Moving Through Mourning: Melancholic Writings on Loss in the Postrevolutionary Egyptian Novel. A Comparative Literary Analysis of Donia Kamal's Cigarette Number Seven, Yasmine El- Rashidi's Chronicle of A Last Summer, and Omar Robert Hamilton's The City Always Wins.

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Moving Through Mourning: Melancholic Writings on Loss in the Postrevolutionary Egyptian Novel.

A Comparative Literary Analysis of Donia Kamal's *Cigarette Number Seven,* Yasmine El-Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer*, and Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always Wins.*

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I see boats moving on the sea.
Their sails, like wings of what I see,
Bring me a vague inner desire to be
Who I was without knowing what it was.
So all recalls my home self and, because
It recalls that, what I am aches in me.

“I See Boats Moving”, Fernando Pessoa. 1932

Introduction: Mourning Loss(es) in the Postrevolutionary Egyptian novel.

Over the course of the last ten years Egyptian writers have written a wide variety of literature as a response to the large-scale Arab uprisings along the Arab World, which erupted in early 2011 and lasted until 2013 in Egypt. Thus far scholarly attention has predominantly been drawn to the rise of dystopian and science fiction novels in Egypt as a political and subversive response to the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings.[1] Novels such as Ahmed Naji's *Istikhdam al-Hayat (2014), Using Life* (2014), Mohamed Rabie's *Utared* (2014), *Otared* (2016), Nael Eltoukhy's *Nasa' al-Karantina* (2013), *Women of Karantina* (2015), and Basma Abdel Aziz' *Al-Tabour* (2013), *The Queue*, (2016), have therefore gained attention, since each of these novels uses differing "elements of dystopia, horror, and science fiction, ranging in tone from comic satire to… graphic horror" in order to come to terms with the reality of postrevolutionary times in Egypt.[2] In the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, and the continuous removal of political- and human rights, Egyptian writers "have turned away from realism and the nightmares of the present towards the futuristic lands of science fiction and fantasy".[3]

In an interview, writer Basma Abdel Aziz elaborates on that "Fiction gave me a very wide space to say what I wanted to say about totalitarian authority"[4]. She utilized the novel to imagine how we could "build in our imagination an exaggerated conception regarding the smartness, the strength, and the cleverness of totalitarian authority".[5] Aziz' choice to write a fictional, dystopian novel thus is strongly politically motivated; there is a continuum between the political events in which these novels were written and the creative, critical engagement with different genres on such a collective level within the literary scene in Egypt. It then comes as no surprise that the dystopian Egyptian novel has gained most scholarly attention in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, since this sudden "dystopian turn" in Egyptian literature demonstrates a collective disposition in which the novel is used as political critique: the fantastical, speculative, or fictional is critically used to elaborate on the aftermath of

[1] For in-depth analyses of dystopian Egyptian literature, see for example; "Qutait, Tasnim. 'The Imaginary Futures of Arabic: Egyptian Dystopia's in Translation'. *Textual Practice,* Vol. 34. Nr. 5 (March 2020): 743-759", "Marusek, Sarah. 'Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow: Social Justice and the Rise of Dystopian Art and Literature Post-Arab Uprisings'. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.12 (December 2020): 1–22.", and "Moore, Lindsey. '"What Happens after Saying No?" Egyptian Uprisings and Afterwords in Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* and Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always Wins*'. *CounterText*, Vol. 4, Nr. 2 (August 2018): 192-211."

[2] Qutait, Tasnim. 'The Imaginary Futures of Arabic: Egyptian Dystopia's in Translation'. *Textual Practice,* Vol. 34. Nr. 5 (March 2020): 744.

[3] Marusek, Sarah. 'Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow: Social Justice and the Rise of Dystopian Art and Literature Post-Arab Uprisings'. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.12 (December 2020): 2.

[4] Marusek, Sarah. "Writing the Arab Uprisings: Some Dystopian Reflections from Egypt" *Northern Notes,* May 12, 2021. Accessed May 27, 2022.

[5] Idem.

revolutionary times in Egypt.[6]

In contrast to postrevolutionary Egyptian novels that can be categorized under fictional genres such as sci-fi, dystopia, and magical realism, there is also the emergence of a non-fictional postrevolutionary Egyptian novel that thus far has not received equal scholarly attention. Some articles have been published on the selected novels for this thesis, yet their scope and analyses often posits them vis-a-vis the dystopian novels, rather than analysing them separately.[7] This illuminates that there is an existing lacuna in academic research to come to critical terms with the non-fictional postrevolutionary novel.

I have therefore selected three novels that predominantly use the genre of life-writing and non-fiction in their literary accounts of the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, which are; Donia Kamal's *Sajara Sabi'a* (2012), *Cigarette Number Seven* (2017), Yasmine El-Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer* (2016), and finally Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always Wins* (2017). In the early stages of this research I noted the very intimate and political character of each of these Egyptian novels; each respectively are not just centered strongly around the Arab uprisings, but also on intergenerational relationships to the socio-historical and political landscape in Egypt. I demonstrate that these non-fictional novels must be understood as equally politically engaged to the contemporary postrevolutionary moment in Egypt as the creative and disruptive dystopia novels that have been more widely discussed. Each of these novels can be categorized as semi-autobiographical, for all writers acknowledge their personal and intimate connection to the narrative and characters of the fictional novel they have written. These non-fictional elements set these novels apart from the disruptive and fictional postrevolutionary novels, as it demonstrates a desire to keep the narrative rather close to the personal and intimate experiences of the writers.

All novels were published in postrevolutionary times, though arguably Kamal's novel was published in the midst of a precarious political moment which often is still categorized as belonging to the Arab Spring. In an interview by ArabLit, the writer acknowledges that she wrote the entire novel in the summer of 2012, in about three months "with very little editing or reworking".[8] *Cigarette Number Seven* was then written in the height of Egypt's political

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[6] Moore, Lindsey. '"What Happens after Saying No?" Egyptian Uprisings and Afterwords in Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* and Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always Wins*'. *CounterText*, Vol. 4, Nr. 2 (August 2018): 195.

[7] See for example: "Moore, Lindsey. '"What Happens after Saying No?" Egyptian Uprisings and Afterwords in Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* and Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always Wins*'. *CounterText*, Vol. 4, Nr. 2 (August 2018): 192-211.", "Hawley, John C. 'Coping with a Failed Revolution: Basma Abdel Aziz, Nael Eltoukhy, Mohammed Rabie & Yasmine El Rashidi'. In *ALT 35 Focus on Egypt*, red. Ernest N. Emenyonu, 1st ed. Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2017. Pg. 7-21.", and "Mazloum, Sherine Fouad. 'To Write/to Revolt: Egyptian Women Novelists Writing the Revolution'. *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol. 19, Nr. 2 (3 April, 2015): 207–20."

[8] Mlynxqualey. "An Author-Translator Conversation: Donia Kamal's 'Cigarette Number Seven' and Archiving Romantic Ideals." August 30, 2017. https://arablit.org/2017/08/30/an-author-translator-

moment and Kamal further states that writing the novel was "an act of archiving the experiences of the previous year."[9] Similarly, El-Rashidi acknowledges the great influence of the revolutionary times on the creation of her novel in an interview.[10] Finally, Hamilton's novel is fully centred around the Arab uprisings as the temporality of the novel is set between 2011 and 2013, as well as most scenes, dialogues, and interactions take place on Tahrir Square or during street protests.

Thus, there seems to be evidence that the Arab uprisings have had an imprint on the overall character and narration of these novels. Sabry Hafez noted in 2010 that contemporary Egyptian literature demonstrated a lack of affect, or an "affectless style", which is characteristic of, what he defines as, the "new Egyptian novel".[11] Here Hafez refers to the 1990 generation of Egyptian writers, which use the novel to radically depart from "established norms and offers a series of sharp insights into Arab culture and society."[12] Though the description of an 'affectless' novel does align with some of my observations on *Cigarette Number Seven* and *Chronicle of A Last Summer*, other signifiers as listed by Hafez of this literary style in the New Egyptian novel, such as the novel rarely exceeding 150 pages or the strong use of nihilism, are not in alignment with the selected novels in this thesis.[13] The impact of the revolutionary movement on society and lived experiences then seems to have translated in literary innovations in both form and style and it provides for disrupting, creative literary interventions that are in need of critical exploration. Throughout the following chapters, I will explore these different literary alterations in the non-fictional postrevolutionary Egyptian novel and consequently demonstrate that rather than an 'affectless', nihilist novel, these literary works narrate deeply felt and embodied stories on loss and mourning.

Therefore, in this thesis I will analyse how the Arab uprisings in Egypt have influenced these three Egyptian novels and what in turn this tells us about the style or character of the contemporary Egyptian novel. Contrary to previous research, I have chosen to employ a psychoanalytical framework to uncover both the personal as well as the political dimension of these novels. Nearly ten years after the large-scale Arab Spring uprisings, research on different works of postrevolutionary Egyptian literature could provide insights

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conversation-donia-kamals-cigarette-number-seven-and-archiving-romantic-ideals/ > Accessed May 3, 2022

[9] Mlynxqualey. "An Author-Translator Conversation: Donia Kamal's 'Cigarette Number Seven' and Archiving Romantic Ideals." August 30, 2017. https://arablit.org/2017/08/30/an-author-translator-conversation-donia-kamals-cigarette-number-seven-and-archiving-romantic-ideals/ > Accessed May 4, 2022.

[10] El-Rashidi, Yasmine. "Yasmine El Rashidi, 'Chronicle of a Last Summer'" Politics & Prose. August 16, 2016. Youtube video, 1:03:30. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCSz7Z9sk9g .

[11] Hafez, Sabry. 'The New Egyptian Novel'. *New Left Review.* Vol. 64 (July/August 2010): 50.

[12] Idem, pg. 49.

[13] Idem, pg. 50.

into the various ways in which novelists write- and creatively elaborate upon postrevolutionary times.

Having said this, it should be noted that in their differing and unique approaches the three selected novels relate, narrate, or return to revolutionary times in Egypt. Though the categorical name to which I will refer to these novels, the postrevolutionary novel, may allude to an understanding of these novels as solely focused on the Arab uprisings, I argue they should not be read merely as *responsive to* the revolutionary movement and the contemporary political aftermath. Rather, the postrevolutionary novel critiques historical and socio-political forms of corruption in the Arab World that have their roots far preceding the 2011 revolution. This observation is similar to Nouri Gana's contention that the Arab uprisings and the many acts of self-immolation, which he refers to as "melancholy acts", were not merely responsive to a specific political moment in the contemporary Arab World but were moreover a return from, or maybe a continuum with "the morbidly traumatic legacy of the June 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel singlehandedly defeated and shamed the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan".[14] Sinéad Murphy also emphasizes this in her analysis of science fiction novels in Egypt in the wake of the Arab uprisings:

> Considered in this light, the 2011 uprisings are less exceptional than characteristic of increasingly vocalised–and organised–civic dissatisfaction with corrupt regimes of governance in the Arab world throughout the last decade. The moment of collective action in Cairo's Tahrir Square is indicative not necessarily of a culmination, but of a turning point in a process of transforming the Egyptian political landscape.[15]

Like Gana, Sinéad illustrates the importance of connecting the historical trajectory of political resistance and dissatisfaction with corruption in the Arab World that eventually led to the Arab uprisings and contemporary creative expressions that relate back to these events. All novels discussed in this thesis draw on this historical continuity of corruption in Egypt and they all, within their own creative routes, do write on these historical and intergenerational legacies.

What sets the selected three novels for this thesis apart, I argue, is that we can note a desire to speak of these historically continued forms of injustice, oppression, silencing, and corruption: this can be understood as the work of historical, political, collective, and personal mourning. Therefore, I argue that these postrevolutionary Egyptian novels express a desire to speak of that which is and has been politically and personally lost and silenced. This, I recognize, can be understood as a psycho-affective desire to move into the journey of

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[14] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 119.

[15] Murphy, Sinéad. 'Science Fiction and the Arab Spring: The Critical Dystopia in Contemporary Egyptian Fiction'. *Strange Horizons,* 30 October 2017, http://strangehorizons.com/non-fiction/science-fiction-and-the-arab-spring-the-critical-dystopia-in-contemporary-egyptian-fiction/> Accessed 14 May 2022.

mourning. Within this process, the non-fictional postrevolutionary novel is utilised as a creative and liberating tool of expression of that which has been hidden and silenced in the aftermath of loss. Moreover, I posit that melancholia is evident in each of the selected novels, as it plays a vital role within the various mourning processes presented in the literary works.

Theoretical reflections on loss, mourning, and melancholia.

Precisely because loss, mourning, and melancholia, play such a decisive role in the three selected novels it is of importance to theoretically explore these concepts. This undoubtedly is because of one of the most influential modern interpretations of mourning and melancholia in the early works of Sigmund Freud.

Freud's early observations on melancholia, mourning, and loss have been executed over a hundred years ago, but have nevertheless made an influential and lasting imprint on our contemporary understanding of those categories. Melancholia and mourning, as argued by Freud in his "Mourning and Melancholia"(1917), are both responses to loss, yet it is his contention that mourning is the 'healthy' or preferable response to loss, and melancholia must be understood as a 'failed' attempt to mourn the lost object. Freud argues that melancholia and mourning share the same fundamental characteristics: in both cases a person is unable to adopt a new object of love after having experienced some type of loss. The scholar distinguishes melancholia from mourning by arguing that within a process of mourning, the mourner *knows* what is lost, whereas the melancholic person is unaware of what precisely is lost *in* the loss one experienced.[16] The melancholic person consequently shows an inability to release the lost object as it is unable to identify what was lost in the loss of this object. Therefore, it is unable to form new attachments to other objects/subjects. To put differently, the melancholic person remains stuck in a cycle of attachment to the lost object, whereas the mourning person recognises that the lost object is 'dead' and consequently will withdraw attachment. The person in mourning will, after a period of grieving one's loss, eventually "becomes free and uninhibited again" and form new attachments to replace the lost one.[17]

Through Freud's pathological, psychotherapeutic lens, he argued that melancholia not only is a 'failed attempt' to mourning, it must additionally be understood as a pathological disorder.[18] Melancholia in Freud's work, as a response to loss, is then represented as an undesired response in which the refusal to mourn one's loss takes over and one stays stuck in a melancholic outlook. In short, melancholia in Freud's terms must be understood as an

[16] Freud, Sigmund. 'Melancholia and Mourning' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Translated by James Strachey. Vol. XIV. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1914-1916. Pg. 243.
[17] Idem. Pg. 245.
[18] Idem. Pg. 243.

pathological state and ultimately as something *to be resolved*, for it hinders someone to truly 'mourn' their loss(es).

Though Freud's reading of loss has been influential, it also treats each of these subjects exclusively through a narrowly defined psycho-pathological perspective. Moreover, Freud's work also led to mourning and melancholia to being understood as binary categories. Because the psychoanalyst's work is often treated uncritically as a natural phenomenon, this binary division remains unchallenged. It is through this frame that melancholia is merely treated as a pathological disorder as a response to loss. I argue that this is not only a reductive representation of how loss, melancholia, and mourning function, it also does not do justice to the complexity of understanding a commitment to melancholia within Arabic literature.

Before diving into further theoretical elaboration, I want to emphasize my disposition and understanding of melancholia in relation to the Freudian framework just presented. As noted prior, I argue that melancholia functions as a means to work through the process of mourning, or as a natural phase, element, of mourning. Though in stark contrast to the pathological, Freudian understanding of melancholia, I believe that melancholia can help us cope with loss without it *inevitably* leading to a pathological loop in which one is unable to mourn. Instead, would it not be more than understandable that sometimes loss and mourning go accompanied with melancholia? For our loss may be real and definitive, but our desire to continue to be *with this loss*, to reminiscence, remember, or return to our memory of it whilst we mourn, can lead us to melancholic waters. I believe melancholia does not necessarily lead to an unhealthy attachment to a lost object, but rather it can be understood as part of a mourning process as a means of being present with loss by returning to stay and sit with it.

Based on this contention, whilst Freud's pathological understanding of melancholia, mourning, and loss has been widely elaborated and critiqued upon by scholars from differing academic disciplines, for the interest of this thesis I have chosen to include critiques of Moneera Al-Ghadeer, Judith Butler, Nouri Gana, Alice Miller, and Zeina Halabi. Doing so will strengthen my own disposition towards the notions of loss, mourning, and melancholia. For my analysis of the three postrevolutionary novels, I rely on an interdisciplinary approach, borrowing ideas and critiques from psychoanalysis, literary analysis, and critical theory.

This in turn brings me to the notion of mourning: in his *Signifying Loss,* scholar Nouri Gana discusses the Freudian understanding of 'moving on' from loss. He notes;

> To regain this freedom of attaching to other objects must come then, at least theoretically, at the expense of the loyalty to the lost object(s). The reconciliatory work of mourning can be understood as nothing less than an incitement to and a normalization of the praxis of disloyalty.[19]

[19] Gana, Nouri. *Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2011. Pg. 24.

This disloyalty can also be understood as a forceful forgetfulness; Freud's understanding of mourning endorses the repression and forgetting of loss as the 'healthy' work of mourning. This 'freedom' from the lost object then comes at a high price; when we become disloyal, forgetful, repressive towards our attachment to the lost object(s), in a sense we become those things equivalently to ourselves, our lived experience, and in turn we repressively forget parts that constitute ourselves in relationship to this loss.

This dualistic layer to loss is additionally explored in Judith Butler's work, *Precarious Life: the Power of Mourning and Violence*, in which the scholar addresses Freud's early notions on mourning and melancholia. Butler highlights how Freud's analysis of the process of loss is predominantly related to the understanding of attachment and that according to Freud, successful mourning will come about when the loss of an object (to which one, or in Freud's terms 'the ego', is attached) is replaced by another object and is then finally incorporated into ones life. However, Butler argues against this "interchangeability of objects as a sign of hopefulness" and signals the importance of understanding loss in all its complexity: "There is losing, as we know but there is also the transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be charted or planned. One can try to choose it, but it may be that this experience of transformation deconstitutes choice at some level."[20] She emphasises the importance of understanding that one cannot chose or decide how one is going to *be affected* by loss: affect does not function through a linear or 'predictable', calculative streamline. Butler points towards a rather normative disposition in Freud's work and her elaboration instead allows for a more fluid approach to the process of melancholy and mourning, in which affect's inconclusive nature is taken into consideration. Moreover, I suggest that neither Freud nor Butler consider that the replacement of an object is *impossible*: objects, especially living beings, are inherently unique. Therefore the loss of an object can never be truly remedied through replacement.

Furthermore, Butler elaborates on loss and the consequences of loss more generally for the individual: she argues that when one is faced with loss, something enigmatic is "hiding in this loss, something is lost within the recesses of loss."[21] The scholar points towards the relational within a loss:

> When we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us. It is not as if an 'I' exists independently over here and then simply loses a 'you' over there, especially if the attachment to 'you' is a part of what composes who 'I' am. If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn

[20] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London, New York: Verso, 2004. Pg. 21.
[21] Idem.

> the loss, but become inscrutable to myself. Who 'am' I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost 'you'' only to discover that 'I' have gone missing as well.[22]

Not only did Butler point out how loss can transform our sense of self, without there being a distinct choice in that matter, but moreover she demonstrates in this paragraph that one can also be overcome by *loss within loss* that is dependent on the relational level at which this loss plays out. Put differently, when we lose externally, we inevitably lose a part within ourselves that is constituted in relation to that loss. Butler's notes reveal that loss, and the consequent mourning journey, may reveal to us a multitude of losses that do not have to reveal themselves immediately. I propose that mourning may come in waves and questions: it may wane and wax as we discover how this loss relates to our sense of self and how it has and will continue to constitute our life.

Both Gana's and Butler's notes on mourning and loss critique the Freudian understanding that the work of mourning constitutes a deliberate, normative choice: Gana demonstrates that we must understand this as disloyalty to loss and one's own lived experience and Butler reveals that Freud's notion overlooks the complex affective and relational components of a mourning process that are often out of our control. Both scholars illustrate a more nuanced approach to the understanding of mourning: one in which we often do not have a deliberate choice in the course of this affective journey, but instead must accept what is brought to us by this loss, by first allowing the loss to be experienced fully in its full affective range of sentiments.

In her work *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, Alice Miller consistently refers to mourning. She does so in relation to the understanding that as children we learn to adapt our behavior in order to survive: (early) childhood experiences of neglect, abuse, and abandonment (among others) at the hands of caretakers leave a permanent imprint on our lives. When Miller turns to the notion of mourning, she speaks of "a long process" in which we can become whole again, but we must be willing to:

> Discover our own personal truth, a truth that may cause pain before giving us a new sphere of freedom… We can repair ourselves and gain our lost integrity by choosing to look more closely at the knowledge that is stored inside our bodies and bringing this knowledge closer to our awareness.[23]

Mourning, according to Miller, can be understood as a process of returning to that which has been lost by ourselves: we could say that Miller argues for mourning as a long process of

[22] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London, New York: Verso, 2004. Pg. 21-22.
[23] Miller, Alice. *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*. New York: BasicBooks, 2007. Pg. 1.

rediscovery of loss and to be with loss, rather than to move on or forget about it. Miller continuous: "But the experience of one's own truth, and the postambivalent knowledge of it, make it possible to return to one's own world of feelings at an adult level – without paradise, but with the ability to mourn."[24] Mourning might thus attest to a process of disenchantment: a process of acceptance in which we no longer conceal our lived truth(s) and experiences of loss, but instead uncover it and acknowledge it as our own. Miller gives us the important insight that for one to mourn, one must be willing to strip away illusionary hope and revisit the past: we might find ourselves needing to admit that in hindsight, we may have concealed own personal truth in order to survive.

Tracing melancholia in the postrevolutionary novel.

As illustrated, a mourning journey is inherently complex and difficult to streamline along one homogenous trajectory: this is of importance to this thesis, for it lays the groundwork in which I approach mourning as presented in the selected Egyptian novels. However, though mourning is not a constant, I do argue that melancholia is a consistent element in mourning within the postrevolutionary novel. Melancholia and mourning do not live in isolated spheres, but rather, as these novels illustrate, can co-exist at the same time. It is of my interest in this thesis to trace where and how these Egyptian writers have chosen to write a melancholic sentiment into their novels. In doing so, I demonstrate that these Egyptian writers have utilized a melancholic disposition in their novels to break personal, historical, and political silence on the loss(es) and defeat experienced both on an individual, as well as a collective level.

Building on this argument, I furthermore advocate for melancholia in the postrevolutionary Egyptian novel to be understood as both a personal and collective route to enter the work of mourning. I hereby lean predominantly on the notes of Nouri Gana and Zeina G. Halabi on melancholia and the subversive use of this element in contemporary Arabic literature. As Nouri Gana argued, melancholia in the Arab World can be recognized as a widespread cultural phenomenon or a "collective or group disposition" that is responsive to the "the unyielding hegemony of the joined-up forces of local despotism and global imperialism."[25] When turning to Arabic literature, Zeina G. Halabi illustrates that melancholia is a recurring *collective* sentiment that is often used in Arabic literature to express personal as well as political sentiments of mourning. The scholar elaborates: "melancholia… is an

[24] Miller, Alice. *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*. New York: BasicBooks, 2007. Pg. 14.
[25] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 119.

emotion experienced collectively and subsequently channelled in the literary text."[26] These notes will be some of the theoretical building blocks on which I will refer to in chapter 1 and 2.

A striking commonality between the selected postrevolutionary novels is that all novels start their narratives with the notion of loss and a subsequent journey into melancholia. This, I argue, is pivotal to understanding melancholia in these postrevolutionary novels, as it not only signals an individualized experience of melancholy it also shows a collective disposition towards melancholy in Egyptian postrevolutionary literature.

When tracing melancholia and loss in *The City*, we find a different novel when compared to Kamal's and El-Rashidi's, which subsequently asks for differing analyses. Rather than the intimate narratives on familial and romantic losses that are central to *Chronicle* and *Cigarette*, *The City* is often an intense and horrific novel that mainly focuses on the collective losses experienced during the Arab Spring uprisings. This sets Hamilton's novel apart from the other two novels discussed in this thesis, for *The City* demonstrates elements of terror, trauma, and even horror, that are more commonly embodied in dystopian post-revolutionary works published in the wake of the Arab uprisings as named prior. Yet *The City* differs to these dystopian works for Hamilton chose to have the novel set in the 'real' Cairo of 2011-2013, rather than an alternate dystopian Cairo that is set in a lost and hopeless future. Hereby Hamilton's novel is distinct in form, marrying elements of differing genres such as dystopia and horror into a realistic, political account of the Arab uprisings.

Chronicle and *Cigarette* on the other hand narrate the life story of a young Egyptian woman living in Cairo as she goes through different phases of her life; childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In El Rashidi's novel, these phases are chronologically narrated through the temporal framework of three decisive summers; the summer of 1984, 1998, and 2014, which in turn creates a cadence that feels slow and numbed, and like Kamal's novel, melancholia is woven into the entire narrative. *Cigarette* approaches these phases in a diachronic timeframe: the novel's diachronic narration of Nadia's life creates a disrupting experience of time, yet melancholia is a constant through each of these differing timeframes, creating affective structure within the fragmented narrative. Ultimately, both protagonists become politically involved in the Arab Spring uprisings and violent demonstrations in early 2011 on Tahrir Square, though El Rashidi's novels spends little time narrating the actual sit-in's, demonstrations, and embodied experiences of the revolution, whereas Kamal's novel does feature many chapters dedicated to those politically intense encounters. The novels differ in that *Cigarette* features various romantic relationships Nadia engages in and can be considered cornerstones in the development of the narrative, for affect plays an important part

[26] Halabi, Zeina. G. 'Writing Melancholy: The Death of the Intellectual in Modern Arabic Literature' *Dissertation.* The University of Texas at Austin: 2011. Vii.

within these relationships. *Chronicle* on the other hand features no romantic connections and is rather focused on familial relationships of all sorts; her parents, uncle, and cousin all play an important part in the protagonists understanding of life and herself.

Because of these literary differences, I have chosen to focus on Kamal's *Cigarette Number Seven* and El-Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer* in chapter 1 and Hamilton's *The City Always Wins* will be discussed in chapter two. This is because Hamilton chose to include narratives on martyrdom and it requires a specific theoretical framework to trace and designate how melancholia is infused in these narratives on death and loss.

Moreover, all novels are posited differently in regards to the Arab uprisings: *The City* spends most time narrating the revolution, its political course, and personal implications and spends little time narrating life events and the character's history prior to the revolution. The novel's temporal span focuses solely on the revolution itself and therefore the narrative is focused on experiences of the main characters during the Arab uprisings. In contrast, *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* the narrative momentarily tips its toes in the revolutionary waters, yet the story remains mainly within interpersonal relationships, particularly familial relationships are defining for the narrative and progression of the novel as it also shapes the novels' atmosphere and character more strongly.

Thus, these novels posit the narrative, characters, and their relation to the revolution differently: whereas *The City* weaves personal narratives into a story of a revolution, *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* narrate personal life stories of two Egyptian women in which the revolution plays an important role to the overall life trajectory of the main characters. Consequently, this difference in literary disposition and use of different temporal frameworks of the novel allows for different narratives.

Therefore, in Chapter 1 I will analyse Kamal's *Cigarette* and El-Rashidi's *Chronicle* through the lens of melancholia. Both novels infuse melancholia within personal and individualised experiences between the main character and other characters they interact with. They also share a similar loss that is used in the opening scenes of the novel. I will explore how melancholia is infused in a unique trajectory in these novels to move through a mourning process of the main character and consequently demonstrate how the individual experience of loss speaks of a collective disposition in the postrevolutionary novel towards melancholia.

In Chapter 2 I explore Hamilton's narratives on martyrdom: I demonstrate that *The City* uses this distinct literary element to *speak of* mourning as a collective experience in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. Moreover, in the martyr narratives, focalisation is employed as a literary tool to create a mourning archive that attests of both personal and collective sentiments of loss. In doing so, the novel is utilised to melancholically refuse, or as a

"melancholy act"[27], to forget the loss(es), suffering, violence, and injustices experienced by Egyptian people under a longstanding autocratic regime.

Finally, in Chapter 3 I turn to the category of temporality and the notion of hauntology to flesh out that the deliberate disruption and slippage of time in all novels are indicative of a literary elaboration on loss. In my theoretical elaboration, I turn to Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology to flesh out the presence of spectres and sentiments of haunting in all novels. Moreover, I build on Nouri Gana's and David Scott's work on temporality, as they prove fruitful in my analysis of disruptive time in all postrevolutionary novels. By relating narratives of bodily suffering and sensational, physical haunting in *The City*, to the spectre of Nadia's father in *Cigarette*, and to the subversive use of temporal continuity of political defeat in *Chronicle*, I demonstrate that temporality in all novels attest to a political critique on loss and time.

[27] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 122.

Chapter 1: Melancholia and Loss in Donia Kamal's *Cigarette Number Seven* and Yasmine El-Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer.*

In this first chapter I will explore loss, mourning, and melancholia in Donia Kamal's *Cigarette Number Seven* and Yasmine El-Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer.* Both Kamal and El-Rashidi are Egyptian writers and reside in Cairo and in their novels we can clearly see that their lived experiences have shaped their novels. Their postrevolutionary novels are unique in style, yet they share interesting commonalities that are indicative of a shared disposition towards the notion of loss and melancholia.

A striking commonality between *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* is that both novels posit loss at the center of their novels by starting off with an important loss: the withdrawal of a parent figure from the young protagonist's life. In *Cigarette* it is the mother who emigrates to the Gulf region in the hopes of finding better work opportunities, in *Chronicle* it is the father who leaves on a 'business trip' only to never return to the young child's life. Instead her father lives in political exile, possibly in Switzerland, though the main character never gets to know the full details of her father's life in exile. Both instances signify the departure of a parent from the life of the protagonist when she is still relatively young. It is of importance to note that in both novels this drastic retreat and loss of the parent figure happens rather early on in the narrative: in *Cigarette* this happens on page eleven and in *Chronicles* it is narrated on page five, in the opening chapter. In both instances, it signifies the importance of this event, as well as it symbolically representing an overall sense of loss experienced as a child that consequently taints the course of their lives, and thus the entirety of the novel.

In this chapter I demonstrate that the narration of the loss of a parent is indicative of an individualized, melancholic sentiment that continues to reverberate throughout both Kamal's and El-Rashidi's novel. It moreover shows that the individualized experience of melancholia is at the forefront in these postrevolutionary novels and it hints towards a collective disposition towards melancholia in Egyptian postrevolutionary literature.

Tracing melancholia in Donia Kamal and Yasmine El Rashidi's postrevolutionary novels demonstrates that both novelists have chosen to include personal and individualised experiences on loss and melancholia. Particularly the loss of a parent figure plays an important role for mapping out how melancholia is woven into the narratives of the novels. Scholar Zeina G. Halabi notes in her reading of death and melancholia in contemporary Arabic literature that she recognises melancholia as "Both a somber outlook towards the world and a resistance to complete the work of mourning" and it can be understood as "an

emotion experienced collectively and subsequently channeled in the literary text."[28] Halabi acknowledges a collective disposition and sensibility towards melancholia in the contemporary Arabic novel, yet in her analysis she argues that melancholia within these literary works can predominantly be found in the narration of individualized experiences of loss and melancholy, rather than collective experiences on loss. She argues:

> melancholia ceases to be a collective condition, but rather an individual and intimate state of mind of young protagonists…Disavowing their roles as the guardians of their generation's political and nationalist identities, young writers portray the contemporary intellectual as a lone melancholic character suffering from a sense of loss caused by anxieties experienced and narrated at an intimate level[29]

Though *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* do not necessarily portray contemporary intellectuals, Halabi's note on melancholia in Arabic literature being a more widespread phenomenon, but it being narrated on a rather intimate and personal level is relevant for my analysis of these two postrevolutionary novels. Kamal and El Rashidi's novel are highly personal novels, often including intimate family settings and romantic relationships in which interpersonal connection is a vocal point in the novel.

When turning to the abandonment of a child and the subsequent loss this child experiences in *Cigarette Number Seven* and *Chronicle of A Last Summer*, we can see how the child copes with this loss in a melancholic fashion as described by Freud, Al-Ghadeer, and Butler: the child experiences the loss of love object, but is unsure of what exactly is lost in losing this person, in turn leaving a void behind with which the ego then identifies as an act of psychic preservation and protection. This is particularly evident in Kamal's *Cigarette Number Seven.* In *Cigarette* the mother leaves young Nadia behind in search for a better economic position:

> I had only been a few months old when my mother left me with my grandmother and went to the Gulf. We didn't own a house and my father didn't have a steady income, so my mother bent over backward to get a job overseas. She took my sister with her and left me behind... For the next few years, my grandmother took care of me and my grandfather, who was sick.[30]

Interestingly, this is also the single time in the novel that the protagonist's sister is mentioned: after her departure, like her mother, she disappears as if a ghost and is not mentioned again. No memories or nostalgic longings for a lost past are narrated into the novel: Nadia seems unaffected by the drastic departure and subsequent loss of her mother. After having lived under her grandmother's care for several years, Nadia is taken to live with her father in

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[28] Halabi, Zeina. G. 'Writing Melancholy: The Death of the Intellectual in Modern Arabic Literature' *Dissertation.* The University of Texas at Austin: 2011. Pg. vii.
[29] Pg. 5.
[30] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 11.

Heliopolis where she "began to experience feelings of estrangement… I think it must have been around that time that I developed my fierce stare and my steely armor began to form. I became known for being antagonistic. I spoke very little"[31] Then the chapter continues by young Nadia not wanting to join the other children during an annual charity event at her school and she secludes herself the entire day, until the end of the festivities were approaching, then she would join the other children again.[32]

In Nadia's life we see that she has experienced at least four losses from the young age of seven: the sudden departure of her mother, sister, grandmother, and grandfather. In turn, we see Nadia becoming estranged with her environment, tending to seclusion, and becoming antagonistic. Here we can detect a melancholic sensibility in Nadia: she has identified and internalised the losses she experienced as a child because she is unable to detect *what* is lost within the various losses she experienced. Nowhere in the text does she refer to what she misses about the lost objects, at some point they just disappear from the narrative of *Cigarette*. For this reason, Nadia is unable to release the losses she experienced and the ego subsequently turns to a melancholic disposition: in order to protect herself from the losses she experienced as a young child, the ego identifies with the emptiness and the void left behind by her mother and grandmother and internalises this loss as her own, resulting in a sense of emptiness within ("I became known for being antagonistic. I spoke very little") Through this ego identification and appropriation, Nadia is able to hold on to her attachment to the lost object(s). This melancholic preservation of the lost object results in an internalised loss of self, or rather an impoverishment of the ego, as becomes evident in the following passage:

> I sit on the edge of my sofa for days or weeks, maybe months, detached from the details of everyday life, just contemplating and anticipating, thinking mostly depressing thoughts. Maybe I have lost that yearning for the unknown that I used to have… Travel was going to be my destination, and passion for the unknown my prayer… I still haven't lived a single story to match my fantasies or the books I've read. I lay on that sofa for weeks – or was it months?- and got lost in a amaze of repetitive thoughts. I was bored- bored and settled- settled on the sofa, and settled in my lack of passion and longing.[33]

The inability to act on one's dreams and desires is strong in this specific passage: Nadia seems to have abandoned or let her desires slip away from her, signalling a melancholic disposition of the ego. By abandoning the desires and dreams of self, the ego is revealing a melancholic attachment to lost others; it is however translated as an internal loss of self, rather than an external loss. As Freud reminds us, the melancholic person believes herself to be "incapable of any achievement" and it is the ego itself that has gone empty, rather than the

[31] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 12.
[32] Idem. Pg. 13.
[33] Idem. Pg. 51-53.

outside world.[34] This sense of an impoverished or unachievable life is also projected by her ego onto her relationship with Ali: "What did Ali see in me, I still wonder. Was I a reflection of what he wanted but lacked the energy to do?... Did I arouse his curiosity? Or just his desire? I didn't know why he stayed. And I had no idea when he would decide to leave."[35] In this quote, Nadia admits that she is unaware of what makes her desirable, she believes herself to not be of any significant value to Ali's life ("what did Ali see in me… I didn't know why he stayed"). Moreover, the final sentence, "I had no idea when he would decide to leave" also prevails her melancholic outlook on life: she holds on to the idea that anyone might just leave her life, without any sign or warning. We can quite literally see her how her melancholic attachment to the lost object (mother, grandmother, sister, and grandfather) rises back to the surface when faced with new attachments and relationships in her life.

This latter note is important, for it signals the second means in which we can trace melancholia in *Cigarette*: Nadia struggles to fully attach herself to new situations, objects, and people. For example, her melancholic tendency to estrangement and social seclusion is still prevalent in her adult life and it demonstrates an inability or a resistance to form new attachments: "There were no familiar faces, thank God. I didn't want to see anyone I knew and have to force a smile or make the effort to fill the void that came after the first greeting."[36] Though the melancholic person thinks herself to be free of the attachment to the lost object(s), her resistance to becoming attached to new love objects shows that she has not yet let go of the lost object(s): instead she has internalised, appropriated, and identified with the lost object. She also believes that new attachments are inevitably empty and will only increase her sense of emptiness within ("the void that came after the first greeting"). This again shows a melancholic sensibility within Nadia.

Finally, melancholia can also be recognized in the resistance to fully let go of loss. This is evident in the passage where fourteen-year-old Nadia hears the news that her mother has passed away. The tragic event does not seem to affect her:

> My mother died when I was fourteen years old. She died suddenly… I didn't cry, which was normal for me. I never cried, not as a child nor as a teenager. More than anything I was curious about my father's reaction to my mother's death. He surprised me, as usual, by crying silently at her burial…His tears confused me. I had seen him cry in silence once before, while poring over his papers. But seeing him cry on the day of the burial was more confusing and left me nervous and distressed.[37]

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[34] Freud, Sigmund. 'Melancholia and Mourning' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Translated by James Strachey. Vol. XIV. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1914-1916. Pg. 245.
[35] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 53.
[36] Idem. Pg. 48.
[37] Idem. Pg. 73.

Here it is evident that Nadia is resisting to mourn her mother's death: she is emotionally unaffected by the loss of her mother. Nadia later again recalls the "ordinary sadness" she felt at the loss of her mother.[38] Not only does Nadia not mourn her mother, she also experiences discomfort when she watches her father express sorrow and grief for the loss of his wife. When observing grief in her father's behaviour, Nadia clearly is affected as she becomes "nervous and distressed": she is resisting to be affected by the observed grief. This passage thus prevails a double resistance to the process of mourning; firstly as a person who lost someone, but also as an observer of a person in mourning. This resistance to the process of mourning, by adopting an unaffected and apathetic view, prevails a melancholic disposition. That Nadia is actually affected by the loss of her mother, after she had abandoned her from a young age, is clear when she states:

> Endings are the same in all their forms, but are especially painful when one side does not accept that it really is the end and gets stuck instead in an endless loop: final attempts, pleas, anger, repeat. The end is the end. I shivered at the thought. I put out my seventh cigarette and hugged myself, trying to expel all thoughts of leaving and dying. There wasn't much difference between the two. Leaving is a form of death for me. Every time someone I loved left, my subconscious translated that as a death. He was not coming back…. Those who leave do not come back.[39]

This passage is illustrative of how the abandonment of Nadia at the hands of her mother, and the death of her mother, has affected Nadia's experience of life, as the possibility of leaving becomes synchronised to a complete death of sorts and it is then translated through the emotion of melancholy. Nadia voices that she has accepted certain endings in her life, yet when understood through the lens of melancholia we can detect that she has most likely not accepted certain losses or endings in her life, but instead her ego has internalised and appropriated the loss as her own. Interestingly, we also see here the significance of the novel's title, *Cigarette Number Seven,* come into play: the act of smoking her seventh cigarette becomes a symbolic representation of melancholia. Smoking is used in this passage by the author as a symbolic representation or act of denying and repressing emotions on mourning: by smoking her seventh cigarette Nadia tries to banish "all thoughts of leaving and dying". In doing so, cigarettes are the symbolic representation of melancholia and the resistance to fully accept loss in *Cigarette.*

The melancholic person is unable to release its attachment for it is unaware of what is lost in the object and this causes the ego to then identify and internalise this loss, as Freud argues: "In mourning it is the world that has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and

[38] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 170.
[39] Idem. Pg. 113-114.

morally despicable."[40] This ego identification with loss results into an internalised experience of loss: because the melancholic person is unable to identify the loss, the ego embraces it as its own and leads to an ego deprived of meaning and fulfilment. Scholar Moneera al-Ghadeer clarifies:

> Thus, the reaction to loss in melancholy takes a different route, and whatever was lost in the loved object is incorporated and internalized, manifesting a loss in relation to the ego itself. More importantly, unlike in mourning where the libido detaches itself from the forsaken object and is able to seek a new attachment, in melancholy, the libido shifts itself from the love object to the ego through a confusing process of identification, internalization, and incorporation.[41]

The melancholic person thus goes through a transformative process in which the ego takes on the loss, consequently appropriating the loss itself, to then integrate it through a process of identification.[42] This results in a lack, or sense of emptiness within the ego: the melancholic person thus not only is unable to form new attachments, it furthermore is unable to identify value and meaning within the ego itself. Al-Ghadeer then refers to Judith Butler's work *The Psychic Life of Power*, in which Butler elaborates on this ego identification process:

> Insofar as identification is the psychic preserve of the object and such identifications come to form the ego, the lost object continues to haunt and inhabit the ego as one of its constitutive identifications. The lost object is, in that sense, made coextensive with the ego itself. Indeed, one might conclude that the melancholic identification permits the loss of the object in the external world precisely because it provides a way to *preserve* the object as part of the ego and, hence, to avert the loss as a complete loss.[43]

Identification can be understood as a psychic preservation of the object, helping it to "survive inside the ego" whilst "the ego presumes that it has given up the lost object".[44] By identifying with the loss, the ego does not have to release the lost object after all and instead it creates "a relationship of familiarity and fixed attachment with the love object."[45] Internalisation and identification thus functions as a means of self protection for the melancholic person: it gives the illusion of having let go of the lost object, so that the ego is not confronted with the vulnerability and pain it will have to face if it were to commit to the process of mourning.

Finally, another instance in which we can recognise melancholia in *Cigarette* requires a closer look at the use of temporality. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will elaborate more

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[40] Freud, Sigmund. 'Melancholia and Mourning' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Translated by James Strachey. Vol. XIV. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1914-1916. Pg. 245.
[41] Al-Ghadeer, Moneera. 'Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry' *Symploke.* Vol. 15, nr. 1-2 (January, 2007): 292.
[42] Idem.
[43] Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997. Pg. 134.
[44] Al-Ghadeer, Moneera. 'Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry' *Symploke.* Vol. 15, nr. 1-2 (January, 2007): 293.
[45] Idem.

deeply on the use of temporality, but in this chapter I will briefly elaborate on the interconnectedness between the use of temporality and melancholia in *Cigarette*. Kamal has not provided specific temporal significations in her novel: no dates are mentioned throughout the novel. Though one can pick up here and there in which timeframe a chapter is posited, there are very few moments in which the reader can find those significations. If they are incorporated, it usually is indicated as "Years ago", "Two days had past since the big battle", or "When I was twelve", however the reader is never presented with an indication of a specific day, time, or year. The only instances in which years are named is when Nadia speaks of the past, and one of these again is related to her father's spectre: "I read a lot about the prison years in the sixties. Most of that generation of intellectuals spent about five years in detention, in what my father called the 1959 roundup."[46]. Nadia's father had also once been detained in prison for political activity and it is a frequent memory that her father brings back up.

Interestingly, in doing so we see yet another melancholic element: the past becomes a consistently revived element in the narrative that is more clearly denoted than the present. Consequently, the past becomes clearly fleshed out in the narrative as it is more clearly, if not more predominantly, shaped then the present moment. The narrative of *Cigarette* can thus be categorised as melancholic for unspecified contemporaneity and the clearly defined temporality of a past, all are indicative moments of melancholia.

Chronicle of A Last Summer

When turning to Yasmine El-Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer* we can identify similar traits of melancholia in her novel. For example, in the following quote: "Some days after school I would sit in my cupboard imagining I was hidden away. I waited for them to find me. Baba did, but after he left nobody took notice."[47] In this short passage the young protagonist is not found, nor seen, by others in her life: after her father's loss she thus experiences a loss of self, she becomes invincible and unnoticeable. It also speaks of a melancholic sentiment as seen in *Cigarette Number Seven*: the protagonist tries to hide away and seclude herself from the outside world. This can be understood as melancholic, for the melancholic person is unable to attach itself to a new object and in turn hides away from the world. That way, the protagonist does not have to engage herself in the outside world where she will have to make new attachments and let go of her melancholic attachment to her lost father.

[46] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 65.
[47] El Rashidi, Yasmine. *Chronicle of a Last Summer: a Novel of Egypt*. First edition. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2016. Pg. 11.

An important reflection on and difference in melancholia for understanding *Chronicle* and the particularities of melancholia can be found in Moneera Al-Ghadeer "Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry" in which the scholar employs and in-depth analysis of melancholia onto Bedouin Women's poetry. In her exploration of melancholia, she too addresses notes on melancholia made by Freud and Butler, but the academic brings in the dimension of the phantasmal:

> Here, we can see another process of holding back into the lost object, but it is an attachment to reflections and images, a preservation of phantoms and specters. More precisely, melancholia is the phantasm of being loyal to the lost object and establishing the never- ending love with what it entails of waiting, agony, and pleasure. From this perspective, this phantasmatic relation with the object is caused by an irretrievable and unnamable loss.[48]

The scholar argues that when we look at how precisely the ego identifies with the lost object, it becomes clear that it is through mirroring and appropriation: the ego does not attach itself the lost object per se, but instead attaches itself to a phantasmal, mirroring preservation of what once was a love object. Al-Ghadeer's attention to the phantasmal within melancholia is helpful when identifying the melancholic pattern evident in *Chronicle of A Last Summer*. When returning back to the nameless protagonist's loss of her father we initially see her finding imaginary ways in which she can still connect to her father, showing a melancholic attitude towards the loss of her father: "Baba's office was the only place that still smelled of him… I would open the third drawer of his desk and put my nose to it. I opened it just a crack so that the smell wouldn't escape."[49] The young child uses her sensations to stimulate her imagination to create a phantasmal attachment to her father, though he is still absent in her life.

As the story continues and the protagonist grows into her late teens/early twenties, the tangible memories she had of her father also start to fade: "My memories of Uncle are the sharpest, most defined…As I walk through the square I see, hear, feel him. I relive past moments. With Baba, only the stories are left."[50], then later on: "I remember certain things. The sound of his breath as he wound up his wristwatch. How he gestured with his hands as he spoke… What I know about him I construct, piece together, through stories, notes, remembered dreams, interpreting recurring ones."[51] This re-remembering of her father is repeated in Chronicle: "There was much I didn't know, and many things I imagine I had inherited, borrowed, maybe even imposed on him, the man I wanted him to be, pieced

[48] Al-Ghadeer, Moneera. 'Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry' *Symploke.* Vol. 15, nr. 1-2 (January, 2007): 293.
[49] El Rashidi, Yasmine. *Chronicle of a Last Summer: a Novel of Egypt*. First edition. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2016. Pg. 19.
[50] Idem. Pg. 77.
[51] Idem. Pg. 83.

together, fading memories held tight by strands."[52] In each of these quotes from *Chronicle*, we see a gradual fading away of both the tangible memories as well as the phantasmal imaginations of her father, which she acknowledges are reconstructions of imagined, reinterpreted, and dreamed up ideas of who her father was or might still be. This gradual fading of her memories is accompanied with the gradual absence or loss of her own emotions: "I think about Baba more and more. At a point the idea of someone long absent turns from emotions into something of a mental exercise in remembering and deduction."[53] In losing her phantasmal mirror image of her father, an external image, the protagonist experiences a loss within: she loses the ability to emotionally connect. By this *external* loss she thus consequently experiences an *internal* loss.

I have found Judith Butler's notion on the work of mourning and loss helpful to understand how melancholia functions in *Chronicle*. As argued in the introduction, Butler effectively draws our attention to the importance of understanding the relational condition within loss: loss does not occur on an individual level, it acts on a relational one. This means that when one loses, we are not merely losing something or someone *outside* of oneself, but rather we additionally lose a part *within* ourselves, a part that is constituted in relation to that very loss.

When returning to melancholia in *Chronicle*, Butler's notes on the relational aspect of loss is helpful to distinguish melancholic sensibilities in the novel. Butler's elaboration suggests that once we lose, we are likely to embark on an inward journey as well, one in which we question not only the other, but also ourselves within that relational context. With the main characters ebbing of emotions and the gradual fading of affect, we quite clearly see the syncing up of the loss of her father, something *outside* of herself, as too the loss of her memory and emotions, a loss that is carried *within.* This internal loss is additionally evident in the loss of meaning and/or desire in the protagonist's own reflection's on her father's absence: "I didn't know why nobody talked about Baba even though everyone missed him. I still counted every day but didn't know anymore what I was counting to."[54] This last quote clearly prevails a melancholic assimilation of loss as described by Freud: though the protagonist remembers she has lost someone, she does not remember or know what was lost *in* that very loss. Another notable sign of melancholia in *Chronicle* is the chapter in which the main character starts questioning love and commitment; she turns to statues of ancient Egyptian gods in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The protagonist states:

[52] El Rashidi, Yasmine. *Chronicle of a Last Summer: a Novel of Egypt*. First edition. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2016. Pg. 105.
[53] Idem. Pg. 82.
[54] Idem. Pg. 59.

> I've taken to writing letters to people who don't exist or once existed or exist only as statues or gods… *How did he deal with difference?* I want answers I know I will never get… I write: *What Does it mean to be devoted?* I underline these notes and then circle them, with a question mark.[55]

The protagonist shows an interest in attaching herself to phantasmal beings, revealing a melancholic sensibility within the novel. She is still melancholically attached to the loss she experienced as a child, the loss of her father, and therefore she is unable to form new tangible attachments. Though seemingly it may look as if she is trying to form a new attachment, the 'other' in question is not real human being: the attachment is thus of a fictive and singular nature and it is not one in which an attachment or mutual interaction is fostered. This, the desire to form an attachment to an unreal or phantasmal being, demonstrates her melancholic attachment to a lost object: her father.

That this attachment is a melancholic attachment is also evident by the fact that these statues of ancient Egyptian gods belong to a past: they symbolise a past rather than contemporary or new temporal frame. Even though it is a 'new' commitment in her life, it reveals a melancholic longing for something imagined, lost, and of the past. This quote is thus also symbolic of her melancholic attachment to a loss of the past.

She furthermore acknowledges that she is in search for answers about herself and the meaning of devotion in her life: she is thus actively questioning what it means to be committed. Butler's note on the relational aspect of loss is helpful to unpack this, for it explains why the protagonist is resorting on an inner quest of meaning: what does it mean to commit to someone and be devoted? How does that 'tie' manifest itself within relationships? That the protagonist is searching for answers also suggests that she is unsure how to answer that question: the ego has internalised the loss of her father and it now identifies with not knowing how to commit to someone. Though she is asking questions to a fictional character, she seems to acknowledge that she is in search of something unattainable, something fleeting. When read through a melancholic lens, we can find the protagonist longing for answers from her father, a relationship in which she equally never received any clarity or answers on her questions. She acknowledges this later on in the novel when she states:

> In my mind's eye I envisage Baba, his absence ever present in the questions unasked… I imagine the questions linger for everyone. There had been problems with the government. They were selective about who they went after. It is all I know. It might be all anyone knows, even Baba himself.[56]

[55] El Rashidi, Yasmine. *Chronicle of a Last Summer: a Novel of Egypt*. First edition. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2016. Pg. 79.
[56] Idem. Pg. 114.

When the protagonist thus asks the fictional Egyptian god "what it means to be devoted?" she is thus indirectly asking a melancholic question: one that reveals her melancholic attachment to her lost father. Melancholia in El-Rashidi's novel thus can be read through the phantasmal reconstruction of the protagonist's father, the subsequent ebbing of emotions and affect that accompany this imaginary attachment, and her attempts for attachment to fictional characters of the past. As Al-Ghadeer noted, melancholy attachment is in essence a form of "irretrievable and unnameable loss" and reveals a longing for something that still has to be mourned.[57]

The political within melancholia

Both novelists also chose to narrate the novel through the focalisation of one character, that being the protagonist or main character. This *character bound* focalisation, as Mieke Bal denotes this technique, in turn strengthens the personal and intimate character of *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* for it narrates the life world through one lens.[58] It leaves the reader immersed in a rather intimate setting of this life world, for there is no focalised intervention or interruption of this life world by any other character. Both novels thus display a deeply personal experience and sensibility towards melancholia, it can however be identified more collectively in contemporary Arabic literature as Halabi noted. We can thus question why melancholia is evident in these postrevolutionary, and moreover how does melancholia function in these novels? What does melancholia *do* or produce within these literary settings?

Butler reminded us that within losing someone, there is inevitably a relational aspect to that loss. The scholar highlights that there is the potentiality for collective solidarity within the experience of loss:

> all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous 'we' of us all…Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure.[59]

This is an important observation, for it highlights the relational dynamics and collective potentiality for solidarity within the process of loss, and consequently that of melancholia and mourning. Nouri Gana emphasizes a similar note in his *Signifying Loss*: *Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning* on the process of mourning. Gana too critiques Freud's "Melancholia and Mourning" and addresses that it is his contention that *Signifying Loss* is aimed to "offer a

[57] Al-Ghadeer, Moneera. 'Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry' *Symploke.* Vol. 15, nr. 1-2 (January, 2007): 293.
[58] Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Fourth edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pg. 13.
[59] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London, New York: Verso, 2004. Pg. 20.

corrective to Freud's insistence… on the temporal constraints and therapeutic aims of mourning".[60] Though largely reflective on the practice of mourning, Gana's work is still relevant to understanding melancholia more deeply. The scholar notes:

> A more deliberately relational and sociopolitical conception of mourning seems to me conductive not only to framing ways of relating to lost others, to the past, and to history writ large, but also to rethinking the present and the future by contemplating how the experience of mourning can become a threshold moment of solidarity and community building. Narrative becomes by the same token… a function of sociocultural formations and transformations of intelligibility, collectively, and subjectively.[61]

As Butler did in her critique, Gana too denotes the importance of merging the relational and sociopolitical into our understanding of loss and mourning for it would allow for a more holistic understanding of how loss, mourning, and melancholia, can both become catalysts of subversion, rather than mere normative responses to loss and de-/attachment. Each response to loss, when put in relational, sociopolitical, and sociocultural aspect to one another, can become as Gana notes a valuable 'threshold moment' of subversion and collective solidarity. When we aim to release the "therapeutic grip" Freud's work still has over melancholia and mourning, we can instead see the potentiality for melancholia's and mourning's power of political and sociocultural subversion.[62] Halabi, Butler, and Gana all refer to the importance of positing melancholia not only within the Freudian context of psychoanalysis, but also relating to it within the broader sociocultural and political circumstances.

When returning to the loss of a parent figure in *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* there is another commonality between the two losses: in both cases, the choice for the parent figure to leave Egypt was politically motivated. In *Cigarette* it is because the mother is unable to find suitable work and consequently is unable to financially provide and take care of her family and in *Chronicle*, though left more or less unclear, it is because the protagonist's father used to be an activist and critique the Egyptian government. Though the loss of a parent is thus represented through an intimate and personalized optic, the nature of this loss is politicized. Thus, melancholia in these novels is not just a phenomenon that denotes personal loss, it also suggests towards a melancholic loss that is of a political nature. This latter argument is also explored by Nouri Gana in his article "Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics", in which the scholar traces "the afteraffects" of the 1967 defeat in the Arab World by the hands of the occupational state of Israel, as he demonstrates the importance of understanding the expression of melancholia in relationship to this devastating defeat. In his article, the academic argues that "individual materializations of a more collective or group disposition towards melancholia" can be recognised in Arab contemporaneity as a reflexion of

[60] Gana, Nouri. *Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning*. Lewisburg [Pa.] : Lanham, Md: Bucknell University Press ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2011. Pg. 26.
[61] Idem.
[62] Idem.

continuous resistance against on-going practices of neo-colonialism and local despotism within the Arab World.[63]

The scholar recognises that within the Arab World, the work of mourning in a Freudian sense is aligned with defeat and accepting "the verdict of reality (Israeli superiority) and to mourn the lost object (sovereignty and dignity)".[64] Here we can quite clearly see Gana's disposition towards loss, mourning, and melancholia, as presented in his *Signifying Loss*, as strongly informed by the broader socio-political, historical, and cultural factors that have shaped melancholic sensibilities within the Arab world, and more specifically Arabic literature. Loosening the 'therapeutic grip' of Freud's understanding of melancholia reverberates again in Gana's article, as he clarifies:

> In its Arab sociocultural and political formation, melancholia is no longer mainly associated with the fall of self-esteem and the regression to infantile fantasies and primary narcissisms, not to mention the pathologies of attachment to lost causes, but is inextricably linked to the rise of individualism, self-reflexivity, and, above all, the human clamor for freedom from injustice.[65]

Gana's exploration of melancholia in Arabic literature not only brings in the importance of understanding the relational level within loss, as Butler also highlighted, but he additionally emphasises the importance of understanding the specific socio-cultural, political, and historical circumstances under which that loss has been experienced in the Arab World. In doing so, Gana highlights that melancholia within cultural expressions in the Arab World acts as political resistance against the forgetfulness of normative mourning. He argues that this melancholic disposition has consequently shaped artistic literary expressions in Arabic literature. Precisely because in the Arab World "normative structures of mourning are… aligned with the system of global imperialism and settler colonialism.", a commitment to melancholy, or a refusal to fully let go of loss(es), in the Arabic novel functions as a political call for justice and a powerful tool of political and creative insurgency.[66]

Through a personalised and intimate narrative, *Cigarette Number Seven* and *Chronicle of A Last Summer* can be understood as postrevolutionary Egyptian novels that vocalise the 'afteraffects' of not only personal loss, but also political loss(es). Both Kamal and El-Rashidi have narrated the political afteraffects of the 1967' defeat into their novels by centralising the tragic loss of a parent and demonstrating how this continues to shape the present moment of the main protagonist. I have demonstrated how this loss is experienced melancholically by the main characters. By understanding that melancholia in the Arabic

[63] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 118-119.
[64] Idem. Pg. 121.
[65] Idem. Pg. 136.
[66] Idem. Pg. 122.

novel functions as a subversive mode of writing, rather than a mere pathological condition, we can see the potentiality for positing Egyptian postrevolutionary literature as politically outspoken through the use of personalised narratives on loss.

Chapter 2: The Melancholic Refusal to Forget: Narratives on Martyrdom, Mourning, and Loss in Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always* Wins.

In the first chapter I have demonstrated how melancholia is written into *Cigarette Number Seven* and *Chronicle of A Last Summer*: through the use of personalised and intimate narratives on family and loss, both Kamal and El Rashidi have used the novel as a literary device to vocalise personal and collective loss(es) and the subsequent aftermath of mourning. In their novels, melancholia becomes an individualised experience that reverberates throughout all aspects of life of the main character. The use of melancholia in these novels not only attests to an intimate experience of loss; it moreover shows a collective disposition towards melancholia in the Egyptian postrevolutionary novel.

When turning to Omar Robert Hamilton's *The City Always Wins* (2017), locating melancholia requires a different lens. This is predominantly because Hamilton's novel is distinct in form and style, marrying elements of horror and terror into a realistic, political account of the 2011-2013 Arab uprisings. One of the more outstanding features in Hamilton's novel is the inclusion of martyr narratives and I argue that within these narratives we can trace distinct melancholic sentiments. Tracing melancholia in *The City* is twofold: firstly, melancholia is found in the consistent inclusion of martyr narratives and the affective aftermaths of this loss experienced by close loved ones. Secondly, melancholia is evident in the novel through the creative utilisation of non-fictional data of the Arab uprisings in Egypt. I argue that both elements of the novel are a response to loss and they share a similar frame to how melancholia is written into the novel. In this chapter I will focus mainly on the inclusion of martyr narratives in *The City*, as I argue we can see melancholia at play most distinctly in Hamilton's novel. Additionally I illustrate how the use of non-fictional data is used to create a literary, mourning archive that refuses to forget the suffering and loss(es) experienced by those involved in the Arab uprisings.

A closer look at martyr narratives in Hamilton's novel reveals a politically subversive use of melancholia: narratives of martyrdom in *The City* are purposefully included as a literary, melancholy act to resist forgetfulness of loss, violence, suffering, and injustices against the Egyptian people by a corrupt state. As Nouri Gana clarifies, forgetfulness in the Arab World is aligned with accepting defeat against neo-colonial and authoritarian injustices and violence at the hands of state power.[67] Central to this chapter is Gana's distinction of melancholy acts, as I argue, it illustrates how the use of melancholia in this postrevolutionary novel is politically deployed: martyr narratives in *The City* are evident of a literary, political strategy that reveals a melancholic refusal to forget the loss(es) experienced by the people that

[67] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 121.

fought against longstanding forms of corruption under autocratic regimes.

Moreover, I demonstrate that the inclusion of martyr narratives shows that mourning and melancholia can co-exist simultaneously: martyr narratives in *The City* function as a means to mourn the lost people of the Arab uprisings in Cairo, yet these mourning narratives remain melancholic at their core by remember and remaining close to what is lost. Martyr narratives in *The City* then attest to how melancholia is utilised as a means to alter the novel into a site of mourning.

Martyr Narratives in *The City Always Wins*: Form, Vision, and Focalisation

The City follows a group of young revolutionaries in downtown Cairo as they participate in demonstrations and set up an activist collective during the Arab Spring uprisings. The novel is set in what is often recognised as the most important phase of the Revolution in Egypt, 2011-2013. Within this timeframe we follow protagonist Khalil, a young Palestinian Egyptian activist who left his life in the United States behind to participate in the Arab Spring uprisings in Cairo. Khalil is part of podcast station and resistance collective *Chaos* in which he, alongside his fellow activist friends Mariam, Hafez, and Rania, aims to contribute to the revolutions cause to topple the longstanding corruption and violations of human rights under the autocratic regime of former president Hosni Mubarak. They set up a podcast station, have headquarters where they meet daily, organise meetings, participate in demonstrations, gather (video) footage of state violence during peaceful protests, visit families of martyred revolutionaries, and write testimonies, amongst others.

Moreover, the novel is centred mainly within the many violent moments the main characters experience during their activist work on the streets of Cairo. Their willingness to persevere even under the direst of circumstances is a core element that gives the novel an overall characteristic of intensity. This feeling of intensity in the novel is strengthened by the many graphic, violent scenes set during demonstrations and violent attacks on the streets of downtown Cairo. The novel often narrates physical injuries or the witnessing of a character being shot, injured, or murdered during political protests.

Like *Cigarette* and *Chronicle, The City* too is opened with the narration of loss. However, in contrast to the very personal loss of a parent, the novel opens with the death of young revolutionaries. Most of these characters stay mostly anonymous throughout the novel or have no intimate and personal connection to the main characters. Main character Mariam recounts the rather morbid and large-scale loss: "She stopped counting the dead an hour ago… *they are all dead.* The hospital's morgue is full".[68] The opening chapter continues by

[68] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 5.

narrating the violence that was involved in these killings: "The army opened fire. No hesitation. They crushed people under their tanks."[69], as well as creating space for the narration of anger and grief amongst relatives of the killed revolutionaries in the morgue: "My son is dead. My son is dead inside and we talk of justice? What justice for the poor? For the weak?"[70] The chapter is concluded by 'Umm Aymann', Aymann's mother, stating that her martyred son Aymann: "'came alive in Tahrir'".[71] Umm Aymann later speaks in the novel as she narrates her grief on losing her child:

> Gathered, now, every morning, in mourning and absence. She is thankful. She will be watchful. And when breakfast is over there is always a little left. She makes sure of it. She places it in the fridge… Heba, her youngest, always watching, takes it out first thing in the morning and washes it before her mother wakes up. And the day begins again. The relics of the dead.[72]

These opening paragraphs demonstrate what will be cultivated throughout Hamilton's novel: affected narratives on martyrdom. These narratives play a prominent role in the novel, as the martyrs of the revolution are mentioned continuously throughout the novel from the onset onwards. More so, different characters that have lost a close loved one get to speak on their loss. This is an important aspect of discerning how melancholia is connected to martyrdom in *The City* and it requires attention to form. Though the content of the martyr narratives too is of importance to grasp how grief and loss are written into the novel, the form in which these narratives are written equally reveals a disposition towards melancholia.

Most prominently used in the martyr narratives is the literary tool of focalization. As distinguished by Mieke Bal, focalization is "the relationship between the vision, the agent that sees, and that which is seen" and furthermore, "The subject of focalization, the focalizer, is the point from which the elements are viewed."[73] If the focalizer and the character coincide, its vision will be more easily accepted by the reader, for the reader is inclined to see along the character's perspective: Bal refers to this conjunction as a *character-bound focalizer*.[74]

Contrary to *Cigarette* and *Chronicle*, in which Kamal and El Rashidi deployed the technique of character bound focalisation exclusively to a single narrating subject, a "*character-bound* narrator", *The City* utilises a multiplicity of characters as character-bound focalisers. Bal elaborates that focalization "can shift from one character to another, even if the

[69] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 7.
[70] Idem. Pg. 6-7.
[71] Idem. Pg. 8.
[72] Idem. Pg. 38.
[73] Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Fourth edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pg. 135.
[74] Idem.

narrator remains constant."[75] Whilst Khalil is still the primary narrator of the novel, focalisation shifts to different characters when martyr narratives are introduced. Bal argues that when focalisation is shifted in a narrative, in turn "we may be given a good picture of the origins of a conflict. We are shown how differently the various characters view the same facts."[76] Though arguably the opposite may be relevant too: in allowing different characters to focalise, one could also find a collective thread or disposition in varying experiences. This is relevant when understanding focalisation in *The City*, for it is exclusively deployed when narrating martyr narratives and subsequent experiences of loss and grief: where the two main protagonists Khalil and Mariam can focalise differing experiences, emotions, and life events, other characters in the novel exclusively focalise or speak when it is in relation to a loss they have experienced of their martyred loved one. The characters that focalise within the martyr narratives can only navigate within the realm of loss and death, rather than in the bigger spectrum of experiences in life that Khalil experiences.

As argued in the introduction, melancholia in the postrevolutionary novel must be understood as both a collective and a personal route to mourning. This is rather clear when turning to martyr narratives since the martyr narratives are highly individualised narratives on loss and mourning, yet taken together they become a collective set of voices that all speak on loss(es). Like *Cigarette* and *Chronicle*, we see a novel that utilises an intimate and individualised experience of a loss to speak of a larger, collective experience on loss. However, in comparison to the other two novels, we see a difference in stylistic choice. Whereas *Cigarette* and *Chronicle* remain close to one main character by deploying one character-bound focaliser, *The City* utilises multiple voice to speak on individual experiences of loss.

Thus, a shift in focalisation in *The City* is strategically used only in the context of martyrdom and it emphasises the desire to make visible and democratise the large-scale collective experiences of loss, death, and grief by the hands of unjust state violence deployed against peaceful demonstrators in Cairo. By allowing a variety of characters to focalise, Hamilton utilises the novel to *give voice* to a collective of people that experienced injustices. Whilst Bal's note on focalisation as a tool to show heterogeneity within a narrative might be relevant, in *The City* the consistent shift in focalisation attests to a collective experience of suffering and loss. Focalisation in *The City* strengthens a collective and political disposition in which Egyptian people that were active in the Arab uprisings in Egypt have collectively experienced injustices: we are shown how a heterogeneous group of people have similar experiences with loss, death, and suffering.

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[75] Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Fourth edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pg. 136.
[76] Idem.

Another important aspect of form within the martyr narratives is that those voices that focalise their experience with loss are always closely and intimately connected to the martyred: they are either family members or a romantic partner of the martyred. Often these characters are the parents of the martyred person and are named by their parental status, such as 'Abu Bassem' (Bassem's father), 'Umm Ayman' (Ayman's mother), 'Umm X' (X's mother). What is striking is that these parents are not referred to by their personal name, but by their affiliation to the child they lost, the reader never gets to know the characters personal name.[77] The identity and subsequent representation in *The City* of these parental figures is thus tied to their relationship to their loss. As such, they become fixed to a loss they experienced.

However, these characters do not characterise *themselves* through this lens, but rather it is the vision of Kamal and other revolutionaries that denote these family members of the martyred through a melancholic disposition. This vision of these characters is thus inherently melancholic, for the characters are 'envisioned' through the context of their martyred child. We can thus see a *mediated* vision of these characters that strongly relies on a melancholic optic.

As demonstrated, form plays a central role in how melancholia is written into the narrative of the novel, though it is not the only means by which melancholia is cultivated throughout *The City's* martyr narratives. For example, vision and melancholia collide when turning to one of the final martyr passages in the novel. In this passage Abu Bassem returns to a cybercafé to watch a video on YouTube of his martyred son, Bassem. Throughout the novel we have seen Abu Bassem watch this video continuously to keep his son Bassem, or rather the phantasmal memory of Bassem, in his life. Near the end of the novel, Abu Bassem contemplates:

> There are no new words for loss. They took everything from me. My boy, my brotherhood, my reasons for breath. He slips into his seat in the corner of the cybercafé… What if, today, it's gone? What if Bassem doesn't appear? What if it breaks or is lost or deleted an the last time was the last time I will ever see him and I didn't know it and I didn't watch it as carefully as I should have… What if today is the day I find I have nothing left?[78]

The act of watching a recording of Bassem already reveals quite a melancholic attachment: Abu Bassem is unable to let go of a past vision, or visual representation, of Bassem. As defined in chapter 1, this is in line with Al-Ghadeer's notes on melancholia as it often can be

[77] It must be noted that the referral to person by his or her parental name is also a common way to refer to someone in colloquial Arabic.
[78] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins*. First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 298.

traced in the "attachment to reflections and images, a preservation of phantoms and spectres" and this phantasmic relationship to loss has its origins in "an irretrievable and unnameable loss".[79] Indeed, Abu Bassem even acknowledges his loss as indescribable.

This passage reveals that Abu Bassem has created a melancholic attachment to his martyred son through a phantasmal relationship. In turn, his anxiety towards the loss of an imagery of Bassem is not so much about the fear of losing this particular video. Instead, it is reflective of his melancholic, phantasmal attachment to Bassem: if Abu Bassem loses this video, he consequently loses the vision of his martyred son. Therefore the loss of this visual representation would break his ability to phantasmically hold on to his son, it would break the phantasmal and melancholic preservation of the lost object.

We can note how melancholia functions as a means to cope with loss: though Abu Bassem is more than likely aware of his attachment to this video as 'phantasmal', he nevertheless finds it to be his only site of salvation. Though he does not articulate this sentiment clearly, the narration of the continuous return to this video, and Abu Bassem voicing that he would have "nothing left" if the video will be deleted, illustrates the importance of melancholia in Bassem's mourning journey. Melancholia is helping him cope in some way with the loss of his son: it allows him to hold on to his son and *be with loss* rather than to 'move on'- or forget it.

Melancholic refusal and martyrdom in the Arab uprisings

As demonstrated, form plays an important role in tracing how melancholia is woven into narratives of martyrdom in *The City*. When further exploring martyrdom in the novel it becomes clear that these narratives are all politically engaged and that melancholia is consistently used throughout these narratives. To understand why melancholia is of political importance in narratives of martyrdom, a closer look at the phenomenon of martyrdom during the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt is needed.

In their article on martyrdom in the Middle Eastern region, Elizabeth Buckner and Lina Khatib argue that the Arab Spring brought forth a new disposition towards martyrdom in the Arab World. The scholars illustrate how narratives and imageries of martyrdom prior to the Arab uprisings have been traditionally shaped by states for nationalist aims, and "martyrs often became politicized symbols that serve the political aims of those in power."[80] Martyrdom in the Arab world prior to the Arab Spring uprisings was utilised as a tool for

[79] Al-Ghadeer, Moneera. 'Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry' *Symploke.* Vol. 15, nr. 1-2 (January, 2007): 293.
[80] Buckner, Elizabeth, and Khatib, Lina. "The Martyrs' Revolutions: The Role of Martyrs in the Arab Spring". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. 41, nr. 4 (2 October 2014): 376.

"political apparatus" to "consolidate collective identities" and consequently appropriate them for "larger national aims".[81]

Images of the Arab Spring martyr however differ greatly from pre-Arab Spring martyr narratives: the Arab Spring martyr is no longer singularly narrated along the values and aims of official political organisations.[82] Instead, the Arab Spring uprisings were "a people-led mass political mobilisation, often unorganised, and bottom-up, and so too its imagery creation was bottom-up and people-led."[83] This is exemplary in the use of graffiti depicting martyrs in downtown Cairo[84], but also in the creation of "The Museum of the Revolution"[85], and notably, the subversive use of social media, where Facebook groups such as "We Are All Khaled Said" were essential for circulating martyr narratives in Egypt. Narratives on martyrdom were reclaimed by citizens and revolutionaries alike, rather than solely being utilised by political state apparatus for nationalist politicised aims. Instead, narratives of martyrdom at the hands of revolutionaries demonstrated that martyrs of the Arab Springs were understood as "both victims of their own states' unjust policies, and the true heroes of the revolution."[86] The understanding of martyrs as everyday people and victims of corrupt state violence by autocratic regimes, is an essential shift in the martyr narrative as Buckner and Khatib clarify:

> The emphasis on martyrs as *truly innocent* victims of their own states allowed activists to redefine in- and out-group identities- the 'us' was the people, while the 'them' were the regimes. In this way, martyrs came to represent the everyday people of the region.[87]

This political division is also linguistically evident in the most popular slogan of the Arab Spring all over the region: "The people demand the toppling of the regime/system" ("ash-sha'b yourid isqat al-nithaam").[88] One could argue that this process of denationalisation of martyr narratives resulted in a 'bottom-up' representation of the martyred. Hence, narratives on martyrdom and the revolutionary martyred became tools within the act of

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[81] Buckner, Elizabeth, and Khatib, Lina. "The Martyrs' Revolutions: The Role of Martyrs in the Arab Spring". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. 41, nr. 4 (2 October 2014): Pg. 375.
[82] Idem. Pg. 378.
[83] Idem. Pg. 377.
[84] For articles on the use of graffiti during the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt see; 'Pannewick, Friederike. "Icons of Revolutionary Upheaval. Arab Spring Martyrs." In *Martyrdom: Canonisation, Contestation and Afterlives.* ed. Saloul, Ihab, and Henten, Jan Willem. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.' and 'Abaza, Mona. "Mourning, Narratives and Interactions with the Martyrs through Cairo's Graffiti". *E-International Relations* (October 7, 2013): 1-20'.
[85] Abaza, Mona. "Mourning, Narratives and Interactions with the Martyrs through Cairo's Graffiti". *E-International Relations* (October 7, 2013): 13.
[86] Buckner, Elizabeth, and Khatib, Lina. "The Martyrs' Revolutions: The Role of Martyrs in the Arab Spring". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. 41, nr. 4 (2 October 2014): 380.
[87] Idem. Pg. 378.
[88] For regional differences and an in-depth linguistic elaboration on the use of this Arabic political slogan see: "Kraidy, Marwan M. *The Naked Blogger of Cairo: Creative Insurgency in the Arab World.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pg. 8".

political resistance by the people participating in the Arab Spring uprisings rather than the state or authoritarian regimes: the death of young 'normal' or common people became a political tool of and for the people in their fight against injustices against state violence.

In her sociological account on martyrdom during the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt, Amira Mittermaier elaborates on the public commemoration of young martyred in spaces such as Tahrir Square. She elaborates on the dualistic nature of publicly memorialising martyred revolutionaries:

> Relatives of martyrs held up pictures of their loved ones; and the walls were filled with murals of martyrs,…Naming the dead and establishing their martyrdom was critical for enabling martyrs' families to receive recognition for their loss…but the martyrs also carried weight as embodied evidence of state violence, as tools for holding the state accountable, as mobilizers of continuous protests, and as a source of inspiration.[89]

The act of making martyrs visible then reveals a dualistic interest: firstly, a personal and intimate desire to receive recognition of the loss(es) and grief endured by the martyrs' families and secondly, as a political intention to utilise narratives of martyred revolutionaries as "embodied evidence" of the continuous violence employed on Egyptians by the hands of an autocratic political regime. The latter note additionally reveals that martyr narratives during the Arab uprisings served to fuel political momentum: martyrs became symbols of the suffering endured by the Egyptian people and they became 'mobilizers' for the continuation of political insurgency.[90]

What is noteworthy in Mittermaier's account on martyrdom, is the performative and ritualistic element of the commemoration of martyrs: by physically being present on Tahrir and materializing the martyr's memory in the form of demonstrating, making posters, and speaking of their deaths, the people on Tahrir did not only demand recognition of the injustices they and their martyred loved ones suffered from, but they also were mourning their loss(es). Returning to these memories of loss than can be understood as a means to *archive* and re-enact, perform these acts of mourning. The inclusion of martyr narratives into *The City* then mimics in literary form the activist spirit of revolutionary times by re-enacting the mourning practices of relatives of the martyrs at Tahrir Square. In doing so, the book becomes a melancholic mourning archive that remains close to loss and suffering, by refusing to forget these losses.

Another means in which Hamilton re-enacts the revolutionary spirit is by including non-fictional data of the Arab uprisings in Egypt. Hamilton's novel was published in 2017

[89] Mittermaier, Amira. 'Death and Martyrdom in the Arab Uprisings: An Introduction'. *Ethnos* 80, nr. 5 (20 October 2015): 586.
[90] Pannewick, Friederike. 'Icons of Revolutionary Upheaval. Arab Spring Martyrs.' in *Martyrdom: Canonisation, Contestation and Afterlives.* ed. Saloul, Ihab, and Henten, Jan Willem. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. Pg. 204.

outside of Egypt by publishing house *Faber&Faber* in the United Kingdom: therefore *The City* was not subject to censorship by the Egyptian Government. The writer was able to incorporate many sources of information into his novel that are fully banned in Egypt due to political censorship such as; political tweets, newspaper articles, podcasts, political archives, data from media collectives, and testimonies of survivors and family members of martyred revolutionaries.[91] Often these facts are used in the book as chapter openings, titles, or to differentiate sections in a chapter. In doing so the writer consistently blurs the line between fiction and non-fiction, creating a novel that is fictional, yet reminds the reader that most of these events have happened and real lives were lost in the fight against state corruption.

In an interview with the writer, Hamilton clarifies that he desired to create a historical account on the Arab Spring that additionally showed the psychological intimacy of what the people involved in the violent demonstrations in Cairo experienced.[92] I believe this statement can be traced back in the novel as such: on the one hand, *The City* archives the tangible events and the losses experienced of the people involved in the revolution, and on the other hand, the novel mourns the personal and affective loss(es) experienced by common people and revolutionaries alike at the hands of state violence. The latter is predominantly done through the narration of martyr narratives. By including this non-fictional data, Hamilton utilises the novel as a political vessel to show both the affective, intimate character of the revolution, as well as the collective experiences of loss and suffering.

This dualistic layer to martyr narratives is evident in *The City* when looking at the following quotation in which character Abu Bassem speaks of his martyred son:

> Bassem watches over us all. The martyr is a witness who speaks of the injustice he sees. He stands before the violence and falls before it… 'My son died for them and now I'll die for them and everyone in Tahrir will die for them… Who are we dying for… We're dying to stop the killing and the corruption. We're dying for respect. We're dying for bread, freedom, and social justice.[93]

The martyr figure in the Arab Spring uprisings in *The City* is symbolised as a political agent that fought in the struggle against injustices and it is utilised to fuel a revolutionary momentum. This quote too affirms what Gana has noted that death and suicide during the Arab Spring uprisings were some of "the only means left communicating their rage and

[91] The specific sources used and cited by Hamilton are listed in: "Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins*. First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. *Acknowledgements,* pg. 309."
[92] André, James. "Egypt's revolution, seven years on: An insider's perspective" https://www.france24.com/en/20180312-interview-omar-robert-hamilton-arab-spring-egypt-revolution-mubarak-morsi-sisi . *France24*, March 12, 2018. Min. 6:05. Accessed April 7, 2022.
[93] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 31.

disgust and for protesting against injustices of various kinds."[94] Particularly the emphasis on the death of martyrs carrying a "weight as embodied evidence of state violence" is also a recurring feature in martyr narratives in Hamilton's novel, the opening chapter even includes fragments of this sentiment. For example, Mariam is amongst family members of killed young revolutionaries in a morgue as she thinks: "There will be no swift burial of bodies and truths. There will be autopsies. There will be evidence. There will be justice."[95] This short statement illustrates precisely Mittermaier's argument that the death of martyrs is transformed into *embodied* evidence and is utilized to address injustices at the hands of the state and consequently hold it accountable.

Moreover, *The City* also demonstrates how martyrs become a political tool to keep the revolutionary spirit alive and mobilize people for the continuation of protesting. As such, side-character Ashira, the wife of a martyred revolutionary, voices: "what we have are hundreds of names of people martyred for the revolution. We need to know their stories. They are central to our narrative, they're the reason the revolution must be kept alive."[96] Interestingly, the word 'narrative' is literally used here, displaying the constructed nature of martyrdom and the underlying political motivations for this narrative. In this brief elaboration, Ashira voices what Mittermaier demonstrates in her article: that narratives of martyrdom function additionally to fuel motivation and political spirit to continue protesting. However, Ashira also acknowledges that it is *because of* the martyrs that the revolution must continue: martyrs of the past then become politicized symbols for contemporary political insurgency. This results in an interesting temporal juxtaposition: those that have lost their lives, and are no longer able to actively participate in the revolution, become of such symbolic importance that the contemporary revolutionary moment is dedicated to those martyred losses, rather than it centralizing the people that were still *alive* and participating in the Arab Spring uprisings. Thus, martyrs in *The City* testify to a common understanding that to forget the martyrs is to forget the contemporary political moment: keeping the martyrs' stories alive is a political strategy to consequently keep the political moment alive. Another martyr narrative in *The City* additionally builds on this. Abu Bassem speaks:

> 'My son was martyred in Maspero…But my son died for a reason. All our children died for a *reason*. They died for this revolution… As long as each of you are in Tahrir my son is alive! As long as each one of you are in Tahrir all our martyrs are alive… We will see all the killers in jail! The revolution *continuous!*'[97]

[94] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 118.
[95] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 8.
[96] Idem. Pg. 75.
[97] Idem. pg. 104.

Again, we see the continued use of words such as 'alive' and 'continuous': to keep the stories of the martyrs 'alive' within contemporaneity, a revolutionary spirit is consequently kept alive. The spirit of the martyr thus is interconnected to a political, revolutionary spirit. Finally, the author himself also shares this understanding when he is asked about the role of martyrs in his novel:

> I think they somehow must continue as some kind of fuel, or momentum, or obligation that we will continue to have to the people who have paid the maximum price. However difficult things are, you can't just sort of say 'Well, that's over and we'll forget about it' and move on with your life.[98]

The sentiment that the *continuation* of martyr narratives is of vital, political importance to a contemporary 'moment' ("momentum") is repeated. Yet Hamilton here also uses the word to 'forget', which brings me to my final note on martyrdom and returns us to the question of melancholia.

Scholar Friederike Pannewick, elaborates on the process of materializing narratives of martyrdom in the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt. She emphasizes the importance of understanding how the materialization of martyrdom "counteracts forgetfulness through public remembrance." She continues her elaboration:

> To represent the martyrs as visible and ubiquitous as possible in the public sphere should enshrine remembrance of more than once unpunished crimes and tragic events, as if the extinction of remembrance would mean the cancellation of these acts while providing cover and forgetfulness to the perpetrators. The commemoration of the martyrs oscillates thus between personal efforts to cope with inescapable suffering and political strategy.[99]

Alongside emphasizing the dualistic interest of narratives on martyrdom, in which the personal and political constantly fuse and interact with one another, she additionally highlights that the act of remembering, of materializing and representing narratives of martyrdom, acts as political strategy. By remembering the martyred of the revolution, one is *refusing to forget* the suffering and violence that was deployed onto them that led to their tragic deaths. This refusal is of a rather political nature for the commemoration of martyrs, and more broadly narratives of martyrdom, demonstrate a political resistance to forgetfulness and it must be understood as an essential component to the politically motivated use of martyr narratives. One way in which the importance of publically commemorating martyrs in a

[98] André, James. "Egypt's revolution, seven years on: An insider's perspective" https://www.france24.com/en/20180312-interview-omar-robert-hamilton-arab-spring-egypt-revolution-mubarak-morsi-sisi. *France24*, March 12, 2018. Min. 6:05. Accessed April 6, 2022.
[99] Pannewick, Friederike. 'Icons of Revolutionary Upheaval. Arab Spring Martyrs.' in *Martyrdom: Canonisation, Contestation and Afterlives.* ed. Saloul, Ihab, and Henten, Jan Willem. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. Pg. 204.

material sense is infused into *The City* is in the consistent reminder that street names will have to be named after the martyred of the Revolution: "We will have our street named after you."[100], "'All we want is for him to be recognized as a martyr. We'll have justice when this street is named after him.'"[101] In various moments within the novel this sentiment is repeated and it builds on the sense that materializing the martyred in public space "enshrines" remembrance of injustices.

As illustrated, narratives on martyrdom can be understood through a dualistic attachment of a lost one, which can be distinguished as a personal and a political attachment. What is a consistent factor throughout this analysis is that by the act of mourning a martyr, one is refusing to forget their loss which can be understood as a melancholic refusal to forget: if melancholia is to remain close to- and remember loss, then martyr narratives not only help to fuel political momentum, they also can be recognised as a melancholy act as described by Gana. This is indicative of a melancholic disposition that can be distinguished in narratives of martyrdom in *The City*.

This final note on forgetfulness, or rather the utilization of martyr narratives as political *refusal* to forget the violence and suffering deployed onto Egyptian martyrs, returns us to the question of melancholia within narratives of martyrdom, and particularly Gana's notes on mourning and 'melancholy acts' in his article 'Afteraffects'. In his notes on mourning and melancholia, Gana effectively illustrates that forgetfulness in the Arab World is aligned with "normative structures of mourning" and that this can be traced back to the continued 'afteraffects' of the "morbidly traumatic legacy of the June 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel singlehandedly defeated and shamed the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan"[102]. Gana identifies this crucial historic moment as defining for a 'melancholic turn' within the Arab World at large, but specifically in literature and culture produced within the Arab region. Forgetfulness in the Arab World speaks to "giving up the struggle against the joined forces of local despotism and settler colonialism" and letting go of a sense of "sovereignty and dignity". To put differently: forgetfulness is aligned with "normative structures of mourning" that urge people to become disloyal to their political loss(es) and grief.[103]

Interestingly, Theodor Adorno remarked a similar sentiment in his 1959 essay "The Meaning of Working Through the Past" when he reflected on the use of the slogan 'working through the past', which was widely used in the wake of WWII. The academic noted: "The

[100] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 28.
[101] Idem. Pg. 27.
[102] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 119.
[103] Idem. Pg. 121.

attitude that everything should be forgotten and forgiven, which would be proper for those who suffered injustice, is practiced by those party supporters who committed the injustice."[104] Like Gana, Adorno illustrates that it is in the interest of those that were responsible for the violence and injustice that forgetfulness is advocated for. Forgetfulness then functions to *affectively repress* those that suffered injustice(s), as it simultaneously *deflects responsibility* from those that inflicted the very injustice(s).

To remember loss, and remain melancholically attached to those losses, then becomes synonymous to political refusal. Precisely because mourning is equated to (political) forgetfulness, of losing dignity and national sovereignty, remembering becomes a political strategy that is evident of a melancholic commitment to "freedom from injustice in a postcolonial colonial context".[105] Gana argues that this refusal to forget within the context of the Arab Spring is characteristic of a melancholic disposition that has been cultivated since the devastating 1967 military defeat against Israel: melancholia within contemporary Arabic literature thus attests to a historic political disposition.

Furthermore, he elaborates on his understanding of melancholy acts in Arabic literature, as they must be understood as "the manifestation or materialization in language of the melancholic after-*naksa*–affect whose illocutionary and agentive force registers no less than an act of refusal of forgetful mourning practices and a demand for justice and redress."[106] A commitment to refusing forgetfulness I argue can thus be understood as *melancholic refusal* for the political struggles against injustices by corrupt state powers. Melancholy acts in Arabic literature thus function as "more than a process of working through the loss of an object or an ideal" but rather demonstrate a refusal to forget, to mourn.[107] If mourning in the Arab World is aligned with 'moving on' from the historical suffering and losses experienced by Arabs at the hands of authoritarian state power and neo-colonialist practices, then indeed to remember, to stay melancholically committed to those very losses and moments of suffering, and to *melancholically refuse* to 'turn the page' on those losses, is a rather political act.

Thus when returning to the martyr narratives in *The City,* the concept of remembering loss plays a crucial role in tracing melancholia: to materialise memories of loss in literature, to return to and remember in a literary sense and to melancholically refuse to give up on those losses, illustrates melancholia's purposefully subversive presence in Arabic literature that has been reverberating throughout Arab contemporaneity since the 1967 Naksa. In this light,

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[104] Adorno, Theodor W. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. *European Perspectives*. Translated by Henry W. Pickford. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Pg. 89.
[105] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): Pg. 135.
[106] Idem. Pg. 123.
[107] Idem. Pg. 135.

martyr narratives in *The City* thus reveal a melancholic commitment to refuse to forget those that died within the fight against corrupt state violence and authoritarian state power, and consequently martyrs are thus used as a means for political insurgency.

By including many different martyr narratives, and creating space for differing voices on (collective) loss(es), the novel becomes a collective, political testament to the suffering endured by a collective of people that were involved in the Arab uprisings in Egypt. By writing the martyr into the novel, Hamilton alters the novel into both a political and an affective *mourning archive* that resists forgetfulness of loss(es) experienced during the Arab uprisings in Egypt. I have demonstrated that focalisation is strategically used in these martyr narratives and it can be understood as a melancholic, political act to refuse to forget loss(es). In the contemporary Arab World, this melancholy act is not only a creative elaboration on the continued loss, violence, and suffering experienced by Arab people all throughout the region, it is also a subversive act of refusing to be silenced and truly giving space to personal and collective experiences of mourning.

Chapter 3: Mourning a Lost Past, Mourning a Lost Future: On the Subversive Use of Temporality and Hauntology

Thus far, I have argued that melancholia is a consistent element in all novels when turning to the narration of mourning and loss, either experienced on an intimate and familial level in *Cigarette Number Seven* and *Chronicle of A Last Summer*, or experienced collectively at the hands of political corruption as seen in martyr narratives in *The City Always Wins.* In this final chapter I turn to the category of temporality, as I argue it plays a crucial role in each of these post-revolutionary novels: all novels deliberately and consistently alter temporality. They do so either by shifting between different temporalities or by interweaving anachronic elements into the novel. By analysing temporality, I aim to flesh out how the disruptive use of temporality is indicative of a mourning process that speaks of loss as an overarching, transcendental experience that is not bound to one specific timeframe. In doing so, I argue that Kamal, El-Rashidi, and Hamilton, all deliver a political critique on Arab contemporaneity by turning to an individualised, scattered experience of loss that transcends temporality.

Cigarette Number Seven utilises a diachronic narrative to disperse temporal structure and jump back in and out of temporal experiences, hereby blurring the experience of time. Though *The City* and *Chronicle of A Last Summer* are written in chronological order, both novels also reveal a plethora of anachronic elements that are woven into form and narrative, as will be elaborated upon. I explore which literary techniques are deployed regarding temporality within the narratives of the novels and how this can enhance our understanding of melancholia in the postrevolutionary Egyptian novel. Alterations in temporality are additionally evident in the incorporation of spectres, phantoms, and hauntology. *Cigarette* and *The City* prominently feature hauntological elements that strengthen a melancholic ambience in these novels, both in narrative, style, structure, and form.

In this chapter I argue that spectres and hauntological moments in each of the selected novels may provide for a sharper understanding of how the journey of mourning is explored within the varying narratives. Firstly, I will analyse instances of spectrality and hauntology in *Cigarette Number Seven* and *The City Always Wins*. Both novels use hauntological elements, yet they cannot be identified in a similar fashion. Therefore a closer analysis of the concept of hauntology and its underlying temporal disruptions is of essence to understand its subversive use in the novels discussed. Secondly, I turn to the concept of spectres and disillusionment as used in *Cigarette*, to then turn to *Chronicle* to illustrate how the subversive use of temporality speaks of loss as a transcendental experience in the wake of the Arab uprisings.

Hauntology and the spectre figure

Jacques Derrida introduced the term *hantologie,* or *hauntology,* in his 1993 work *Spectres de Marx* and though not all agreed with Derrida's contention that "deconstruction was all along a radicalization of Marx's legacy", in the literary field this new theoretical framework "proved to be extraordinarily fertile" for the critical study of ghost, spectres, and haunting in narratives.[108] Though haunting in a literary sense is often understood within the genre of the gothic Victorian novel in which deceased human beings 'return from the dead' as living spectres, haunting does not exclusively pertain to the visual manifestation of a ghost or spectre. Rather, as Derrida noted, it is not that haunting and spectres necessarily come to us as manifestations of a ghost; it is us who signify haunting through the phenomenal lens of a spectre. Optics and gazing thus play an essential part in understanding the phenomena of haunting. Spectres are material, phenomenal manifestations of *spirits*, or as Derrida paraphrases Karl Marx; "the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit."[109] This distinction is of importance, for it illuminates that haunting speaks of more than the phenomenality of a spirit.

When understanding haunting beyond the spectre figure, the presence of haunting and/or spectres can be identified as that which is unable to be released from the contemporary moment, but is not *of the present*, yet it continues to return and accompany contemporaneity: "A question of repetition: a spectre is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*."[110] Therefore, haunting reveals to us a momentary junction of dissonant temporal experiences: that which belongs to a past continues to live among us in contemporary spheres. Put differently, moments of haunting can be signified as momentary ruptures in temporality. Though haunting can be signified in varying ways, the paradoxical alignment of different temporalities is a crucial and consistent underlying feature of the conception of haunting. Haunting thus first and foremost discloses momentary disruptions of temporality. As follows, when signalling moments of haunting in a narrative, one inevitably will find temporality to become a more pronounced feature that requires critical attention. This leads us to the term hauntology, which was coined by Derrida in his work *Spectres de Marx*. Scholar Esther Peeren elaborates on Derrida's notes, demonstrating that Derrida encounters spectrality and hauntology "as a deconstructive force that disturbs traditional notions of temporality and history – by collapsing the borders between past,

[108] Davis, Colin 'Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms'. *French Studies*. Vol. 59, nr. 3 (July 2005): 373.
[109] Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx. The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International.* New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 5.
[110] Idem. Pg. 11.

present and future: 'Time is out of joint' – and that transforms ontology into *hauntology*."[111] In his text, Derrida quotes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as he refers to the "Time is out of joint", signalling this as one of the primary significations of hauntology.

If ontology indicates that which *is,* or what is *in being* in the present moment, depending on the linear unfolding of time and history, hauntology attests to that which is, yet indicates a slippage of time, a seemingly implausible temporal rupture in which *being* no longer attest to a contemporary experience. As Colin Davis phrased it: "replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive."[112] Hence, moments of hauntology can be recognised as perpetual states of a twilight zone: never truly rooted in contemporaneity, yet present and materialised in the now. Hauntology therefore refers to an illusive temporal juxtaposition in which our sense of time, space, history, and its linear connections are disrupted. Derrida's hauntology allows for the critical understanding that representations of spectres and moments of haunting in a narrative must be understood beyond their spectral apparition and additionally through the disruption of time and history.

When directing our attention back to melancholia, the affiliation between hauntology and melancholia is unmistakably so: both constitute unresolved echoes of a past that linger in a present moment. Temporality then is the foundational brick that ties these two seemingly separate categories together. Though in contrast to melancholia, in which the subject itself is unable to release attachment to the loss experienced, when turning to hauntology, Mark Fischer notes that it can either be understood as the refusal "to give up the ghost or – and this can sometimes amount to the same thing – the refusal of the ghost to give up on us."[113] In essence, Fischer demonstrates how haunting can be something that turns up in our lives, whether or not we desire so. Where in melancholia the subject itself is of importance to understand the dynamics of attachment, instances of haunting may lead us to direct our attention, not just to the subject that is being haunted, but to the moments in which loss(es) becomes centralised. In other words, melancholia attests to the agency of the subject, which is unable to release loss, whereas hauntology reveals the lingering of a lost object, regardless of the subject's desires or intentions towards it. With this distinction in place, I will now turn to the fusion of melancholia and hauntology in *Cigarette Number Seven.*

Optics of spectrality: hauntology in *Cigarette Number Seven*

[111] Peeren, Esther. *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility*. London: Palgrave, 2014. Pg. 11.
[112] Davis, Colin 'Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms'. *French Studies*. Vol. 59, nr. 3 (July 2005): 373.
[113] Fischer, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures.* Croyden: Zero Books, 2013. Pg. 22.

In the opening chapter, I have illustrated how in Kamal's *Cigarette Number Seven* we can distinguish a melancholic sentiment as we see how main character Nadia processes the loss of her mother and other relatives. The melancholic sensibilities in *Cigarette* so far have been recognised twofold: firstly, by the internalisation and identification of the ego with the lost object, leaving the subject deprived of a sense of self (since the ego identifies with this loss). And secondly, by the inability for Nadia to connect to situations outside herself or make new connections. However, there is another element to this novel that illustrates a strong melancholic disposition: the inclusion of a spectre.

As elaborated, protagonist Nadia lives with and is raised by her father as her mother left her behind when emigrating for economic reasons. Nadia's father becomes a focal point in the novel, and in different stages of her life Nadia's father is frequently present: they hold many important conversations, share weekly dinners, and generally she confides in him with some of her most intimate and personal questions. Throughout the entirety of the novel, it seems as if Nadia and her father are having realistic encounters with one another. However, as it turns out, Kamal reveals in the closing chapter of *Cigarette* that Nadia's father had long passed away before the revolution. Nadia lost her father at the age of twenty-one: "Nine years have gone by since I stood staring at him as he lay in the hospital's mortuary fridge".[114] Though it remains slightly unclear in the narrative, Nadia was around her late twenties when the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings started. The spectre of Nadia's father is written as if real/material: spectre is thus represented through a realist lens. Rather than the more common understanding of spectres as unwelcome surprise visitors, of which one can be scared by or in shock of, *Cigarette* features a spectre as represented through the lens of realism. Therefore, there is an interesting element to the spectre of Nadia's father: the reader is mostly unaware of the spectre's nature and they encounter the character as any other character in the novel. This is to be expected, for Nadia's father is able to focalise, have regular conversations with Nadia, and spent time together. For example the following paragraph shows how these interactions are written as if real:

> I took a taxi from Zamalek to Heliopolis, where I found my father having breakfast on the balcony… 'Did you read the paper today?' he asked me. 'No' I answered. 'Is there anything other than the usual garbage?' He read a few al-Ahram headlines out to me… I interrupted him. 'Baba, tell you what- I've heard enough. Go get dressed, or are you not coming with me?' 'OK, OK. I'm getting up.' It didn't take my father long to get ready.[115]

Nadia's father is able to focalise, interact in a reciprocal conversation, and physically move and engage his body. Nothing in this passage indicates that Nadia is in fact speaking and

[114] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 187.
[115] Idem. Pg. 57-58.

interacting with a spectre of any sorts. Rather, this narrative style suggests that Nadia's father functions in the fabula as any other character: their interactions do not look abnormal or show dissonance from any regular interaction. For this reason *Cigarette* does not embody spectrality as described in Derrida's work: "A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all spectrality. It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this *the visor effect*: we do not see who looks at us."[116] Contrary to this description, the narrative suggests that Nadia's father *is* fully seen and can see her too. Both by Nadia herself and the reader, Nadia's father is not recognised as a spectre, nor can he be seen as such for the narrative does not provide context to the spectral nature of Nadia's father. Optics here thus again become a focal point in the narrative, for eventually the final chapter reveals the spectral nature of Nadia's father. This final revelation of Nadia to the reader releases that Nadia's father as a 'living' being had been an illusion all along.

Several elements of this illusion of the spectre are of importance to understand. There is a rather melancholic undertone to this illusionary spectrality. Keeping the illusion alive of the living spectre attests to a rather melancholic disposition in Kamal's novel: throughout the entire novel the spectre is written *as if* a realist element of the narrative all along. Unlike her mother's death, which is mentioned halfway through the novel[117], her father's death is not mentioned until the very ending of the novel. This leads to the narrative suggesting that her father *is* still alive, for it veils her father's spectral nature. In an interview with the writer, Kamal elaborates on her choice to centralise Nadia's father in the narrative:

> If there was one concrete motivation for me to write, it was that through everything that had happened since January 2011, with every small or big development, I'd find myself wondering what my father would have done if he were alive. What advice would he have given me? How revolutionary would he have been? The questions haunted me, and I needed to finally sit down and explore them.[118]

Interestingly, the writer uses the word 'haunted' to describe her lingering questions regarding her own father as she also acknowledges this to be her foremost motivation to write the novel. The inclusion of Nadia's encounters with her father's spectre thus mimics Kamal's personal experiences and desires, demonstrating the semi-autobiographical nature of the novel. *Cigarette* even features a scene in which the spectre of Nadia's father proclaims to

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[116] Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx. The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International.* New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 6

[117] See pg. 72 in "Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018."

[118] Mlynxqualey. "An Author-Translator Conversation: Donia Kamal's 'Cigarette Number Seven' and Archiving Romantic Ideals." August 30, 2017. https://arablit.org/2017/08/30/an-author-translator-conversation-donia-kamals-cigarette-number-seven-and-archiving-romantic-ideals/. Accessed April 23, 2022.

Nadia; "Is this the revolution then? Am I really going to witness a revolution before I die?"[119], again clearly showing a melancholic gaze for Nadia's father has already passed away at this temporal timeframe. As such, these desires have a clear melancholic undertone: the writer is unable to let go of her attachment, questions, and desires towards her own father, which she has lost already, and she utilises the novel in turn for this melancholic quest for answers. The spectre of Nadia's father thus becomes the symbolic and melancholic representation of the writer's personal questions.

Here it is fruitful to return to Moneera Al-Ghadeer's notes on melancholia and phantasmal attachment as included in chapter one. As illustrated prior, the scholar argues that "an attachment to reflections and images, a preservation of phantoms and specters" is another form of melancholic attachment to a lost object. Through the preservation of spectres of the lost object one is able to preserve and remain attached to something that has already been lost, as it demonstrates a "phantasmic relation with the object" that is "caused by an irretrievable and unnameable loss."[120] The use of spectrality in *Cigarette* can thus be interpreted through a melancholic lens, for it reveals the melancholic desire to stay loyally committed and psychically preserve the lost object, in this case the father figure. The novel thus mimics in form what Nadia experienced internally as recalled in the narrative: a loyalty and melancholic attachment towards a lost objects which is kept alive through a spectral illusion and is then finally shattered.

Cigarette is a hauntological novel in which the character of the spectre functions as a melancholic object. Recalling that melancholia may be instigated by the *not knowing* of what is lost within a loss also draws clear parallels between melancholia and hauntology: the latter too signifies a temporal disruption, like melancholia, but it moreover questions what is to be known. The shift from ontology to hauntology as argued by Derrida demonstrates the questioning of knowing, for what is, what it is 'to be', is disrupted: time and history no longer provide these linear foundations for *knowing* and instead we can only 'know' through revisiting, disrupting, and non-linearity.

Therefore, the presence of a spectre in *Cigarette* denotes not only the actual haunting of a spectre, but it moreover reveals a hauntological narrative that is infused with melancholia. The presence of a hauntological narrative is evident in the use of temporality in *Cigarette*: a few elements in the novel attest to a purposeful rearrangement of temporality. One of those characteristics is the use of a nonsequential or anachronic narrative structure, so the reader consistently jumps back and forth in time. Anachrony, as described by Mieke Bal,

[119] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 15.
[120] Al-Ghadeer, Moneera. 'Melancholic Loss: Reading Bedouin Women's Elegiac Poetry' *Symploke.* Vol. 15, nr. 1-2 (January, 2007): 293.

can be understood as "the differences between the arrangement in the story and the chronology of the fabula".[121] It challenges linearity in its most fundamental sense since anachrony makes the narrative structure non-linear. Not only does this consistently and purposefully disrupt narrative, it also strengthens the hauntological character of the novel: never fully present in the now, yet it can only be read in the present moment. Or to put differently, since a written text is inherently linear, and form is often of sequential order "one word or image follows another; one sentence or sequence follows another", anachrony within a novel goes against this inescapable linearity.[122] The use of anachrony thus can be interpreted as a hauntological element in the novel since it allows for two opposing temporal elements in the novel to exist at once.

Hauntology and mourning in The City Always Wins

In *Cigarette* we have seen a designated moment of hauntology by the incorporation of a single spectre figure, which can be clearly distinguished in the narrative. In *The City* we can differentiate similar and varying elements of haunting and hauntology throughout the novel. Like Kamal's novel, anachrony is a literary technique also deployed by the author in *The City* and it is found most strongly in the anachronic divisions of the book into three parts. The novel is separated in three different temporalities; "Part 1. Tomorrow", "Part 2. Today", and "Part 3. Yesterday". By dividing the book through this chronological reversal, the writer diffuses temporal experiences by connecting the early stages of the revolution to a future, the more challenging and politically scattered moments of 2012 into the present, and finally, the period of Sisi's regime as a past regression. This decline in chronological experience reveals a hauntological scope in which we can see different temporalities existing in one cohesive moment: each of these novels is written in the present narrative tense, yet they are categorised and referred to in different temporalities. Both present and future in part one, two 'presents' in part 2, and a present and past in part three. This anachronic division of the novel creates a rather scattered canvas on which the chronological narrative of *The City* is played out. Though the narrative of the novel follows sequential ordering, and is mostly chronological in structure, we can see moments of anachrony and temporal disruptions in categorical divisions such as this. In an interview, the writer elaborated on this choice of anachrony in his novel:

> In the beginning, everything is to do with the future. It has to do with building a different tomorrow, it's optimistic, it's collective. And then by the end, in the book 'Yesterday' is constantly looking at the past and going over the actions and the different possible scenarios that could've played out and what the mistakes were. I think the

[121] Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Fourth edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pg. 70.
[122] Idem. Pg. 68.

> central question that this part of the book is about… 'were you strong enough to change history and fail? Or were you never strong enough, in which case, if you weren't, then you never will be'.[123]

What is striking about this fragment is that Hamilton himself brings in the category of history, which if understood within the framework of ontology and hauntology, we can see the novelist questioning the idea that history and a past *can* be changed and altered, that there is a different future or possibility for a future that differs from a corrupt past. Instead, he has used a chronological reversal in his novel as symbolic for the loss of a future and a regression to a failed past. The novel thus becomes hauntological in form and structure: momentary disruptions and fusing of different temporalities are all present in the novel and it questions and challenges the idea of ontology, to *be* in one temporal timeframe only as delineated from history, linearity, and designated time.

Instead, the structure of the novel is constantly in one temporality, as it is too in another by its categorical signification. The past becomes a symbolic hauntological spectre, as it is unable to be released from the present tense and it shapes the contemporary moment. Here we can also see an intersection between moments of hauntology and melancholia. If indeed melancholia can be detected within identification with the lost object, then the spectre of the past being the only temporal experience to hold on to, is transformed into a contemporary loss. The chronological reversal can also be understood as melancholic when approached from the perspective that melancholia does not allow for 'new' attachments. If indeed main character Khalil experiences the Arab Spring uprisings as a loss, a loss of a future (which this chronological reversal suggests), then the return to a failed past as the only possible outcome, is an indication of melancholic attachment.

Moreover, this temporal reversal indicates that the present and future can be understood as a lost object in the Arab World. This is similar to Gana's argument that "Arab contemporaneity is then stranded, or suspended, in a present without potentiality."[124] Instead, the future is a sight of loss, of defeat in the aftermath of battle against injustices. Similarly, David Scott also elaborates on the future as a lost object. The scholar argues:

> Time, in short, has become less yielding, less promising than we have grown to expect it should be. And what we are left with are *aftermaths* in which the present seems stricken with immobility and pain and ruin; a certain experience of temporal *afterness*

[123] André, James. "Egypt's revolution, seven years on: An insider's perspective" https://www.france24.com/en/20180312-interview-omar-robert-hamilton-arab-spring-egypt-revolution-mubarak-morsi-sisi. *France24*, March 12, 2018. Min. 8:10. Accessed April 6, 2022.
[124] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 121.

> prevails in which the trace of futures past hangs like the remnant of a voile curtain over what feels uncannily like an endlessly extending present.[125]

Like Gana, Scott argues that the contemporary moment has no potentiality for growth, and instead a lost future is tainting contemporaneity: the present is immovable from an 'aftermath' in "pain and ruin". Whereas Mark Fischer may have distinguished this lost future as "the slow cancellation of the future" and a "feeling of belatedness."[126], instead Gana and Scott flesh out that in the aftermath of revolutionary times, the future is not lost because of a slow process of 'cancellation' or 'belatedness', but rather the future is lost because the past (one of corruption, violence, and loss) continuous to shape the present and future. Therefore, Hamilton's disruption of temporality in *The City* is illustrative of mourning losses in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings.

Another instance in which we can see a purposeful rearrangement of temporality is in the use of flashbacks within the narrative. For example, when Khalil meets the landlord's lawyer to renew *Choas'* workspace in downtown Cairo, the narrative slips into moments of hauntology:

> The sticks, the crowd, the lifeless bodies dragged through the streets in merciless ecstasy. His mind replays the nights patrolling Tahrir with Opantish the polar flare burning a path through the crowd, the heaving of hundreds of bodies all reaching, reaching… he doesn't see faces, can't feel one night from another, but he can hear the shouts and screams and the *sister, she's my sister* following him through his dreams.[127]

After this internal flashback, Khalil is interrupted by the lawyer and continous their conversation, creating an abrupt ending to Khalil's hauntological diversion into a traumatic past that lingers in his present moment. What makes this passage hauntological can be attributed to this being a flashback, a general return to an unfinished past that still exists in the present moment: a derision from the present tense narrative, a slippage in time. Additionally, what makes this passage hauntological is the use of horror and haunting: Khalil is unable to identify the "lifeless bodies", "the heaving of hundreds of bodies", and "shouts and screams" as they all become one uniform faceless phantom that haunt him in the present moment. Where these people might once have been described by their names, such as in the martyr narratives in *The City*, the violently murdered revolutionaries now became faceless, nameless, spectres without identities that return to him.

This passage also brings me to another important and distinct element of hauntology

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[125] Scott, David. *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. Pg. 6.
[126] Fischer, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures.* Croyden: Zero Books, 2013. Pg. 8.
[127] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. pg. 181.

in *The City*: one of the most prominent instances of hauntology can be detected in the inclusion of affected bodily suffering, trauma, and pain into the narrative. This is specific to Hamilton's novel, as neither *Cigarette* nor *Chronicle* includes this element of affect and suffering in their narratives. In particular, one instance of physical injury and suffering Khalil experienced during the revolutionary protests consistently and hauntingly returns to the narrative and it becomes an important site of hauntology within *The City*.

Khalil was shot during a peaceful protest at Tahrir square and he had to undergo surgery in which metal pellets were placed in his back, the doctor explains to him: "the body will slowly push the pellets out of itself. One by one."[128] Shortly after the surgery Khalil experiences a sense of pride as revolutionaries around him check on him during his "heroic recuperation": his injury attests to his political commitment to the revolution and his determination to fight for the political cause of the Arab Spring uprisings. However, as the narrative progresses and the steel pellets are only partly in Khalil's body, the sensation of the metal and the accompanied suffering he experienced by the injury hauntingly returns throughout the novel. For example, Khalil narrates:

> I try not to think of my back, how it's sweating, itching, pulsing, the old wounds reopening slowly as I prepare for the warm rivulets of blood to congeal and bind to the fabric of my shirt, each bleeding hole an unexpelled sphere of steel pulling out of me, pulling me toward the mouth of a gun, toward the beginning and the end.[129]

Interestingly, Hamilton uses the metal in Khalil's back as a hauntological element in the novel: the presence of steel in Khalil's body is a material manifestation in the contemporary moment of past that continues to live on in his body. It is also an unfinished element: the wounds are constantly re-opened in his body by the steel. Khalil continues to experience similar physical sensations of terror and pain: "He feels his back and its metal, moments of a frozen chaos suddenly superheating with a need for attention."[130], and later: "with each report of a shotgun the metal pellets in his back vibrate. We are one, still. Your steel lives on in me, poisoning me, seeping chemicals into my bloodstream."[131] The steel penetrating Khalil's body thus becomes politically symbolic: it is defined with the possessive pronoun 'your', hinting towards the steel being understood as something outside of Khalil and possessed by someone/something else. Though it remains unspecified, the passage prior suggests that the opposition in possessiveness is referring to the army who used guns, tanks, and violence against peaceful protesters. After all, it was the army that shot Khalil in his back and created this wound in the first place.

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[128] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 104.
[129] Idem. Pg. 215-216.
[130] Idem. Pg. 174.
[131] Idem. Pg. 113.

In contrast to *Cigarette's* melancholic attachment to a spectre, in the *City* it is the internal, physical system itself which gradually becomes a site of haunting: an ever-returning cycle of a past manifests itself a contemporary physical haunting. Khalil continues to experience this traumatic re-living of his suffering and pain, as his body is unable to release and forget what has happened to him. David Scott argues that trauma is "nothing but a past that will not go away, a past that returns, unbidden, involuntarily, to haunt or unsettle or somehow mangle the present."[132] The body can thus become a site of haunting as it can recall and involuntarily return to instances of suffering.

Bessel van Der Kolk clarifies in his *The Body Keeps The Score* that as human beings, we try our very hardest to dispel and forget suffering and trauma we have experienced in life, particularly those who have experienced war trauma and/or physical abuse and injuries. However, "Long after a traumatic experience is over, it may be reactivated at the slightest hint of danger and mobilize disturbed brain circuits and secrete massive amount of stress hormones."[133]. This is because, like the mind, the body is a space of *remembrance* and it can return to sensations experienced in a past: the body stores experiences and is able to return to those whenever it is triggered and remembers these instances. Interestingly, the novel itself also acknowledges this bodily remembrance in the sentence "These bodies become what the mind cannot forget." which is used in the opening chapter of the novel.[134]

Van der Kolk demonstrates in his work how the body is altered on a deep cellular level at the hands trauma, as it leaves "traces on our minds and emotions, on our capacity for joy and intimacy, and even on our biology and immune systems."[135] In a sense, the body can thus become fully altered and 'haunted' by a past at the hands of trauma and violence: it is unable to release a past suffering and thus the body is able to slip back into a past experience, without their being a desire to do so. We see similar passages of traumatic bodily suffering incorporated into *The City's* narrative:

> The pain in my mouth is inescapable. I try to counter it with painkillers… but any progress made in numbing the pain is undone as soon as I'm asleep. I lie in bed waiting for it to start, I lie awake in the heavy, yellow dark of this city that is never silent and never still, the dark that fills itself with the names and the faces and the last breaths of the dead and is spent now waiting, waiting, waiting for what's coming as my teeth start their primordial cracking and crunching against each other.[136]

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[132] Scott, David. *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. Pg. 13.
[133] Van der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. London: Penguin Books, 2015. Pg. 2.
[134] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 6.
[135] Van der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. London: Penguin Books, 2015. Pg. 1.
[136] Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017. Pg. 236.

We see a clear derision from melancholia to hauntology for Khalil is not *willingly* instigating this slippage into pain and suffering: on the contrary, he is actively trying to escape and numb his pain by taking painkillers. He is however 'inescapably' bound to this pain since his sleep, or his subconscious, hauntingly brings back pain and suffering. Contrary to melancholia, in which returning to a loss of some sort stems from a choice to return, in this hauntological passage Khalil tries to dispel and numb whatever his physical body is remembering and experiencing. Not only can we see his affected bodily suffering and the haunting return of this pain, there is also the element of hauntology in which "the city" and "the names and faces" of the dead become this haunting spectre that are connected to his teeth "cracking and crunching against each other". So, we can then identify a fusion of hauntology in which both bodily suffering and unidentified, haunting spectres return Khalil to an unfinished terrorised past. Not only is his body haunted by the physical suffering he experiences, he is additionally haunted by the suffering of spectres in the city.

Another element to this passage that requires attention is the absence of full stops: the entire quote is slightly longer, but nowhere in this paragraph has Hamilton used a full stop. This literary technique is deployed in various instances in the novel[137], as also in the following quote in which Miriam experiences

> Her hand is still in his hand and that's good, because if she just focuses on that, then everything else can fade out for a minute… we can just breathe and not think about the dark underworld running beneath us and not think about January 25 and not think about the hospital, the phone calls, the morgue, and not think about what would happen if we stopped… we can't stop there's no time, no time to think about ourselves or our mistakes or the morgue there's only today… there's only the lives and the crush… that's all that matters so we don't need to talk because with talking our hands will shake.[138]

This passage can be understood as hauntological, for firstly there is no designated end or beginning. By removing full stops from these sentences, they all become intermingled into one cohesive sentence which in turn challenges the linear structure of the novel and instead blurs clearly designated sequential ordering. As Bal described, the literary text can only be read through its inherently and inescapable linear structure (one word can only be read *after* the other), but by removing full stops, Hamilton challenges this linearity and fuses all of these sentences into one, large passage. We are no longer able to categorise or designate one experience or sensation from another because they are all interconnected and non-linear in their experience.

As I have argued prior, we can distinct melancholia from hauntology by looking at the agency of the subject: a melancholic person still has a choice to engage with loss(es), or is

[137] See for example pg. 93 and pg. 160 in 'Hamilton, Omar Robert. *The City Always Wins.* First edition. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017.'
[138] Idem. Pg. 147.

refusing to let go of an object "that should officially be lost" [139], whereas hauntology illustrates the inability to escape loss' haunting presence, whether or not one *desires* or chooses to be haunted. Similarly, we could argue the same for a mourning process: sometimes in moments of loss, we are thrust into a process of transformation, whether or not we choose to engage in this process or not. This is especially true if our point of safety is threatened or transformed at the hands of physical violence, such as the case in Khalil's narratives on physical trauma.

What becomes evident here is the usage of these hauntological narratives to narrate the long-lasting effect of bodily suffering that can go accompanied with a mourning process. When returning to Butler's notes on the work of mourning, the scholar argued that mourning can be understood as a process of transformation. Butler argues: "Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance."[140] Yet, here I want to emphasize that physical trauma, or the loss of safety in ones body, is by no means a choice or submission to transformation: when looking at the use of hauntology in the narratives in *The City*, we can note that Hamilton deliberately fuses temporality to show how physical suffering from (war)trauma is haunting, rather than a choice to mourn or to transform. Instead, Khalil's body already is transformed through trauma and is then confronted with a loss and consequent mourning journey.

The effects of trauma on the body and the self, and specifically the violent battles that were involved in the Arab uprisings in Cairo and their subsequent aftermath, are also commented on by Kamal in *Cigarette*: "I do think that battle affected, on a personal level, everyone who took part in it. If you've witnessed so much violence and blood and fought for your own survival, it would be impossible to stay the same. Something changed in each one of us."[141] Kamal, like Hamilton, emphasis how battle inevitable changes us: therefore, transformation as understood by Butler as a choice *of mourning*, is challenged. Instead, what I believe Kamal and Hamilton highlight, is that transformation might occur *prior to* mourning and mourning itself is the acceptance of this transformation. Butler's contention that mourning is an agreement to transformation is challenged, and instead these writers utilise the novel to demonstrate that in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, transformation has already occurred: now is the time of accepting this loss and defeat and to mourn what was lost in the

[139] Mannucci, V. and Mattioli, V. "Mark Fischer. Hauntology, Nostalgia, and Lost Futures. Interviewed By V. Mannucci and V. Mattioli." *BLACKOUT*, Summer 2014. https://my-blackout.com/2019/04/26/mark-fisher-hauntology-nostalgia-and-lost-futures-interviewed-by-v-mannucci-v-mattioli/. Accessed may 28, 2022.
[140] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London, New York: Verso, 2004. Pg. 20.
[141] Kamāl, Dunyā, and Nariman Youssef (trans.). *Cigarette Number Seven*. Cairo, Egypt: Hoopoe, 2018. Pg. 157.

fight for justice a better future. Thus, Butler's note on transformation and mourning might be more effective when understood as something one has to *accept* in the aftermath of loss and transformation, rather than to agree or submit oneself to transformation as a mourning practice.

The aftermath of defeat: loss as transcendental after the Arab uprisings

This note on the concept of mourning returns me to notions of spectrality in *Cigarette*. A second element to spectrality in Kamal's novel reveals an important connection to the political moment in which the novel was published. Kamal's novel was written over the course of the Arab Spring uprisings and was first published in Arabic in 2012 as *Sajara Sabi'a*, whilst still in the middle of revolutionary times.

The final revelation on the spectral nature of Nadia's father in the closing chapter is a rather unexpected turn of events, which forces the reader through a process of disillusionment: the reader may have attached themselves to a character that in actuality never existed within the literary text. The reader will have to come to terms with the fact that they have read and engaged in a narrative and character that did not exist and had never existed in the narrative. By including a spectre in the narrative, and keeping the reader in an illusionary state, *Cigarette* mimics in form symbolically what was experienced collectively and politically: a political moment of loss of hope and disillusionment. Disillusionment became a shared sentiment in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings and the increase of state violence by the army against peaceful protesters in Egypt. The hauntological element of the spectre in *Cigarette* thus not only functions as a melancholic object, but furthermore can be symbolically interpreted within the political course of the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt.

Moreover, by shattering illusions in her novel, this literary move can also be symbolically interpreted as a mimicking of the shattering of a revolutionary dream. I argue that though on the one hand the illusion of the spectre figure in *Cigarette* functions as a melancholic object that is unable to be released, on the other hand the illusion of the spectre, and the final shattering of this illusion, may also attest to a political moment of disillusionment Egypt was in at the time of publication. This revolutionary dream was nothing more than a *ghost of Tahrir*: an illusionary spectre that in reality never existed. This sentiment is a shared collective sentiment as John Hawley argues in his analysis of various postrevolutionary novels, he states: "Egyptian novelists are much less certain that anything new has actually resulted from the upheavals."[142] Here we can start to see that the inclusion of

[142] Hawley, John C. 'Coping with a Failed Revolution: Basma Abdel Aziz, Nael Eltoukhy, Mohammed Rabie & Yasmine El Rashidi'. In *ALT 35 Focus on Egypt*, red. Ernest N. Emenyonu, 1st ed. Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2017. Pg. 10.

a spectre, and the realization that this spectre has not been real, may also point to coming to terms with loss. This loss then speaks of a loss in the past, of the subject that once was not just a ghost, but a tangible attachment, but it also speaks to a lost future in which this spectre or subject is not present. Thus: "Listening to the ghost means listening to the past and the future at the same time."[143]

Arguably, El-Rashidi and Hamilton also make similar literary moves in their novels to comment on loss in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. *Cigarette*'s narrative also shares this disposition, but we can see this skepticism, or moment of disillusionment in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, most clearly narrated in *Chronicle*:

> It was on the same street corner where Baba saw the Israeli jets that I first saw the square full, first experienced tear gas, saw my first dead body, shot from behind… Some days I still just want to erase it all, shake off the shadow of disappointment. *The second defeat, our second Naksa.*[144]

The protagonist speaks of the shadow of disappointment, in which the aftermath of the Arab uprisings is seen as a moment of losing hope, disillusionment, and most importantly as a "second Naksa", a repetition of a historical defeat. El-Rashidi draws a material continuing between the experiences of defeat and loss between the protagonist's father and the protagonist herself by positing them in the same urban setting. In another quote from *Chronicle*, we are presented with a similar narration on history and time:

> He uses a word, *poranheyar*, to explain our emptiness. A kind of devastation. Something passed on, by the generation before… I felt deceived too, cheated out of a life, but I wasn't sure why, or by what. I wondered...People, the older generation, Aunty and Uncle and all the others, would always somehow revert in conversation, even when talking about the price of food, to ''67'. *Defeat, we are a defeated nation.*[145]

In both quotes, temporality is used in the novel as a means to draw parallels between historical moments of political importance: El-Rashidi illustrates that there is a connection between different intergenerational experiences on loss and defeat. In doing so, the writer shows the historical continuity between the 1967 Naksa and the contemporary political moment in the novel.

Thus, hauntology is deployed in Chronicle, not by the inclusion of a spectre, but by the deliberate blurring of notions on temporality. The novel prohibits the reader from making clear distinctions between temporal frameworks, since the main protagonist experiences the present through the loss(es) and defeat of the past. Therefore, temporality is disrupted *within*

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[143] Salem, Sara. 'Haunted Histories: Nasserism and The Promises of the Past'. *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 28, Nr. 3 (July 3, 2019): 262.
[144] El Rashidi, Yasmine. *Chronicle of a Last Summer: a Novel of Egypt*. First edition. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2016. Pg. 160-161.
[145] Idem. Pg. 79-81.

the narrative, rather than the anachronic, stylistic choices that Kamal and Hamilton made in their novels.

Here Gana's notes on melancholia as an "after-Naksa effect" are quite relevant, as they reveal that melancholia in El-Rashidi's novel is a responsive literary choice that speaks of suffering, not just as a present-time experience in the wake of the Arab uprisings, but in the larger continuum of historical suffering in the Arab World at large. Gana's analysis of the of the 1967 defeat, or Naksa, prove insightful to understand El-Rashidi's quotes. Gana argues:

> The finality of the defeat was such that it foreclosed the possibility of a second round. What is traumatic is not so much the defeat in itself, but the *afteraffect* in which it was and continuous to be experienced and relived as an irreversible destiny- as a continually retraumatizing re-memory and re-enactment of the foreclosure of a possible future, or worse, the foreclosure of the very possibility of a future.[146]

Put differently, loss becomes a permanent state of life in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings that transcends temporality: if the state of life in which past losses were experienced remains unchanged, especially when challenged again in a revolutionary momentum in the contemporary moment, than loss becomes a transcendental experience that continuous to taint Arab contemporaneity. All novels, in their own distinct way, articulate this disposition towards loss through temporality and hauntology: whether as the haunting spectres of loss in *The City* and *Cigarette*, or as the re-memory of defeat as an inescapable historical continuity that shapes the present in *Chronicle*. Through the intimate narration of suffering, loss, and mourning, all novels create a mourning narrative in which temporality no longer attests to the logical unfolding of time, but as a lingering of loss of the past that shapes the contemporary moment in postrevolutionary Egypt.

[146] Gana, Nouri. 'Afteraffect: Arabic Literature and Affective Politics'. *Representations.* Vol. 143, nr. 1 (August 1, 2018): 121.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have demonstrated how loss, and the subsequent journey of mourning, plays a central role in the postrevolutionary Egyptian novel. By deconstructing these novels through the categories of melancholia, martyrdom, temporality, and hauntology, I have argued that the selected postrevolutionary novels share a collective disposition towards melancholia. In their melancholic narrations on death and loss, all three novelists have used melancholia in their works as a literary sentiment to move through mourning. In doing so, their stories become testaments to mourning in the wake of the Arab uprisings in Egypt. I have argued that, though clearly differing in character, narration, form, and style, all three novels can be understood as 'mourning novels': each novel illustrates a commitment to personalized, affective narratives on loss as central to the overall work.

As demonstrated, each of these novels mourns their loss(es) through a different trajectory and it reveals that a mourning process cannot be categorized as one absolute or homogenous concept: all attempts to narrowly define mourning would not do justice to the complexity of this grieving course. Instead, as each novel illustrates, the process of mourning can take many different shapes: in *Chronicle of A Last Summer* mourning is a silent, painful hollowness in which the protagonist alternates between grief and melancholia, in *Cigarette Number Seven* mourning is exclusively melancholic as Nadia is unable to release her attachment to the losses she experienced and holds on to her father's phantom, and finally in *The City Always Wins* mourning takes on a traumatic route in which narratives on martyrdom and physical injuries show the interconnected relationship between personal-, embodied-, and political loss.

Each novel demonstrates a unique and distinct mourning process that is different from the other, yet what these works have in common, and what truly makes these novels 'mourning novels', is the utilisation of the novel as a means to *speak of* this mourning process. The novels dedicate much time to digest, understand, return, and affectively relate to the losses experienced by the characters in the narrative and each creatively, but consistently, come back to and write on loss. Therefore, these postrevolutionary novels speak of a distinct desire to mourn political and personal losses as deeply and intimately felt. This is in contrast to what Hafez noted on the Egyptian novel prior to the Arab Spring, which can be understood as an "affectless" novel in which existentialist, nihilist sentiments are woven into a rather short literary work ("nearly exceeding 150 pages") and deliver sharp, societal critiques on the contemporary political landscape in Egypt.[147] Where this 'New Egyptian Novel' speaks of socio-political critiques by embracing a detached and affectless style, the postrevolutionary

[147] Hafez, Sabry. 'The New Egyptian Novel'. *New Left Review.* Vol. 64 (July/August 2010): 50.

novel does the opposite; not only does it turn to personal losses to critique the political, the narrative provides much room to deeply feel the losses experienced.

The postrevolutionary novel then delivers a political narrative by narrating personal and political loss(es) and the affected aftermaths of those losses. This is similar to what Halabi's noted on the use of melancholia in contemporary Arabic literature, where "melancholia ceases to be a collective condition" and instead becomes an intimate, individual experience of "young protagonists… a lone melancholic character suffering from a sense of loss caused by anxieties experienced and narrated at an intimate level".[148] Moreover, all writers have distinctly used melancholia in their novels to write on this mourning process. This in turn highlights that melancholia and mourning cannot be separated as two differing categories, but rather are of an interchangeable nature. *Cigarette*, *Chronicle*, and *The City* demonstrate the creative agency that literature has to speak on the complicated and painful process of mourning our losses.

Finally, in my analysis on the use of temporality in all novels, I have argued for the disruptive use of temporality to be understood as a political critique on Arab contemporaneity. *Chronicle, Cigarette,* and *The City* all strongly reverberate this disposition; they share the sentiment of loss as an overarching, inevitable experience in the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings, not merely because they have lost a future, but because loss is an omnipresent experience of the past that keeps re-enacting itself in the present moment. Inevitably, this also shapes the future, as the future in turn also becomes a site of loss. In their literary mediations, all writers articulate loss as an inescapable experience in the Arab World, and more specifically Egypt, that transcends temporality: loss is not bound merely to one temporal experience, such as the past, present, or future, but rather is consistently omnipresent.

The selected novels for this thesis thus speak of mourning, melancholia, and loss in the wake of tragedy: in their refusal to forget the past, and instead remaining close to intimate and political loss(es) the characters in their novels have experienced, these postrevolutionary novels are political commentaries on the contemporary moment in postrevolutionary Egypt. We can then see that the postrevolutionary novel is utilised as a "melancholy act" that refuses to forget the (historical) loss(es), violence, suffering, and injustices that Arab people have experienced at the hands of corrupt regimes in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

Further research could focus on the connections between dystopian Arabic literature and the realist novels discussed in this thesis. It could provide fruitful to analyse postrevolutionary literature in all its forms, as I believe there are interesting parallels to be found between the dystopian Egyptian novel and the realist Egyptian novels that were

[148] Halabi, Zeina. G. 'Writing Melancholy: The Death of the Intellectual in Modern Arabic Literature' *Dissertation.* The University of Texas at Austin: 2011. Pg. vii.

published after the Arab uprisings. After all, form should never prohibit us scholars from seeing the interconnectedness between heterogeneous expressions of universal experiences such as mourning and loss.

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