarly literature presented earlier in this dissertation and the analysis of the documentaries showed that the international events, the regional changes, and local Egyptian events and power struggles, played an important role in shaping women’s experience. For example, even though Egypt is not directly colonized by foreign military, their economic dependence on the U.S. and international funding impacts its independence. The irony is that this economic dependency might lead to the issue of legislations and the development of oppressive structures for women and can also lead to legislations and structures that could liberate women.

The creation of the Women's National Council is one of liberation structures that was developed under Mubarak, thanks to international pressure and the presence of foreign funding as a motivation.

International and regional contexts, policies, and political events also played an important role in shaping Egyptian women's experiences. The implementation of neoliberal policies and structural adjustments imposed by the international monetary fund in the early 1990s had a huge impact of different women's social programs (Kamal). On the regional level, different political events did not mainly focus on women's issues but had a huge impact on women's issues in Egypt, like the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the consequential Arab Israeli conflict, and the surge of political Islam. Therefore, analyzing the context requires not only analyzing it at the local micro level, but also at the macro level in terms of the international and regional level, but also in terms of historicizing the events.

The other important aspect in analyzing the context is to understand the role of Islam in both the private and public life. Islam was a major element in all the documentaries. The documentaries problematized the role that Islam played in women's issues in both the private and public sphere. There are many issues related to the conceptualization of Islam that were manifested in the both the content of the documentaries and their production. Islam, like any religion, has various interpretations and Egyptians don't have a monolithic understanding of it. Saba Mahmoud posits that some Egyptians "understand Islam as a doctrinal system with a strong political and juridical implications for the organization of state and society" while other Egyptians "see Islam first and foremost as individual and collective practices of pious living" (35). The documentaries showed that these are not two independent and static interpretations but confronting, dynamic ones. The documentaries showed that groups who adopt Islam as a political ideology, mainly the Muslim

Brotherhood, implemented different strategies to fill the power vacuum after the toppling of Mubarak. These strategies varied from direct political mobilization techniques, like organizing political conferences, hanging signs to praying masses in Tahrir Square, wearing the same costume (as shown in documentary, *The Square*), to even using violence and corrosive actions against women and men (as shown in documentary, *The Trials of Spring*, when Islamists attacked the Women's March, or even the attack on famous leftist veteran leader, Shahenda Maklad, while she was protesting against the Muslim Brotherhood beside Al-Ittihadiya Palace, or in *Alyaa: the Naked Revolutionary*, when the late, well-known, Egyptian feminist, Nawal El Saadawi, was harassed when she protesting against the Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi). Islamists also used the judicatory system to impose their ideology (the case of the Islamist lawyer suing Alyaa El Mahdi for her activism with FEMEN as shown in documentary, *Alyaa: The Naked Revolutionary*). The lawyer was arguing that Alyaa's actions are against Islam and that her actions humiliated Islam. Thus, Islam was used a framework to achieve political gains. The fact that the implementations of these strategies manifested in different ways does not change the fact that Islam is beyond beliefs and rituals but is instead a political ideology and a framework.

On the level of the private sphere, the different documentaries showed that the personal relationship with Islam is not static but dynamic. The changing of Mama Khadiga's position from wearing the hijab to removing it after the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, as shown in *The Trials of Spring*, represents that the individual perception and understanding of the role of Islam in both private and public spheres is not static but instead a dynamic process that is always evolving. Mama Khadiga's new position and understanding of her identification with hijab is shown. She used to wear the hijab as a tool to challenge Western ideology and then she decided to remove it to disassociate herself from corrupted Islamist organizations. The documentaries not only showed

the importance of understanding the complex role of Islam in shaping personal, political positions and strategies for state governance but also showed the lack of Western understanding of the role of Islam.

In Timothy Brennan's book, *Places of Mind*, he presented the ideas of Charles Malik on the evolution of Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Brennan asserts that Malik argued that "the West must learn that Islam, even for Christians in the region, is one's fate. It is not just a religion but a total outlook, an understanding of which has been frustratingly rare" (65). The production of some of the documentaries represented the struggles in the post-Mubarak era as a conflict between secularism and Islamism. This binary representation reflects a lack of understanding of Islam as a "total outlook" and "fate". There are many important repercussions for this binary representation. Firstly, it does not provide an accurate meaning to the events as Abuelnaga would argue that "limiting one's reading to an analysis of binaries generates a reductionist structuralist analysis that could turn the process of negotiating boundaries into a monolithic unit of meaning" (20). Secondly, it developed Orientalist discourses (Dabashi; El Mahdi). Thirdly, it dismissed the narratives of non-Egyptian Muslims. The six documentaries did not include any Christian voices (with the exception of, *The Trials of Spring*, who included Mariam Kirolos, but not as a Christian, as an activist). The documentaries were keen to include individuals who were either Muslim clergy member or leaders in different Islamist groups, like the Salafists or the Muslim Brotherhood, to comment on different issues related to the Revolution in general but also women and gender issues as well. However, the same did not happen with Christian voices. Therefore, an analysis of women's voices in Egypt would most likely be inaccurate as it excludes the voices of religious minorities in Egypt who participated in the different stages of the Revolution, and certainly, the

position of the religious authorities that had an impact on their participation. One could even argue that the success of toppling Mubarak might have changed the power dynamics between women and the religious authorities that they follow.

Contradictions are the third important aspect in the proposed analytical framework. There are many aspects that should be unpacked in relation to contradictions. In this dissertation, Neroni's definition of feminism was adopted as it focused on the contradictions surrounding women. The literature on women and revolutions highlighted that women's rights regressed in political regimes in post-Revolution eras (Allam; Jaquette). Women's issues witnessed a huge regression and they lost various legal gains after the toppling of Mubarak (Sholokamy). The documentaries focused on the transformation of Tahrir Square from a safe, inclusive place where women were welcomed and encouraged to be politically active to a place where excessive violence was normalized. The transformation of the physical and the regression of the legal rights in the new regime accompanied other contradictory discourses. El Nossery asserts the massive participation for women in the mass protests against totalitarian regimes "prompted women to find new means with political means to cope with political and social despair" (143). However, El Nossery asserts there is a discrepancy between the revolutionary rhetoric that praises women's agency and the post-revolutionary one that depicts women as icons of national identity. "On the one hand, women are uncompromisingly seeking pathways to become subject of their own history; the other hand, they are still compelled to play specific roles within the nation, such as for reproduction and as guardians of traditional values and ethics" (El Nossery 143). This inconsistency and contradictory discourse played an important role in shaping women's activism in different forms.

These contradictions made women, especially women who were active, either in politics or in the art scene, curate arts and organize different political activities that aimed to subvert the

nationalist discourse around women and narrate women's own stories and reflect their own agency and not an imposed imaginary rhetoric about women. The other major important role of these contradictions is that it created a sort of cognitive dissonance as the nationalist discourse around women and the representation of the nation as a woman did not incline with the brutal physical violence practiced by the military and supported by Islamists. The inconsistency between the words and deeds toward women encouraged masses of women to protest against them.

Also in relation to contradictions, the way that Egyptian women expressed their agency might come off, to Western feminists, as inconsistent and problematic. The adoption of the motherhood frame in order to be present in the public space might seem like a contradictory action. However, it is not. Motherhood might be a strategy for Egyptian women to express their agency. Women depicted in the analyzed documentaries confirmed Saba's Mahmoud definition of agency, which emphasised the capacity of women to negotiate their agency. In some situations, these negotiations might take forms that might be contradictory to Western women's understanding of agency.

In summary, the proposed "the Triple C" framework is not yet by any means a complete analytical framework and should not substitute any existing intersectional analytical framework until it is used in the analysis of other cases. However, the mass participation of women in the Egyptian Revolution and the various violent and non-violent events in the post-Mubarak era did challenge the discourse around context by highlighting the importance of questioning what context means and the importance of liberation from any binary thinking. The different forms of activism and art created by women highlighted the importance of analyzing the commonalities between women on the level of oppression, but also on the level of agency and fighting for liberation. Contradictions surrounding women are increasingly pronounced. These contradictions developed challenges, but at the same time, developed opportunities for resistance, liberation, and

empowerment. In some other cases, women expressed their agency by using discourses that were originally developed to oppress and control them as part of their struggle to achieve liberation and empowerment.

In conclusion, the massive participation of women in masses on January 25, 2011, and the resilience they showed during the first 18 days and in the post-Mubarak era, either within the private or public sphere, reflected a long history of activism and creativity in developing and expressing the agency of women. Women in Egypt are still protesting against interlocking systems of oppression, not from Tahrir Square, but from different platforms and by adopting different strategies. Therefore, *El Thawara Mostamera*, The Revolution Continues.

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