

The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**A Mnemonic Topology of the Eighteen days in Egypt
(25th January-11th February 2011)**

A Thesis submitted to
the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (M.A.) in Gender and Women's Studies in
the Middle East / North Africa

Specialization in Gender and Women's Studies in the Middle
East and North Africa

by Sara Verderi

under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker

July 2015

Acknowledgments

There are many people whom I would like to thank for their support and help while writing this thesis. First and foremost, I cannot begin to express my gratitude for the endless time and energy that my adviser, Martina Rieker, provided on a daily basis. Her guidance and intellectual and moral support throughout this process has been invaluable. In addition, I would like to thank my two readers Hanan Sabea and Hoda El Sada, who offered her thoughtful comments and meaningful support throughout the writing process. My gratitude goes also to Dalia Mostafa for her unwavering support during the writing process. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mostafa Mohie and Menna Murad, fellow graduate students for their comments, critiques and ideas. My gratitude goes also to Ayat Othman for her precious support during my fieldwork in Aswan.

I would like to acknowledge the generous funding of the Cynthia Nelson Fellowship donors and the American University in Cairo, without which this project would not have been possible.

I am very grateful for the loving support of my parents for their patience, generosity and kindness. I would also like to thank my grandfather whose words and lessons are a constant guidance in my life. To my friends Alessandro and Federico, thank you for having encouraged me every step of the way through this journey. And finally, this project could not exist without the time and thoughtful contributions of my interlocutors and to them, I am most indebted.

Abstract

A Mnemonic Topology
of the Eighteen Days in Egypt
(25th January- 11th February 2011)

Sara Verderi

The American University in Cairo
under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker

The aftermath of the eighteen days in Egypt constitutes a moment in which it is possible to study the entanglement between evolving political imaginations, techniques of governability and capital processes of restructuring. Focusing on the stories of activists who took part in the 25th January uprising, this thesis examines the conflicting representations thriving to establish a mnemonic "truth" about a moment of political transformation.

In using memory as a methodological lens, this thesis proposes to consider the operational aspect of memory, thinking about memory as a usable knowledge in the present. This approach to memory re-discusses its use as category of experience by putting the accent on the way in which the 'event revolution' prolongs in activists' lives.

By tracing a mnemonic topology, the purpose of this thesis is that of looking at how Tahrir's eighteen days are remembered differently not only among activists in Cairo but also in different socio-geographical contexts. Throughout the stories of interlocutors in Cairo, Aswan in Upper Egypt and Damanhour in the Nile Delta this thesis examines different re-elaborations of temporalities and representational politics, part and parcel of 'revolution' nomenclature and the way in which social change is imagined.

This thesis will explore how women activists have been variously thinking about 'revolution' in the light of their experiences in the first phase of the uprising and how the memory of the 'event' is translated and mediated into their everyday lives. In this context, the multiplicities of desires formulated varies according to class and geography. Coming from genuine desire to give a material form to emerging political subjectivities, the textual production of the three feminist NGOs taken into analysis intersects with processes of commercialization of 'trauma' and commodification of the figure of the harassed woman, its production and consumption within neoliberal terms.

©Copyright by Sara Verderi 2015 All

Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Revolution, Memory and Life	1
Introduction.....	1
Situating the Study.....	3
Further Mnemonic Knots.....	4
Literature Review.....	6
Thoughts on the History of a Buzzword.....	6
Revolution and Temporalities	7
Revolution and Representational Entities.....	9
"We were making history": Tropes about Women and Revolution in Context.....	11
Operational Memory and the Everydayness of the Event.....	15
Methodology.....	18
Oral History and Feminist Methodology	18
Reworking the Archives in a Time of Change.....	18
Mnemonic Topologies.....	21
Political Violence and the Figure of the Harassed Woman.....	22
Marketing Memory	24
Research Structure and Chapters	28
Fieldwork and Materials	29
Chapter Two: 'One, No One, One Hundred Thousand': Remembering Tahrir.....	32
Introduction.....	32
The Image of the 'Path:' Emerging Impressions about the 'Ongoing Revolution'.....	34
The Revolutionary Subject and his/her Demands: <i>Peoplehood</i> and Ordinary Desires.....	36
Conclusion.....	40
Chapter Three: Other Tahrirs: Remembering outside Cairo.....	44
Introduction.....	44
Space and Memory	48
Rebelling Against Whom?	53
Trope of Gender Violence in Aswan and Damanhour: Two Textual Examples.....	56
<i>Niqabs</i> and <i>Baltagis</i> : Living memory at Work.....	58
Conclusion.....	62
Chapter Four: Violence and the Marketing of the Harassed Woman.....	64
Introduction.....	64
War on Terror and the Romanticization of the Eighteen Days.....	65
Sexual Harassment and the Tribal Matter: Sayable Violence	71

Making the Silenced Speak.....	77
Violence in the Ordinary: Hope and Despair.....	79
Conclusion.....	81
Chapter Five: Further Reflections and Questions.....	84
Revolution in Context.....	84
Memory in Context.....	85
Bibliography.....	VIII

Images

Figure 1: Qasr al-Aini Wall.....	50
Figure 2: Midan Tahrir in Gharb el-Sahel, Aswan.....	51

Chapter One:

Revolution, Memory and Life

Introduction

A recent study about school textbooks observes that Tahrir's eighteen days are already scripted in the official history with the label 'revolution'. A vast academic literature has analyzed the two-years of intense social mobilization in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen, under the rubric of 'the Arab spring.' The uprisings lead to the ousting of four presidents, Ali Abidin Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya and Mohammed Saleh in Yemen. Other popular uprisings such as those in Syria and Bahrain emerged also emerged during this time frame without being able to force a regime change. In Egypt, protests started in Cairo, Alexandria and Suez on the 25th of January, 2011. Squares of many Egyptian cities were occupied in the night of 28th January. The sit-ins culminated on the 11th of February, after 'eighteen days' with a televised speech by General Omar Suleyman, head of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), who declared president Hosni Mubarak deposed and announced the beginning of a transitional phase which would culminate in a new constitution and new presidential and parliamentary elections.

This thesis focuses on the political imaginations and practices of activist women who had participated in the event, the 'eighteen days,' commonly remembered by Egyptians as the '25th January revolution', 'January revolution' or simply 'revolution,' and the impact of the revolution on their everyday lives reflected upon in 2014-2015. The stories of activist women in Cairo, Damanhour (Delta) and Aswan (Upper Egypt) speak about the past of the eighteen days but also articulate a language embedded in the idea of 'revolution' as a conceptual tool to understand social change. In the act of remembering the eighteen days women partially reify a nomenclature historically attached to the way in which social change is scripted in post-modernity. Terms such as freedom, democracy, development and women's empowerment are part and parcel of the politics of the familiar that are

enacted in moments of social disruption.

The iconic image of Midan Tahrir as a space of street politics has a long tradition in Egypt. The 25th January uprising reinvigorated this image making the capital's square a dominant trope in the imaginaries of activists both in Cairo and in other Egyptian cities. Situated in different locations this study focuses the attention on how socio-geographic configurations and specifically the spatial hierarchy of Cairo, influences the way in which women activists make sense of revolution.

Analyzing oral testimonies, textual and visual sources from three different NGOs and various professional figures all over the country, this thesis explores how gender violence emerges as central theme through which women characterize their experiencing of 'revolution'. Structural violence and the taking over of the army is either absent or only emerges as the backdrop to women's stories. A central space is occupied by the trope of the problem of societal violence afflicting Egyptian women. The predilection for the problem of violence against women partially responds to market demands for a specific crafting of the Egyptian revolutionary woman as a product. Institutional recognition of violence against women is seen by many as one of the most revolutionary changes in Egyptian society.

Interrogating women's memories of the 1947 Partition and 1984 Sikh massacres Vena Das (2007) observes that the memory of the Partition cannot be understood as a direct possession of the past, but is instead constantly mediated by the way in which the world is presently inhabited. Memory and oral history studies have already successfully brought to attention the limits of historical discourse in the temporal rupture it establishes between past and present ousting the voice of the subject who talks (Esmeir 2007). The experience of the eighteen days has negotiated a new relationship between the life of women and the external world. This new consciousness is perception impregnated with memories (Burton 2008). It is operational (Piperno 1996) in the sense of acting upon the world in the present (Bergson cited in Burton 2008)

Drawing on the concept of memory in the work of Das (2007), Piperno (1996) and Burton (2008) this thesis traces the narration of revolution through memory, whereby memory is a methodology that allows us to think about revolution

through the present everydayness of the subject's lives. It also aims to sustain a political project where memories of the revolution in Egypt constitute a reserve of experiences for a myriad of revolutions, past, present and future.

Situating the Study

The 25th of January 2011 Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said” launched a protest in all Egyptian cities. The social media page had been founded two years before by Wael Ghoneim, Google regional manager for the Middle East and North Africa, in memory of Khaled Said, tortured to death in Alexandria by the security forces. Few months earlier, December 2011 the emblematic self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, a street seller publicly humiliated by two police agents, led to a crescendo of protests all over Tunisia which led to the ousting of previous president Ben Ali in mid-January 2011. The 25th of January, the national police day in Egypt, the Facebook page in collaboration with a network of activists, in particular *Kifayya* and 6th of April movements¹ launched a call to protest against injustice, corruption and unemployment inviting people to emulate what the Tunisian people have done.

In Cairo, numerous gatherings started to form in different areas of the city, Shobra, Dokki, Nasr city and New Cairo all aiming to converge to Tahrir square. In the Nile Delta (Northern Egypt), in Alexandria, the second biggest city in Egypt, and Suez also account registered major protests.

In the Sa' id, Upper Egypt, protests were set in major cities, Aswan, Qena, Sohag and Luxor. In Aswan demonstrations formed in the Bazar areas, proceeding through the Nile corniche to the main square, Maḥatta Square.

¹Kifayya Movement: political group founded in 2004 during the anti-war protests against the US invasion of Iraq. Many of the founders came from the ranks of the Socialist Youth Organization during the 1960s and were then active critics of post 1968 Nasserist politics and Kifayya staged the first sit-in to demand Hosni Mubarak step down in 2004 and launched a campaign of electoral reform that would allow multi-candidate elections for the presidency. 6th April Youth Movement: political group founded in 2008 to support the strike of Mahallat el-Kobra's textile workers, announced for the 6th of April 2008. Some of its founding members, like Ahmad Maher and Asmaa Mahfouz, played a charismatic role during the 25th January uprising. In 2014 the movement was blamed of the economic backdrop and given the appellative of 6th ifrit (Ifrit meaning evil in assonance with the word April). The group was banned in 2014 by a court sentence and many of their members charged with long prison sentences for holding a sit-in against the anti-protest law in November 2013

On the 28th of January, the so-called Friday of Rage, people succeeded in reaching Tahrir square from other neighborhoods all over Cairo. Once reached the vicinity of Tahrir, demonstrations coming from the most-populated governorate of Giza were attacked by the police on the Kasr el-Nil bridge that connect the Giza with downtown and Tahrir square. Many were wounded and shot in their eyes with birdshots and live ammunitions. In Aswan it was the only day of confrontations between the protesters and the police and tear gas was launched. In Damanshour the first sit-in in Clock Square took place on the 2nd of February, the Camel Battle, *baltagiyya*² riding camels charged Tahrir square in the attempt to evacuate the sit-in. After the failed attempt people remained stationed in Tahrir, holding public debates, organizing security checkpoints and the main access-points and groups of medicinal and garbage collections. On the 11th of February, the Resignation Day, vice president Omar Suleyman announced the resignation of Mubarak on a television speech, the takeover of SCAF (Supreme Council of Military Forces) in the person of general Mohammed Tantawi. The same day big celebrations would take place in Cairo and all other cities in Egypt. On the 13th February SCAF announced the suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of parliament until new elections, to be held after six months.

Further Mnemonic Knots

Beside the timeline of the eighteen days, other historical episodes emerged and intertwined in activists' narrations about 'revolution'. Here briefly reported in a chronological order.

The Orabi revolution which took place between 1881 and 1882 against the Anglo-British occupation and the Ottoman Mohammed Ali's dynasty. The uprising bears its name from colonel Ahmad 'Orabi, official of the Egyptian army; 1919 Sa'ad Zaghloul revolution was also set against the British occupation. Sa'ad Zaghloul was the leader of the nationalist Wafd party; The 23rd July 1952 is remembered as the starting date of a process of political transformation inaugurated by size of the

²Baltagiyya are commonly understood as thugs of violent extortion rackets coming from the informal settlements of Cairo and other cities (Amar 2011) often associated with the Ministry of Interior according to the revolution slogan *DakhiliyyaBaltagiyya* (Dakhiliyya meaning Ministry of Interior)

government by the hand of a group of Egyptian officers. The process is commonly referred as 23 July revolution or The Free Officers Revolution.

Mahalla el-Kobra strikes in 2008 are commonly remembered among the most important social movements preceding the 25th January 2011 Taking their denomination from the industrial textile pole situated in Mahalla el-Kobra in the Delta Nile, the Mahalla strikes were a series of social mobilization of textile workers, activists and workers in other Egyptian cities against neoliberal labor policies and demanding the step down of president Hosni Mubarak.

After the eighteen days in March 2011, Salma Ibrahim and other women from the Tahrir sit-in were sequestered and forcefully underwent a virginity test to ensure, according to the security forces, that their morality had not been compromised. The episode is remembered as the Virginity Test incident. Maspiro, also referred as Maspiro massacre took place in the vicinity of the Maspiro television building, in October 2011. Particularly remembered by Coptic activists since most of the victims were Christians, it also marked the beginning of a more visible involvement of the army into the uprising repression following the eighteen days. After the clashes, a group was founded, the Maspiro Youth Union signed a passage of rupture between Coptic activists and the clergy who were unable to condemn the massacre of more than 28 people by the army.

Mohammed Mahmud clashes were sixteen days of standing up between youth and police in the alleys close to Tahrir square in November 2012 –and was a turning point in the conceptualization of state violence and brought many activists to come to political maturity. The street from which the ‘event’ took its name has been standing out in the course of time as elected *lieu de memoir* of 25th January with its walls painted with the face of the revolution martyrs in 2011 and 2012 and its name symbolically changed into Freedom Eyes street; The Blue Bra or *Sit al-Benet* incident refers to a video-broadcasted image of army beating a woman wearing a blue bra in Tahrir, December 2011 to which followed major women mobilizations; During Morsi's office³ other two most recurrent mnemonic knots were respectively,

³Mohammed Morsi, served as fifth president of Egypt. He was appointed chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party in 2011 and served as president of the republic from the 30th of June 2012 to the 3rd July 2013. In May 2015 he was sentenced to death for incitement of violence, terrorism, espionage and prison break charges but the sentence is still on hold

Ittihadiyya clashes, a night of violent confrontations between Morsi opponents and supporters in December 2012 and the 30th June 2013 mobilizations which concluded with the ousting of Morsi and the taking over of SCAF on the 3rd July of the same year.

Literature Review

Thoughts on the History of a Buzzword

Tracing the temporal contours of the 25th January uprising is not an easy task. This is because opponent visions about the effective period of time in which 'the revolution' happened. While some consider only the first eighteen days the revolution, others consider the revolution ongoing for the one year and six months that followed (six months of SCAF rule and one year of the elected president Mohammed Morsi) making the revolution 'end' on 30th of June 2013 when a series of protests, known as *Tamarrod*, paved the way to military coup that brought about Morsi's removal and the taking over of general Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi. Four years after the 25th January nobody in academic circles refers to the 25th of January (both the eighteen days and the one and half year 2011-2013) as 'revolution' while preferring to use the word uprising.

Critically reviewing the term 'revolution' and its nomenclature allow a better understanding of activist political imagination. This is because the term 'revolution' not only provides a concrete form given in the speech act to name social movement but also contains a system of meanings, desires, theories, historically and spatially determined. How do the use of the system of meanings attached to 'revolution' been shaping activists' political imagination and how has it been contested and negotiated? Two conditions emerged as central and require to be unpacked, the first is related to political representation, revolution is a word linked with the imagination of popular mass uprising followed by radical institutional, political and social transformations; the second refers to temporality, revolution is seen as an historical event that presupposes a 'before' and a 'after'. Thomas Nail *Returning to Revolution* (2012) is the main guiding theoretical reference in the analysis of the Cairo ethnography. In particular, a critique to representational politics and historical succession in the way it is re-discussed in activist emerging imaginations of the eighteen days. Activists'

story telling is also historically contextualized within the body of literature about social movements in Egypt (Asad 2012, Bayat2011, Sabea 2014; Shahat 2015) and women and revolution (see chapter two: Duboc 2011; Sorbera 2014; Mostafa 2015, El-Sadda 2015)

Revolution and Temporalities

In her essay *Thinking the New: of Futures yet Unthought* Elizabeth Grosz (1999) asks, with many other postcolonial theorists, whether the language of revolution involves a kind of predictability, of transformations that follow a predictable path. Wendy Brown (2002) also discusses the problem of temporality attached to revolution in post-modernity shedding critic light on the promise of futurity that it offers but never deliver. Brown proposes to dismiss 'revolution' and create new signifier to contain theories (and practices) of social change. Pointing out the limits of a philosophy of history based on succession of crisis or revolution is the central idea at the base of imaginations about revolution and finds its root in the Hegelian teleological vision of history.

Thomas Nail proposes an analogue diagnosis of the problems of temporality but proposes an alternative approach to account for revolutionary practices. Contrapuntal multi-melodic approach has to go hand in hand with attempt of accounting for revolutionary practices. Opposing a teleological universal history Thomas Nail (2012) and Slavoj Zizek (2009) propose to reinstate a political imagination for which revolution inscribes a circular movement in history, a repetition of infinite beginnings instead of a gradual, ascending mote toward an end as defined by the Hegelian and Marxist teleological philosophy. In *A Critique of The German Ideology* Marx has already discussed the limits of conceptualizing history as 'empirical experience'. Historical becoming instead unleashed in the relation between dominant mode of production as materialized in the division of labor and socio-political forms sustaining human cooperation. Marx's attempt to take distance from a structural way of conceptualizing history finds a more computed form in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte* where, in his critique to the poetics of the Paris Commune, he critically engages historical materialism in context. Throughout the essay she explains that the coup enacted by Louis Bonaparte was also made

possible by the recalling of the past, more precisely by the “ghost” of Napoleon I and its reincarnation in a caricature-like form in the person of Louis Bonaparte. Recalling the ghost of the past, Marx argues, is serving the purpose of bourgeoisie revolution and not that of the Commune. Marx polemically engages with the famous Hegelian saying “history repeats itself twice” by adding “the first as tragedy and the second as farce” because he sees of the constrains that the linear philosophy of history exercised on the struggle “the social revolution of the nineteenth century” he argues instead

cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself, before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolution required world- historical recollections in order to drug themselves concerning their own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. (1978:596)

If Marx warns about an excessive historical rumination in the Paris Commune, how can we re-configure the relation between revolution and history when confronted by social change at the present conjuncture?

Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari historical topology Nail, Zizek, Alain Badiou, Micheal Hardt and Tony Negri have argued for the necessity to re-think revolutions not as a series of points chronologically and dialectically connected and proceeding towards a perfect *synthesis* but a series of blocks of becomings, contingent “heterogeneous points on a one-dimensional folded surface” (Nail 2012:46). An overwhelming attention to the event, found also in Alain Badiou (2005) conceptualization of the revolution as a condensation of past and future into a totalizing “truth moment” or in Hardt and Negri ideas of social change as “potency” risks, according to Nail, to bring to a “subjective paralysis” (2012:15). Nasserist formulation of history seen as a path to be followed by the Egyptian people in order to achieve a better future (Abdel Latif 2010; Mosallam 2012) and the mobilization of 'revolution' as milestone events throughout this ideal path resonates with the grammar used by Cairo activists. Its controversial contention mirrors the controversial attempts to delimit the temporal contours of 'revolution' in contrast with the Nasserist narrative of revolution as event and proposing the idea of ongoing revolution. A glance at discursive practices of remembering revolution in Egypt is

conveyed in Abdel Latif's essay *Nasser's Resignation Speech and the Memory of Defeat: A Rhetorical Introduction to Political Discourse Analysis* (2010). The author makes an analysis of the linguistic feature of Nasser resignation speech after the defeat of the six-day war in 1967. The linguistic elements of Nasser political discourse, Abdel Latif argues, shape part of Arab and Egyptian collective memory. For instance, the use of the euphemism: in the speech Nasser decides to use the more nuanced term *naksa* instead of *hazima* as he previously did when referring to the 1919 Orabi Pasha revolt and the 1948 *naqba*. This to avoid "*hishabbah al-hofra bi al-sakkeen fi dhakira al-masreen*" (twisting the knife in the memory of Egyptians); another important feature in the speech analyzed by Abdel Latif is that of metaphor. Nasser equates history to a path to follow, then 1967 Naksa is imagined as a moment of impasse in the historical path "*sareen fi al-tareeq*" (Egyptians walking through the path); finally, the use personal pronouns "we" in order to extend the responsibility of the defeat to the whole population (*tawzi'a masuliyat al- hasima*) Abdel Latif highlights the shift from "we" to "I" is widely used in political discourse. Understating the use of a certain nomenclature in the Nasserist vocabulary is a required tool to start engaging critically with historical representation and representational entities in the context of 'revolution' in the modern epistemology as well as in the context of the eighteen days and political imagination of women activists.

Analyzing the eighteen days through memory allows political theory to root itself into the present, to build a continuity between the pastness of the event and the present of the subject. Through memory of activists it is possible to bridge the temporal gap created by historicization and look at how subjects transpose 'revolution' into their everyday living.

Revolution and Representational Entities

Nail individuates three dangers that representational universal history poses to the diagnosis of revolutionary praxis. The first, territorial representation, deploys when movements articulate discourses of neo-territorialities in the case of indigenous movements if they remain caught in particularistic, segmentary struggles without being capable of connecting with other struggles nor expand to the larger

horizon of revolution (absolute negative and relative negative deterritorialization); the second danger, state representation, is given as a consequence of state attempt to codify movements in “machinistic enslavement” when “despotic regimes create a generalized terror and paranoia of scission resolvable only by a transcendent union.” (2012:58). State representation also functions through the capturing of movements in a language of juridical subjectification; the third danger of political representation is capitalist representation and is given within capitalist social ‘axiomatics’ (2012:60) which organize the social machine according to the logic of processes of valorization and accumulation. Concretely, capitalist axiomatics translate for the worker into (1) privatization of the soil (2) loss of means of production and alienation from the product of labor (3) and for capital in (1) deterritorialization of wealth through financial capital (2) decoding of state through financial capital and public debt. The two decoded flows, free labor and free capital are immanent and transcendental in the social machine as internal, even biological are the dangers that empire poses to revolutionary practice as Foucault and Agamben later theorize in the idea of bio-power and bare life (1996:151). In *Empire* (2000), Hardt and Negri have extensively argued that revolutionary praxis of the multitudes is not to be directed in the direction of the capture of particular institutional subject (the state for example) but must operate from within, that is, on the plan of immanence. Given the extraordinary connection and simultaneity of the Egyptian uprising with those in Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen as well as the Occupy movement, territorial representation and the question of neoterritorialities seem not to be particularly relevant in the story telling of activists in Cairo. More relevant it appears in the Aswan and Damanhour ethnographies (chapter three) where self-representation of activists passes through territorial belonging, for instance, in activists’ political imagination of being from the South of Egypt or rather from the river Nile Delta. State representation emerges instead from Cairo activists’ narratives (chapter two) to the extent that an emphasis is put on national belonging and the identification of the people of Tahrir as ‘Egyptian people’. Recurrent is the sentence ‘all Egyptians were there’ or ‘we were all there for Egypt’. Patriotic discourses also relates to state and media attempts to break the unity of the movements stressing on sectarian and national divisions. At the same time, state media integration of the

sexual harassment issue and discourses of women rights inclusion in representational democratic discourses as well as gender global rights agenda. Capital axiomatics organize the social machine according to the logic of processes of valorization and accumulation. Territorial and state representation intersect with capital axiomatics in the way in which political practices enacted by activists, textual production about gender violence in this study, are subsumed within the logic of capital and in fact commodified to respond to the demand of a 'niche market'.

Specifically in this thesis, regulating the 25th January uprising components through subjectification within representational politics comes to surface in the production of activists around the theme of violence against women. The comparative analysis between Cairo and Aswan/Damanhour ethnographies brings into attention how processes of subjectification are influenced by territorial representation. State representation unfolds when demands to be represented based on gender and claims for recognition within the legislative and juridical domain are made, as in the case of liberal-oriented feminist tradition in Cairo. The production of gendered subject *avis à vis* violence, within the non-governmental sector, targets a specific market segment where the subject is represented, or better marketed, as a product for the capitalist market. Of course, the nuances are much more complex and it is not accurate to reduce all the experiences of women and activists narrated here into this schematic. Political imaginations and textual production examined in the next chapters sometimes complement the nomenclature related to revolution, change, democracy, modernization, progress, empowerment but others narrate unexpected ways of navigating the social.

"We Were Making History": Tropes about Women and Revolution in Context

The memoir genre is probably the most immediate form of accounting in the suddenness of social transformation. In the context of the eighteen days Prince's *My name is revolution*, recently translated in English for the American University in Cairo Press, and Abu El-Komsan *The Freedom of the Square* published with the support of UN Women already show the main trope of memorialization that variously emerge in the story telling of women during the ethnography. The two novels portray all principal common tropes in the memorialization of the eighteen

days that I have traced in the conversation with women in Cairo, Aswan and Damanhour. One of the themes draws from nationalistic narrative of *peoplehood*. Prince describes the revolution as the revolution of Egyptians, common citizens along with the army who stood against the oppressive rule of the police. Another theme is that of Tahrir as an ideal moment were Egyptians in Prince and Women in El Komsan made it to “liberate” the square from class, religious and gender contradictions. The outcome of this victory consisted in the creation of a redeeming space of harmony and collaboration. In this ideal space/moment women triumphed by successfully building their role of “leaders” (El Komsan). In the self-reflexive intermezzo Komsan often refers to her role of mother and to her religious beliefs while Prince thematizes the generational conflict between her enthusiastic desire to be in Tahrir and her parents’ opposition to this desire. Finally, the revolution is also memorialized as an “internet revolution” where the role of cyber activism occupies a central part in mobilizing and conveying ideas.

A brief review about feminist and gender studies in Egypt in social sciences, even if not directly related to the theme of memory, is important to make sense of the tropes that have colored the debates about gender and social change in contemporary Egypt. The eighteen days have marked an important landmark of renovation and new important points of discussions such as the feminization of labor and an international interest in gender politics in Egypt, with consequent mushrooming of NGOs, groups and outlets for the first time also outside Cairo and Alexandria. The review also reveals three major trends which will variously cross the discussion in the following chapters: the first concerns historical representation and historical continuity in women political participation in the moment of social disruption. Rich in materials and contribution it is divided into two ramifications - history of feminism and feminist literature (Sorbera 2014; El Sadda 2015; Mostafa 2015); gendered political economy and human rights (Duboc 2013; Khalili 2014; Singerman 2013; El Azzazy 2014); the second points to two conceptualizations of social change according to geography. In Cairo discourses of sexual harassment wrestle within a classist notion of respectability vis à vis the *baltagi* subaltern sexually-driven subject, in Aswan and Damanhour they articulate a language of tradition and modernity translated into kinship and tribalism of the two cities and the

presence of the Ministry of interior in Cairo; here very little has been written and theorized previously; the third hints to the endeavoring of institutional recognition and legal rights activism, in particular societal violence against women, as ideal framework of reference in feminist discourses.

Duboc (2013) traces a genealogy of women struggles in Egypt whereby 2006 strikes in the textile factory in Mahalla al-Kobra, Delta is particularly significant as women played a leading role of carrying the “culture of protest” which led into 2011. Contesting another global north approach to the revolution in Egypt as part of the Arab Awakening Duboc and others (Fahmy 2015) have contextualized the 2011 uprising in history. Tracing the lines of past struggles - the bread riots in 1977, the Anti-war protests against US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Mahalla strikes and the creation of 6th April in 2006 - is the argument used to demonstrate that Arabs did not awake because there was never an Arab's sleep. In general, the article explores the mechanics of neoliberal restructuring characterized by the feminization of labor and consequent growing visibility of women in labor protests.

Similarly, Singerman (2013) economist approach sees in the neoliberal restructuring process the cause of 'youth and women' mobilization. The author highlights the role of anti-globalization movements in shaping characteristic forms of organization in 2011 uprising. In fact, movements such as 6th April and Kifayya networking are built on voluntary informal non-organized rhizomes, a kind of non-hierarchical model typical of the occupy movement or the *indignado* in the contemporary moment. Claims of dignity during the 18 days have been part of the most heard words in the chants of the uprising. Singerman elaborates a metaphor of dignity as being a word whose signifier contains political claims about the dignity of the body. Repeated attacks on women's bodies, both by state and societal violence, have occupied a central place in the representation of the revolution. For instance, the attack on a demonstrations of women on the 11th March 2011, the virginity test, the blue bra incident are only the most spectacularized events concerning these discourses. The fact that bodily violence against women has passed from being a taboo to be widely discussed in the public mainstream debates is considered by many scholars and revolutionaries among the most important successes of the revolutionary wave.

A considerable part of feminist scholarship in/of Egypt is dedicated to early 1900's feminism. Participation into the global arena of feminist discussion, supporting the nationalistic project, and advocacy for universal suffrage were among the principal features (Sorbera 2007). The complexity of this duality public/private vis à vis state representation in the debates around feminism in Egypt has been the object of the attention of this literature. On the other hand, later on during the Nasserist period, feminism assumes anti-institutional nuance epitomized in the figure of Doria Shafiq (Abu El-Dahab 2015).

In liberal feminist discourses, the implementation of women rights in the new constitution has played a central role during the SCAF transitional period and the two constitutional referenda in 2012 and 2014 respectively under Mohammed Morsi Justice and Freedom Party, Islamist in orientation and Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi military-backed government. In the newest constitution, article 11 reads that the state is responsible for ensuring equality between men and women and encouraging forms of positive discrimination between sexes. The article is also regarded by Hoda El Sadda as an achievement resulting from anti-harassment campaigns brought to the front since revolutionary waves as well as the pressure of transnational actors and the divisive politics between secular and Islamist factions (El Sadda 2015). The struggle for the recognition of women rights within institutional spheres and women's inclusion in civil society are also part of the feminist critique to Qasim's "new woman" idea promoting an image of womanhood domesticity and epitomized in modernist Islamist discourses. Given that the 2012 constitution version of the article re-instated the central role of the family and supported women as mothers, the amendment of the article in the 2014 constitution seemed to open new representational spaces outside the domestic. Debates around the legitimacy of women representation into "the square" were equated to and linked to the endeavoring of feminist perspective and women rights to be represented in the Egyptian constitution.

Questions of representation vis à vis the state intersects with the global gender agenda of transnational actors and human rights organizations as El Azzazy has argued when she writes that "legal rights activism is historically the defining feature of gender equality discourses in Egypt" (2014:3). El Azzazy captures the

impact of the revolution on shifting the tactics of human rights organizations during Justice and Freedom "moment" when the implementation of the Islamist political project highlighted the recurrent point of contestation between women right's law advocacy and Islamic law. The moment also highlights another point of contestation, that between secular and Islamic feminisms and contended visions of justices (El Azzazy 2014; Khalili 2014)

In Dina Wahba's *Gendering Revolution* (2012) we find another theme of feminism contextualized in the context of 25 January- the patriarchal state. Highlighting historical continuity of women political participation is an attempt to build up historical credentials (see Fahmy 2015 and Singerman 2013). Women are an “invisible and enduring presence” which is encouraged to boost the national project but should participate in forms that keep intact upper class social respectability. The state is characterized as the incarnation of patriarchy, resulting in a fusion between modernity and tradition in post-colonial Arab states. Wahba goes on arguing that the eighteen days were a moment in which gender inequality was defied while the aftermath of the revolution is reasserting patriarchal hierarchy. A similar characterization of the eighteen days as “gender bias free zone” or “gender neutral” is commonly thematized in the literature on women and revolution (Sholkamy 2011; Magdy 2012)

In an essay called “the Privilege of the Revolution; Gender, Class, Space and Affect in Egypt” Jessica Winegar argues that the experience of women sitting at home while taking care of children is not thematized in the narratives of the revolution. In so far, she problematizes a representation of the revolutionary in his/her hypervisible heroic androgenic image to that of the woman, invisible in this way questioning the duality public/private and its gendered construction. In contrast with that, Winegar states that domestic everyday experience is crucial to the state and the public. In conclusion she argues that the women and men who could not go to Tahrir constitute the hidden majority, which will ideally continue the revolution in the coming years (2012:70). In questioning the heroic representation of the revolutionary not only we are clear about the multiplicity of experiences - a multiplicity that cannot transcend those who are not represented - but we also de-

construct the linearity of the revolution as metanarrative of women struggle to affirm 'public recognition'.

Operational Memory and the Everydayness of the Event

Four years have passed since the moment in which people appeared to each other in Tahrir and other squares of Egypt to give life to a rich variety of street politics. The focus of the analysis, however, is not much centered on the reconstruction of the event, historically. Drawing on Bergson's theory of memory James Burton (2008) describes the process of memory formation in the subject consciousness by distinguishing between two different types of memory that work with present perception to support consciousness in negotiating the body relation to the external world. The first is pure memory which is manifested in learned habits, it is acquired by repetition and does not bear the mark of the past, it is part of the present. The second type is representational, a recording memory-images of all the events of our daily life that occur in time. Representational or archival memory seemingly works in the way archives do by preserving in the subject mind a series of images in the form of archives. Pure memory, Burton argues, is the way in which the past is prolonged in the present because it through it that the subject can potentially act upon the world in the present.

pure memory is the record of our entire experience ... indeed its basis is the entire movement of the material body over the course of its past existence(2008:329)

As the commercial use of “memory” in the form of database shows, the question of memory closely relates to that of capital. In a sense the challenges posed to memory by technological innovation are even more radical to that in which memory embodies notions of truth and justice. Franco Piperno (1996) argues that the introduction of computer memories, in the form of databases do not gather all the answers for a given question. Rather most of the memory stored in these databases conserve a knowledge usable for certain paying clients in the form of ultra-specialized strategic, economic, commercial, or financial data. In informational

epistemology what really matters is not to assert truth through memory, rather the function of memory is operative. Both Burton and Piperno point out to the operational aspect of memory, respectively in the subject consciousness and computer database, thinking about memory as a usable knowledge in the present.

Vena Das' (2007) work also points out to the subject life and practices as a site in which the past continues into the present arguing that it is in describing what happened to the subject that the memory of the event is folded in ongoing relations. In her ethnography about women life in the aftermath of the Partition she argues

thus, the memory of the Partition cannot be understood in Asha's life as a direct possession of the past. It is constantly interposed and mediated by the manner in which the world is being presently inhabited (2007:76)

I sought to analyze how the memory of the event continues in the present and how it deploys a political imagination related to the Tahrir experience in Cairo, the revolution outside Cairo. Focusing on the everyday practices and emerging political imaginations of activists, this research can reinvigorate the debates about the use of memory as category of experience not only as an alternative, or an attachment to history but as an original methodology in its own. I see this originality in the fact that memory and oral history can potentially put the accent of the present nature of the subject existence, which in the context of the 25th January uprising highlight a temporal continuity instead of an approach of mourning the past of revolution or dreaming for future ones.

Methodology

The idea of this research started in 2013 when I came to Egypt for pursuing my studies. Having been in Cairo a year before and closely followed the events in the media since 2011 I could not help but notice how the people's attitude to the revolution was changing. The same people who in 2011 had occupied Tahrir square and decapitated the regime were now turned again to the "military fever" buying photos of the new elected president Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi and singing popular songs such as *teslam el-eyyedi* (God bless your hand) in praise of the Egyptian Army. Talk "politics" passed from being the first topic of conversation that one can start in a

cafe, with a taxi driver and strangers in general to a taboo argument, a threat to national security. At first I attributed these shifts in popular memory exclusively to the effects of a unidirectional produced by the media and public spaces, which were at any nevertheless massive.

Four years after the eighteen days instances of popular memory and everyday practices have been changing. In the ethnography emerges that the figure of the harassed woman is used to address but also deflect the broader social issues brought up during the uprising

Oral History and Feminist Methodology

When I first embarked in this research the question of memory and the eighteen days in Egypt focused on the political significance of women's commitment to projects of memorialization through the use of oral history. In a talk at the American University Main Library in 2014 entitled *Creativity, Activism and Public Memory*, Hoda El Sada, one of the founding member of the Women and Memory Forum, pointed that in Egypt there was a battle for the writing of the revolution's history. Narration of historical trauma through memory is what Al-Samman (2010) analysis is centered on. She argues that through infanticide and violence on their bodies, women create a metaphor for narrating the trauma of the Arab nation from which they had been separated. The act of narrating is seen as an act of healing this trauma. Analogously, Rosaldo (2006) points out that feminist research shall ask "what political meanings women doings generate?" instead of "what do women do?"

Feminist oral history emerges from the assumption that women history has been neglected. It assumes oral history a feminist positionality as to propose a historical narrative that shed light on the participation of women to the public sphere. In Egyptian liberal feminism, this participation is bounded to the acquisition of legal and political rights and more broadly to the national question and the metonymic relation between the Egyptian woman and the nation.

As to avoid the reductionism of framing the multiplicity of the real into a unitary theory, Sangster proposes to use oral history in which "post-structuralist insight must be situated into a feminist materialist context" (1994:22)

The ethnography transcends and intersects with economic monism of Marxist

feminism and liberal feminism obsession with legal rights. It transcends because what women recount highlight a multiplicity of experiences which is brought to light by the ambivalence of memory - multiplicity and way of inhabiting the present - as I have tried to explain. It intersects because questions of recognition and redistribution vis à vis the state were part of narratives as it was the material and social context in which they are produced. I see the limits of liberal feminism in Egypt as using women memories as an attachment to official “androgenic” history. On the part of Marxist feminism the tendency to eclipse the superstructural, the cultural or the emotional for instance, aspects of memory while attributing an overwhelming emphasis on the structural economic one.

Reworking the Archives in Time of Change

Beside interviews I am variously referring and taking ideas from three documentary/archival projects, namely, Woman and Memory Forum's *Archive of Women's Voices*, Southern Center for Rights *Documenting the Revolution in the South* and El-Nadeem's *Letters Behind Bars*. The question of archives, memory and oral history about the revolution, in which my research wish to situate, have also emerged in the debates. The *Oral history archives* of the Women and memory forum in Cairo is an example of a conspicuous production in this moment of political transformation. Reworking the archives, and documenting the revolution inscribed itself in the often-assigned task given to memory - that of making up for historical forgetfulness. However, as it became evident, the commitment of activists to a particular version of the past highlights one narrative but silences others.

If memory methodologically allows us to grasp a multiplicity of contingent singularities, the mobilization of memories in context remains conceptually bounded by what people chose to remember. In the context of activists in Egypt this choice goes greatly back to the tropes of the revolution, in itself a hegemonic discourse. First because the common tropes of the revolution (the middle class, the workers, the women, the lineage of the revolution and the ongoing revolution) despite being vital for the interlocutor and despite bringing up vital emotions have become the common grammar through which memories are mobilized; second because memory projects (archives and oral history) render the experience of the revolution totalizing as they

voice the stories of those who “belonged to” but not those who chose not to. The collective experience is mostly rendered through tropes and the definition of an imaginary community which excludes others. At the same time, it is in the way women inhabit the present that allow to partially circumvent representation and grasp how the eighteen days animate political imaginations.

The question of archives emerges in a specific institutional context of political transformation. Gestures toward mnemonic topologies in which various actors contribute to transpose into tangible forms (written transcriptions, collections of video, paintings and music) the 'database' of the revolution. These practices work with the same logic of archives and are a response to the deliberate institutional forgetting of the revolution in Egypt.

In July 2011, Egypt National Archives in Cairo launched a project of documenting the “social and political upheaval and make it available for Egyptians generations to come” (the Guardian “The Struggle to document Egypt’s revolution” 15th July 2011). Khaled Fahmy, history professor at the American University in Cairo was appointed to form a committee to document the 25th January revolution whose main objective would have been collecting official records, pamphlets, multimedia footage and updates from twitter and Facebook. However, as I was told by the director of AUC library archives, Stephen Urgola, the project was never actually implemented.

Knowing the importance of the topic, the Egyptian state, and the Ministry of Education in particular has instead been very attentive to the crafting of history in textbooks. A recent study by Patricia Sasnal (2014) about modern history and nationalistic propaganda in Egyptian textbooks shows that the January revolution has already been integrated into primary prep and secondary history syllabi. The study reveals that in 2011/2012 school year all direct references of Mubarak were removed and some information added about the 25th January 2011 and 30th of June 2013. On the other hand, Sasnal signals grave omissions of the responsibility of the SCAF (supreme council of the armed forces) and the Mohammed Mahmud clashes in November 2012.

Archives have been considered a practice peculiar to historians apparently in opposition with the relativism of memory (Olick 2011). The many archival projects

seeing the light in Egypt have the specificity of mixing the concept of archive to the use of oral history and memory instead of official written documents. The gesture of capturing the multiplicity of memories and non-hegemonic nature through oral history and vernacular language reveals a rupture, an antagonism toward what is perceived hegemonic history. At the same time, the use of archival practice, a source of attaining knowledge that is typical of historiography, reveals a continuity in the way this experience is made understandable. Similarly of the memoirs, it reveals the desire to give memory a future, as the article of Roger Bromely (2015) suggests. However, the political concern of giving memory a future functions by capturing a particular memory-image of memory which I will call the Tahrir moment. This procedure partially re-presents the same problematics of representational history and historical succession. It seems to me that first, archives likewise historical narratives, privilege a particular narrative of the revolution and silences others. Even if the need to narrate the uprising springs from legitimate political concerns, it ends up with discriminating stories (and subjects) that does not fit its canon. Second, archives, by establishing the contours of the “event revolution” create a temporal rupture i.e. historicize the event. In this sense, living flow of memories of the 25th January the dynamic action on political imaginations is frozen in space, monumentalized in archival memory.

Mnemonic Topologies

During the research I realized that it was reductive to attribute such shifts exclusively to the effect of hegemonic discourses. If people mainly prefer to remember a past of militarism and “law and order” over that of the social power that the 25th January uprising generated there must be reasons. Navigating the space of the people who directly participated to the first eighteen days of the uprising in three Egyptian cities it became clear that memory does not equal resistance. Memory sometimes opposes mainstream discourses and sometimes complements them. It is not a therapeutic remedy to history but a negotiating process mutable in time. This was particularly evident during the interview where most of the women, all from

middle income background, claimed to talk *in the name of* Egyptians when they were enacting a what Nail calls a representational procedure. At the same time the question of political violence became attached to women in mainstream discourses producing a specific representation for women in the revolution.

Despite codification of the multitudes within representational structures (Nail 2012), the component of the “collective consciousness”, as one of the interviewed calls it, was and is part of the experience of the revolution and form “the collective dignity of the people.” I started the research with the idea of celebrating this collective memory but the more I studied and the more were the number of contradictions emerging. The rhetoric of the revolution and my own political background conceived to me that the revolution was about a myriad of individuals (singularities) whose trajectories intersected that of the revolution but did not merge into it. Despite my attempts to squeeze the experience of the uprising into a sharp-cut ideological framework, each and every person resisted to be classified within my old schemes. Still, what persists in the narratives is a contingent sense of connection where popular memories (hegemonic and oppositional) and shared emotions fueled the motor of the uprising. I am using memory as a methodology because it allows a structure to this ambivalence - a multiplicity of singularities that do not necessarily cohere with one metanarrative but at the same time contain an element of collective experience.

Collective emotions that the women who participated into the revolution share shows that memory is a space for a high investment of the subject. This is because memory is not only the telling of the past but rather the narrative of who we are. Political praxis conceived as a philosophy of action is highly informed by affect, a component that has received small attention in political theory. Brian Massumi argues that the act of feeling is enough to make it real (Massumi 2013). In the ethnography it became clear that affect linked to the political became the motor of what happened. Because the remembrances are so intimately related to the subject but also contingent to a memory group they bring out the ambivalence between the “I” and the “we” in the language of the interlocutors. As Alia Mosallam, historian and faculty at the American University in Cairo, argues “memory brings out the emotions of an event, reading through emotional states can help people to overcome

their fears (personal conversation 23/02/2015).

Given that I started in 2014-2015 there were already debates about the uprising to the “Tahrir experiences” so I sought to move outside Cairo. This was because the capital of Egypt had established a hegemonic narrative of the revolution. I traveled to Aswan and the Delta in search of other “Tahrirs”. Indeed I found out that every place had its own square that in part resonate with Tahrir square, for example Clock Square in Damanhour or Station Square in Aswan, and the media story-telling of the revolution but in part articulate its own distinctive language. The memories of the revolution vary as they are intertwined with the social and political “local” contexts as well as their relation to the national and global scale. I re-read a Cindi Katz’s article entitled “*On the Ground of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement*” (2001). What I attempted in this part of the research was the first steps toward a mnemonic topology of the revolution

Political Violence and the Figure of the Harassed Woman

The research allowed me to come to term with my own “ghosts of the past”, as Marx puts it, memories and my political imagination. Since I was a child I grew up with the story-telling of the glorious deeds of the anti-fascist resistance before and during the Big Conflicts storming Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. My maternal grandfather was a witness of the last popular insurrection which took place in Italy before the fascism seized power in Italy- Parma Barricades (Cacucci 2003). In 1922 residents of the working class neighborhoods erected “barricades” to prevent Blackshirts squads from taking over the city. On the paternal side, the situation was not better. My grandfather was a partisan in the armed resistance from 1943 to 1945. Many years after the wars, there were rumors that he had an old English machine gun kept in the house basement. I remember that every now and then during dinner he used to comment in deep disappointment to the television news “Let me go in the basement and take my gun I will show them (the corrupted politicians) what’s what”. The idea of that gun in my grandfather’s basement was insidious and intriguing at the same time. In my youth years during the 1990 I was part of the “leftovers” of the *autonomia operaia* the movement that was heavily

shaped by the 1960s and 1970's political theory and praxis in Italy. Part of our political imagination was that the war machine of capitalism could only be met with the violence of social revolution. The question of violence was important in the representation of political militancy.

All these memories informed the ontological perspective I adopted in the beginning of the research towards political violence. The initial approach towards violence has been problematized throughout the process. In Cairo the crash on the demonstrations by security forces was highly present in the narratives. In Aswan the role of the state repressive apparatus was mediated through a language of tribalism. In Damanhour the violent element was given by familial and kinship control over women.

In an essay entitled "The Dignity of Non-Violence" May Todd argues that histories of nonviolence are "the expression of people asserting their dignity against the violence that seeks to wrap or derange them." (2013:9). The presence of unarmed bodies as the main form of resistance to violence highlights a dominant feature of the uprising's relation with violence.

While women activists often remember episodes of police brutality and some of them were directly attacked during the demonstrations the theme of structural violence is obscured in the textual production, documentaries and photography collection to give all the attention to violence against women. The figure of the harassed woman emerges as the central argument in the way political imaginations about the revolution is transposed into a material form, for instance a book, a photo, a film or a public initiative.

In an article entitled *Turning the gendered politics of the security state inside out?* Paul Amar (2011) has already noticed that the figure of the harassed woman was used to address but also to deflect the issue of structural violence, police brutality and labor mobility. Rising tide of protests in Egypt during the 1990s brought the government to delegitimize the movement by infiltrating the figure of the *baltagi*; consequently, the presence of women in demonstrations was the response of activists to challenge the image of the square as site of violence. "Egyptians progressive organizations realized that placing respectable (upper-middle class) women in mass protests could play a crucial symbolic role (2011:309). The state

responded with sexual harassment by the figure of the *baltagi* in order to undermine women's respectability. The theme of sexual violence then became in the period between 2003 and 2009 normalized in Egyptian progressive organization whereby a shift from street politics to human rights industry brought about the commoditification of the figure of the harassed woman. Some NGOs such as El-Nadeem center resisted the trend by keeping the light of critique on structural violence and the state. Rather than aiming to rehabilitate the respectability of women El-Nadeem offered direct psychological and medical aid to victims of police harassment in the streets and victims of torture in prison. It was also the first organization to offer legal aid not just to political dissidents abused but also to actual working-class sex workers.

Drawing from Beck's conceptualization of 'risk society' in fact, Aradau and Van Munster (2007) have traced a genealogy of European policies in relation to the use of this category. In industrial societies the state builds upon the idea of incumbent risks of indigence and natural calamities to allow production and redistribution of wealth within the Fordist model and portray itself 'social insurer'; after 9/11 however, 'risk' has been gradually taking a different nuance. In fact, the state partially gives up its role of social insurer while more emphasis is put on individual responsibility. At the same time, the dispositif 'risk' to tackle social problems is carried on under practices of 'war on terror' whereby prevention of risk paves the way to technology of increasing control, securitization and erosion of the state of law. In Egypt, the creation of illegal limbos such as indefinite detention, kidnapping of activists, physical and physiological elimination of political opponents all pass through pre-emptive action against terrorism where "the decision is no longer the juridical decision for which careful consideration of evidence is necessary, but it becomes an administrative decision, where the rule of zero-risk takes precedence" (2007:106)

Marketing Memory

The last part of the scholarship characterizing the analysis explores the relation between memory and capital. In *Accounting for violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* (Bilbija and Payne 2012) the authors address different

ways in which memory of political violence in the past three decades in Latin America has now become public domain in discussions, initiatives, museums, soap operas and art, after the fall of authoritarian regimes. These gesture toward memorialization of violence have formed a proper memory market in Latin America. This market includes sectors specialized for example in the merchandising of memory through broadcasting of the soap opera *Anos Rebeldes* in Brazil or tourism trauma sites signed in the Argentina Lonely Planet guide or again in the transformation of torture centers in shopping malls in Uruguay. The authors look at how memories of political violence wrestle with desire of contesting authoritarianism and neoliberal processes of subsumption into the logic of profit. According to Nelson in an essay entitled *Marketing Discontent: The Political Economy of Memory in Latin America*, this specific ambivalence of memory implies political imagination and practices. Nelson observes that many groups politically committed to projects of memorialization struggle between the desire of making memory “public” compromising with the market and the opposition by any means to commercialization. While several authors have treated the question of spectacularization of violence and “trauma-aesthetic” in South Africa and in the Global North (Boltanski 1999; Feldman 2004) questioned the moralization of violence (Aradau 2008; Davidson 2006) *Marketing violence* is among the few which have used memory to look at the complexity of contextualizing memory in the historical moment and current modes of production and forms of social cooperation. Bilbija’s references capital dispossession of memory in the form of memory encapsulation within “lieux de memoir” (Nora 1989) such as monuments, memorials, museums. Bilbija’s volume is important for my argument because it transposes the material contradictions in the practices of women activists that want to carry on the politics of Tahrir but also have to compromise with the capital ‘naked cash-nexus’ (Brown 2002). The contradictions substantiate in the production of textual materials and initiatives by the three NGOs in the way in which, on the one hand they express the desire of activists to gather, discuss, think and critique and, on the other, have to adopt the nomenclature of founding-organizations.

Research Structure and Chapters

In the following chapters I will address how women activists have negotiated their everyday practices in the light of the social transformations occurring in Egypt. In chapter one I have tried to give context to this historical moment as well as the debates around revolution, gender and how they have been scripted in the literature.

In chapter two I focus on political imaginations of activists in Cairo. The dialogues with interlocutors bring up representational politics and historical succession as two main arguments that are negotiated in the way they situate themselves in a moment of political transformation. I thus focus on gendered representational politics, discourses of feminist historian and memory projects, archives of Women's voices, run by the Women and Memory Forum to relate them with the way in which activist women re-elaborate these two themes and how they inhabit the present vis à vis their new emerging imaginations. Interlocutors are all variously connected with the activists' circles formed during the revolution. I did not focus on a particular organization in order to try to grasp the complexity and heterogeneity of the intellectual and professional milieu of Cairo-based activists.

Chapter three sketches a comparative analysis of experiences and features that marks a difference between the Cairo and the outside-Cairo imagination of the revolution. I start the analysis by taking into attention the image of Tahrir square in the way in which it has waged its hegemony on other cities' squares during the uprising and later in the memories of activists. In the ethnography I conducted in Aswan and Damanhour, I focus the attention on two small NGOs that work on gender issues but I also engage with other interlocutors who have been recently active in the political scene or who run memory projects on 25th January. One of these projects, Documenting the Revolution in the South, the dialogues with activists highlight a desire of women in Aswan and Damahour to assert their presence in the revolution even though they could not participate in the Tahrir sit-in. A critical engagement with a language of 'family and tribalism' emerge in the discourses of interlocutors as a category of power they individuate and rebelled against. Activists also want to assert how their life is changed and explain the new practices characterizing their everyday lives.

In chapter four, I address the textual production about sexual violence of the

two NGOs in Damanhour and Aswan, plus a compendium of a Cairo-based NGO on the same topic and relate it to the broader debates about sexual harassment and social change. Building on Paul Amar's conception of gendered politics and the security state and Vena Das concept of unsayable or sayable memories I discuss how the issue of sexual harassment and tribal violence deflect issues of structural violence that were at the forefront of the eighteen day chants and banners calling for social justice and against police brutality and corruption. I propose El-Nadeem epistolary collection of detainees and the lawyer Mahinour El Masri's letter as example of an approach to political violence that keeps the critical light on the state. I also try to understand how women talk about political violence (or chose not to deal with it) and how they make sense of their present in relation to the node violence-social change.

In chapter five I reflect about practices of documenting the revolution. Also I expose the nexus capital-memory in the way in which the memory of the uprising or the figure of the harassed women is commodified and become a product to be consumed within the neoliberal market. The concluding part further discusses the themes emerged during the research and pose new questions.

Fieldwork and Materials

I conducted a total of twenty-two interviews in a period of time going from February to April 2015. For the content of the questions I partially relied on the transcript of AUC oral history project "University on the Square". Questions were also focused on generational and familial memories of the revolution, the reason of his/her engagement to political, documentary projects after 2011 and how they imagined the revolution would have had an impact on their lives.

Most of the interviews, fourteen, took place in Cairo Three individual interviews in Damanhour, Five individual interviews and one discussion group composed by seven people in Aswan, March 2015. For the Cairo ethnography, I did not focus on a particular organization in order to try to grasp the complexity and heterogeneity of the intellectual and professional milieu of Cairo-based activists. Also given the fact that I was living in the city allowed me time to select single interlocutors also outside Nazra for Feminist Studies, a left-oriented women rights

non-governmental organization from which I rely for on my argument about violence in chapter four. Most of the Cairo interlocutors though knew each other directly or indirectly for reasons that I was not able to grasp. In Damanhour and Aswan that, due to the limited time (I spent one week in each of the two cities) I had to adopt a different selection logic and focus on specific groups, namely Ganobiyya Horra (literally The Free Southern Woman) in Aswan and Bent al-Nil (Nile's Daughter) in the Bahayra governorate, in the Western Nile Delta. Both NGOs were connected to Nazra in Cairo which assisted them to set their conceptual frameworks and research questions. The two projects about gender violence were founded by the human rights organization Global Fund for Women based in the US, whose board of directors includes, Mozn Hasan, founder and executive director of Nazra.

I decided on proposing to do fieldwork also outside Cairo. The reason was that Cairo only represents the reality of the city, with its 20 million dwellers and institutional centrality. I chose Aswan and Damanohur as a first attempt to trace a topography of the revolution memory in Egypt. The criteria through which interlocutors were selected are: participation in the demonstrations in 2011, age and preferably involvement in projects of documentation of the revolution; I preferred to study the memories of the generation who witnessed the revolution in its formative age, between 20 and 35 years old. Because of the fact that the initial question aimed to investigate women's commitment to memory as a political project, and because of the limited time, I decided to interview only women. However, as it became clearer during the research, an exhaustive study about memory required me to enlarge the scope much beyond these criteria. However, one important encounter was that with Baadr El Benderi, journalist and signatory member of the June 2013 Road Map. Interviews were composed of 20 questions. In the first phase the same set of questions was the same for each interlocutor. During the processes I learned to craft new questions according to the interlocutor and the flowing of conversation, while relying less on the written scheme. The interview duration was about one hour. Interlocutors in Aswan and Damanhour were interviewed one time. Living in Cairo, it was possible to organize a second part of the interview which happened with most of the thirteen interlocutors.

In Aswan I mainly relied on the members of Ganobiyya Horra but also on a

member of the Dustur Party, the chief editor of the local television channel and a founding member of the Markaz al-ganubi li-l -huquq (Southern Center for Rights). I first met Amany Maamon and Ayat Othman in Gharb al-Sahel. Ayat then introduced me to the other members of the Free Southern Group. I visited the head quarter of the association twice and carried out two individual interviews and one discussion group. I was also introduced to Abd El Rahim El Qinawi Awdallah, who initiated a project of oral memory of the revolution in Aswan for the Southern Center.

In Damanhour I met two members of the Nile's Daughter. Asma Dabees, founding member of the organization and Negma, member and lawyer of the association who is working for the campaign, No to Military Trial for Civilians.

In Cairo, the interviews covered a large range: Hala Kamal and Diana Abd El Fattah from the Woman and Memory Forum, the two who are involved in an oral memory project run by the WMF Fatma Mansour and Reem Bashery from Nazra for Feminists Studies, the historian Alia Mosallam, two AUC faculties and a previous member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Safaa Abdun who was working as journalist for the Daily Egypt at the time. Interviews also include two graduate students and colleagues, two photographers from the independent newspaper El Shuruq, Randa Shaat and Heba Khalifa, who published a photo collection taken between 2011-2012, a researcher currently working on the "Coptic issue" since 2011, a makeup artist and a company manager who took part in demonstrations. With the exclusion of two, all the interlocutors hold the Egyptian nationality and all coming from the middle income strata of the society.

Although in Cairo most of the interviewees knew each other, in Aswan and Damanhour personal relationships were more tight given the smaller context.

The materials utilized include documentaries, newspaper articles, e-zine articles, social media materials, three thesis, digital and printed materials from four NGOs, two in Cairo, one in Aswan, and one in Damanhour, a collection of photography, history textbooks.

Interviews were conducted in English and Arabic.

Chapter Two:

'One, No One, One Hundred Thousand' Remembering Tahrir

Vitangelo discovers by way of completely irrelevant question that his wife poses to him that everyone he knows, everyone he has ever met, has constructed a Vitangelo persona in their own imagination and that none of these personas corresponds to the imagine of Vitangelo that he himself has constructed and believes himself to be. As a result, the first ironic "awareness" of Vitangelo consists in the knowledge of which he definitely is not; the preliminary operation must therefore consist in the spiteful destruction of all these fictitious masks (review of the "One, no One, One Thousand" by L.Pirandello)

Introduction

Pirandello's novel *One, No One, One Hundred Thousand* evokes an awareness about the complexity of a social subject in the modern and the necessity to critically re-think it, avoiding the collapse of complexity of the real into ready-made categories. As I have argued in chapter one, the term 'revolution' entails an imagination of social change that is built upon a nomenclature historically determined. In the light of activists discourses about 'revolution,' this chapter gives critical attention to the influence that this nomenclature has on the imagination of social change in Egypt.

Building on Thomas Nail's critique of two conceptual tools - representational politics and universal history - this chapter traces ways in which Cairo activists question and re-work the categories of 'peoplehood' (Mosallam 2012), 'women' and 'the path.' The discussion then shifts to an analysis of conversations highlighting activists' memories in relation to their lives and the world they live in. Activist imaginations about their 'intimate revolution' (ibid) is mediated through the articulation of ordinary desires much more than through discourses about 'revolution'.

During the fieldwork in Cairo I had the chance to meet many people whose stories I framed into my imagination of revolution. Although my political imagination had already been de-constructed from what I had learned in Damascus in

2011, I kept on asking questions such as "who was organizing protests?" "were you affiliated to some particular organization, group?" and "in your view, is the revolution still ongoing?." I was concerned about individuating a well-recognizable body, such as a party or a vanguard, strong enough to push social change forward. My second concern was that of contextualizing the eighteen days historically as if historical credentials would have conferred more credibility to the movement. However, listening to the narration of the event by activists made it clear that in remembering the eighteen days there was the habit to refer to certain categories of understanding in order to make sense of who was there and what demands were advanced. The analysis reveals a complex process coming to the surface whereby the revolutionary subject is imagined through an idealized idea of 'peoplehood,' yet the demands of this revolutionary subject remain somehow unclear and not simply re-joinable to the language of reform and the state (Bayat 2011). Moreover, the central concern of remembering women's participation and contribution to the revolution highlights the question of gendered representational politics (Fraser 1995; Brown 1993) and the reiteration of the category 'woman' that might strategically boost immediate demands of redistribution and recognition but also dangerously relies on identity politics. Four years after the event, the inscription of the eighteen days within a teleological conceptualization of time is problematic though still a core feature of many narratives. Consequently activists tend to alternate between an emphasis on the "futurity" of the revolution (Brown 2002) and articulating a language engraved in ideas of progress, modernization with an emphasis on past lineages of 'revolutions.' Tracing the historical lineage of the uprising by connecting it to past events such as the 1881 'Orabi and 1919 Sa'ad Zaghloul revolutions and the 2006 Mahalla events and successively framing the 25th January on an imaginary line of "ongoing revolutions"⁴ obscures what my interlocutors imagine and imagined about the eighteen days. In their ironic response to the question "ongoing revolution" throughout my research women activists revealed if anything a critical re-evaluation of the linearity of 'the path.'

⁴the term *al-thawra al-mostamirra* (ongoing revolution) was coined and particularly used in the activists vocabulary after the eighteen days in 2011 to assert the continuation of the social mobilization after the ousting of Mubarak

The Image of the 'Path:' Emerging Impressions about the 'Ongoing Revolution'

Critically re-thinking history as a path that finds its roots in the past and proceeds toward the future characterizes the narratives of activists who participated in the complex process commonly referred as 'revolution'. The idea of Egyptians walking through a path, intertwined by 'revolutions' is a dominant trope in nationalist discourses (Abdel Latif 2010; Mosallam 2012). The image of Egyptians following 'the path' has been variously-elaborated and enhanced in popular culture given the understanding of national history proposed in school textbooks (Sasnal 2014) and in visions of development promoted by human rights organizations. How do activists think about the eighteen days in relation to the image of 'the path'? My first impressions in conversations was that this image remained predominant, especially when activists expressed their hope that the taking over of the army in 2013 was only a moment of impasse for the revolution as were the affirmations that the Egyptian people had become more aware of their rights and they would rise up again in the near future if denied these rights. I began my interviews through recommendations of friends. The first person I interviewed was Yara, an accounting manager in a upscale neighborhood in Nasr City. While sipping coffee in her office she began with the 1919 Orabi uprising and its continuation embodied in the eighteen days (to which she refers as January revolution), excluding the 30th of June 2013 protests from her imaginary 'path, ' "The Orabi Pasha revolution and January revolution were real revolutions. But the 30th of June was just labeled a revolution when it was actually a military coup. (Personal interview 09/02/2015). The ideal 'path', according to Yara, is characterized by what she perceived as 'ideal' events which she calls revolutions, as opposed to those events that are not 'real' revolutions.

The image of 'the path' occurred throughout my fieldwork. Basma, a professor at Aswan University and a member of the NGO Ganobiyya Horra (Free South) , upon being asked if the revolution is still ongoing, began by referring to certain historical processes and excluding others. While Yara excluded the 30th June protests and the taking over by SCAF in 2011, Basma decided to expel the 23rd July

1952 revolution privileging those events that in her opinion had a significant popular engagement, “You see, there was the ‘Orabi revolution and then 1919 revolution then for me the July 1952 revolution is not a revolution but then the bread intifada during the 1970’s which opened the way for the January revolution 2011 (personal interview 21/03/2015, Aswan).

Activists and sympathizers of the 25th January uprising have variously re-elaborated the image of the 'path'. At a conference I attended in Cairo in 2012 many paper titles featured the phrase “the ongoing Egyptian revolution,” a phrase at the time also widely used in social media and pamphlets. Conference discussions focused on the 2008 Maḥalla strikes as having had a pivotal role in determining the 2011 uprising. Similar to Yara and Basma’s responses to my interview questions, in 2012 the debates focused on the importance of tracing a historical genealogy of revolutions in Egyptian modern history. This re-elaboration of the image of the 'path' gained substantial consensus in activists circles as well as among historians of Egypt (Duboc 2013; Fahmy 2015). Likewise, in response to my question why it was important to document popular memory of the 18 days, Farah, a member of the Revolutionary Socialists observed, “look at the bread intifada in 1977, for me memory and history are not something that occurred in the far past, for me it is still present, it is part of my daily life (Personal interview 05/02 2015).

In interviews the responses to my question “is the revolution still ongoing?” was by an large met with people smiling in dismay if not laughing outright. I was not sure about how to interpret the smile except as an expression of disillusionment towards this narrative of futurity which has never delivered its promise, or as an ironic attribution of blame for having been too naive (a statement that I heard many time). Or maybe in the words of Marx is it the tragicomic victories of the revolution that lies behind that grimace. The implicit questioning of the ongoing revolution emerged therefore as a point of contention in the political imaginations of activists in the present they inhabit. The smile points to the necessity of re-thinking the gap between the articulations of the 'path' and the work that the memory of the eighteen days does. (cf Shahat (2015)

The Revolutionary Subject and his/her Demands: *Peoplehood* and Ordinary Desires

The desire of representing an idealized revolutionary subject according to particular categories (national and linguistic belonging, class, gender) has been the subject of several studies about the history of social movements in Egypt (Benin 1981; Cole 1999; Mosallam 2012; Khorshid 2014; Kandil 2014; Ziyad 2014; Mostafa 2015). In this section I describe how activists trace the contours of this idealized figure through the imagination of *peoplehood* and how they themselves characterize their lives in the light of the eighteen days. During my conversations with Yara she describes her emotional state during her time in Tahrir, “everybody was in the street, millions of persons genuinely concerned about you, you can see veiled women besides women smoking cigarettes. The amount of goodness in the people, there was of sense of goodness and acceptance and care.” (Personal interview, 09/02/ 2015) The idealization of Tahrir as utopian space with no gender, class and religious discriminations, where all social asymmetries melt into the name of 'the Egyptian people is also captured in the mémoires of Prince (2012) and El-Kosam (n.d.).

A similar characterization of the revolutionary subject based on an idealization of *peoplehood* gets substantiated in a passage of Amal Ramses documentary "The Trace of the Butterfly." The documentary features the story of Mary Daniel, the sister of one of the martyrs of the Maspiro Massacre in October 2011. The documentary focuses on the changes in Mary's life as a result of the traumatic loss of her brother and the unleashing of the events since 2011. The narrative emphasizes that the memory of her brother brought her to take action through participation in demonstrations, extending her social relations beyond the narrow circle of the Christian community, and to leave her unhappy marriage. In the film montage, the story telling of Mary intertwines with that of her brother's friends and activists. I was struck by the testimony of Tarek Tayeb, dubbed “Tarek Bearer of the flag bearer” for he used to carry Mina Daniel's flag during demonstrations. While remembering Mina, Tarek explains that before the revolution he did associate with Christians and only after getting to know Mina in demonstrations he changed his

mind. Tarek connects with Mina through the recognition that as they are both Egyptians and they had been dreaming for a better future for their homeland.

Mina's wishes were that Egypt would be nice, no poor people, no street children, no oppression, while religion remains for God and the country for the people. He longed for freedom in Egypt, where everyone can express himself freely, and anyone with a different opinion is not alienated, excluded, slain, killed or becomes a victim of fabricated lawsuits. Mina's wishes was that Egypt would be an ideal country, an example for others. Just as we say 'as free as America' or 'as free as Europe' it would be said 'as free as Egypt (The Trace of the Butterfly, 2014, Vimeo min 48:22)

The subjectification of the people in Tahrir square as an indissoluble part of the Egyptian people, the dreaming gaze in the eyes of activists remembering 'being a people' in Tahrir (ibid) constructs an idealized revolutionary subject. Given the emphasis on *peoplehood* in the mémoires, the documentary and the first set of interviews, I attempted to pose interview questions that allowed me to unpack the category. National belonging, for example, emerged as a cause of uneasiness for non-Egyptian activists. Fatma, editor of the first ever satirical feminist magazine in Arabic *al-Shakmaghia* works as a women rights defender in Nazra and holds Yemeni citizenship. She recalls that she was initially keen to stay in Tahrir because she felt she had to be there at that particular moment. She narrates an episode in which she went to the square in order to deliver medical supplies to the field hospital and felt she was not welcomed because she is not Egyptian. After this episode she decided to avoid going again. To get a better sense of social dynamics one of my early interview questions was "were you affiliated to any particular organization?" The responses I received were always the same "'no, I was there on an individual basis.'" As my research unfolded I came to understand that this was not the right question and realized that I was conflating representational politics with organizational structures. Processes of subjectification and *peoplehood* remain in need of further analysis, the assumption of the existence of a unitary revolutionary subject, of a representational entity, implies that this subject makes specific claims and demands. Yet, what were the ideal demands of the idealized subject?

Asef Bayat's framing of 25th January stresses on the centrality of an organized revolutionary movement capable of making it to the state (2011; 2013).

According to Bayat an organized, recognizable body politics is the only force capable of capturing the state and replace it. The lack of an “administrative authority” therefore is seen as a weakness that exposed the Egyptian revolution to counter-revolutionary forces (Jadaliyya 2011). Fragmentary projects, improvisation and loose horizontal networks left the demands for change loosely defined and hence open to appropriation by the counter-revolution (48:2013). Bayat takes for granted the capture of the state as the goal of social movements in Egypt, the potentiality of the Egyptian “refo-lution” being the creation of “a better environment for the consolidation of electoral democracy” (2013:59).

Baadri El-Benderi, an independent journalist and prominent Egyptian activist, was one of the signatory members of the June 2013 Road Map (Khareetat al-Tareeq later renamed Khareetat al-Mustaqbal), drafted after the ousting of president Morsi with the aim of reconciling the various social actors. I met him in front of the Falaki AUC library in downtown Cairo. He warned me that he could barely see my shape due to an accident that occurred on the 28th January 2011 march from Kasr el-Nil bridge to Ghala square after being shot by the police and that left him almost blind. In recounting his memory about the traumatic event, El-Benderi talked about his imagined model of a liberal state, a state that should grant democratic rights of peaceful demonstrators, a state in which the police should act in the service of the citizens and not against them. Were the demands of capturing the state advanced by El Benderi, the Road Map or analyzed by Bayat the only demands of the revolution, and if it was not the capture of the state, what were then the demands of the revolution? As the interviews progressed I reformulated my question: “When you were in the square how did you envision your life to change?” The answers I was given were multiple and, surprisingly, not related to the logic of representational democracy.

Four woman that I posed this question to — Yara, an accountant, Reham, a theatre performer and researcher originally from Minya, Heba, a photographer for one of Egypt’s privately owned daily newspapers, and Mai, a sales representative — reflected as follows:

everybody had a little revolution inside. When it happened people thought that it was not possible to change. For me the revolution was the beginning of something not the end. I went to India, I worked there and I worked for save the children, I earned a good salary and I could rent a flat by myself. The revolution for me was kind of a parallel, on that time I was working with street children but then I was more going to do advocacy (personal interview 09/02/2015)

I live alone since I was seventeen because my mother died that time so nothing changed for me in that sense. What changed for me is the way I see my work and the development issue. I came to Cairo because I was expecting to change the relationship between state and NGOs. But the right-based approach doesn't work because there is no such a thing called universal rights. NGOs are like painkillers. But changing people's perceptions of the world is possible, art and social media are places where people can change perception of the world. That's why we are running this theater school. (personal interview 08/02/2015)

my project (photo collection on the revolution) is also related to a personal revolution. When I got pregnant I felt that I could not take to the street as before, so the revolution started at home and the revolution happened inside me when I realized that I was not able to live the life I wished to. The revolution was outside and inside. The camera was a means to document and to express that. (personal interview 17/02/2015)

my life has totally changed, I became more optimistic, I thought that there is light at the end of the tunnel, (also remember I do not want to think that it is over, that it is gone) I am more aware of my rights and I feel more powerful because when you are aware of your rights we have power. I think that the revolution is still there, print media ,social media, they refuse to write against military, people insist to have their point of view, and there are still demonstrations going on. (personal interview 10/02/2015)

For all four women the “revolution” translated into a new engagement with life. Yara rebelled against her father's wish to meet the expectations of an Egyptian upper class family and marry a doctor or engineer. She moved to live alone and has started graduate work in the social sciences. Reham developed a critique towards her professional training in the field of human rights and joined the Maspiro Youth Union, an organization of Christians outside the official Coptic Church. Revolution

spurred Heba to bring a new life into the world and she has been using her professional skills of photography to portray the revolution 'at home'. Mai, coming from a wealthy family of Gulf returnees in Nasr City, discovered for the first time the collective dimension of street politics in downtown Cairo, and took the courage to quit her previous corporate job to fulfill her dream and train as a make-up artist. Emancipation from familial pressures, becoming a mother in a moment of deep social and political transformations, breaking the barriers of class seclusion and religious sectarianism, these were the revolutionary acts by Yara, Mai, Heba and Reham.

Similarly, *Arsheef Aswat al-Nisa*, an oral history archive of women's voices, engages the multiplicity of desires and practices of activists since the eighteen days. A project run by the Women and Memory Forum, (WMF) the archive focuses on women's achievements and contributions in institutional and non-institutional politics. Documenting women's memories concerning their struggle against the prejudices that render them as second class citizens, WMF argues, is particularly important in this historical moment in which dominant narratives reduce everything to women's struggles for legal rights. In the introductory video of the project, Hoda El Satta explains how the 25th January revolution marked a cornerstone in the orientation and activities of WMF. Founded in 1995, the WMF's commitment was to document women's participation in the public sphere throughout the 20th century, following the 2011 revolution the documentation project focuses on the possibilities of action and the possibility of change in the Egyptian society.

Conclusion

Along with the limits of envisioning revolution as part of an historical succession rather than blocks of new beginnings, a problem that Marx does not address, is the latent desire for representational structures, be it the state, the party or the vanguard. The lack of organization, the absence of specific demands and the allegedly incapacity of the revolutionaries to make it into the structure of power were among the issues raised in the debates about the uprising. Assef Bayat (2011; 2013), for instance, warns about the "lack of administrative authority of the revolution" (2011) that did not allow the revolution to create a better environment for

the consolidation of electoral democracy. The lack of specific demands, he argues, conjured to the fact that "grand visions and emancipatory utopias have given way to fragmentary projects, improvisation and loose horizontal networks." (2013:48). But what if we think for a moment about this absence of administrative, of a more spontaneous, rhizomatic authority not as a lack but as the outstanding feature of the eighteen days? A political theory that aims to concentrate power into a representative structure does not break free from the old schemes in which power concentration (and capital crystallization) plays the same role of codifying the actions and flows of the multitudes, rendering them homogeneous, centralized, governable. Nails warns against the dangers of representational history of political philosophy.

The encapsulation of the 25th January uprising in the order of historical successions of revolutions in Egypt reproduce the same teleology of history and the hope for a future that will never really happen. By reproducing the dialectical relation between the representational structure (the people, the women, the revolutionaries) and power (the state, the regime, capital) it reproduces a dichotomy that aligns the openness of a revolution to the politics of the familiar (Sabea 2014). Likewise the middle class, the party, the revolutionary, the vanguard, the citizen, the category "women" reiterates a mode of representation that might strategically boost demands for justice but also relies on identity politics.

Activists idealized the figure of the revolutionary subject by remembering their presence in the square with sentences such as "all Egyptians were there" or "as Egyptian you had to go". This idealized figure - the people - however, appeared to be ephemeral, problematic and controversial. Some of the problems of this category of understanding emerge when in remembering the eighteen days, the imagination of Egyptian people is connected with the Egyptian army. Slogans such as 'The people and the army are one hand' epitomized for many the role of the army as an ultimate guarantor of national unity, deploying its tanks in Tahrir square to check on the people with its benevolent eye. Four years later, this narrative is questioned by many activists. In particular, the overwhelming role assumed by the army in the June 2013 Tamarrod protests are remembered by activists as a fracture of the ideal unity of people and army. This fracture is also expressed when there is a painful recognition

by many of the loss of popular support to the revolution which increased a sense of isolation.

The complexity of the role of the nation state in crafting political imaginations requires further investigations. Oral history archives such as *Arsheef El-Nisá a* build a different story of the protagonists of social movements, stories that resonate with the idea of documenting women's life stories. More than that, the methodological approach based on memory and oral history allows us to give continuity to the event into the present. However, I argue for a renewal of the way in which women are positioned vis à vis the state according to the WMF, because at this point it is clear that the nation state is not able nor willing to deliver gender justice. In the same way feminization of labor is not in itself a form of emancipation for women, women participation into 'the public sphere' is not an index of achievement of gender justice. In other words, in the context of the neoliberal state, gender differences are subjected to constant erosion not because the state cares about gender justice but because it aims to extend women's labor time beyond social reproduction. Not all women I interviewed articulated 'revolution' in terms of accessing the public. Social differences influence the possibilities/ desires that women activists formulated during the eighteen days. Heba is a single mother and lives in a rented flat in downtown Cairo. Yara and Mai are the daughters of upper-middle class families in Nasr City. Heba was dreaming about a revolution in which she could afford to buy her own flat, a dream that did not come true. Yara and Mai hoped to pursue their professional careers, and has the resources to do so. Heba's photography collection "From the inside" portrays her experience of the eighteen days from 'the inside' of the domestic space. Being a single mother she could not leave the house and join demonstrations although she wanted to. The impossibility of being active in the public sphere, however, did not prevent her from going through her intimate revolution, formulating new desires, enacting new practices, inhabiting the world differently. Heba's photography grasps moments of resistance in the domestic space, a resistance that unfolded in a deep connection with the uprising in Tahrir.

In conclusion, in my interviews acts of remembering the eighteen days focused less on dreams of capturing the state, but on practices and ordinary desires of the everyday. The continuity of the uprising in the minds of Heba, Reham, Mai and

Yara becomes significant in the way it shapes their present. The eighteen days moment is not an icon to be stored and recorded. It is what they are today and how it has shaped their political imaginations and practices.

Chapter Three:

Other 'Tahrirs': Remembering Outside of Cairo

Demonstrations in Aswan are not real demonstrations, they are only objections. In Cairo if I attend a demonstration I do not go home until I realize what I want. Here in Aswan I demonstrate to say that I am rebelling, there is no direct engagement between the interior minister and the demonstrators. Because here the matter is tribal. In the city, police deals with individuals. If Sara is arrested she only has her parents and her siblings to protect her. If they catch Asma there is a tribe, there are a lot of people and men, there is a tribe coming to stand with her. The Nubians were affiliated with the Wafd party, al-Tagammu party and National party (personal interview, 23/03/2015).

Introduction

Thinking critically about the eighteen days requires a resistance towards the temptation to frame social struggle within familiar schemes of understanding “revolution”. One of these temptations brings the political imagination of many to envision the eighteen days only within the boundaries of the capital city Cairo. This is why I decided to shift the center of the narratives towards two other Egyptians cities namely, Aswan in Upper Egypt and Damanhour, in the Nile Delta. The way in which the political geography of Egypt is structured gives the city of Cairo an overwhelming dominance over the rest of the country. Political centralization in the city of Cairo, as described by the mother of one of my interlocutors, renders the capital as the place in which (seemingly) “all things happen”. The stories of women in the two ordinary small cities, on the contrary, highlights their experiences as evidence of the revolution outside of Cairo (Scott 1991), that “things also happened” elsewhere. In my interviews with the Nile Daughters in Damanhour and *Ganobiyya ḥorra* (Free South) in Aswan memories of January 25 continue to animate political imaginations and life choices.

Talal Asad (2012) argues how the word 'dignity' was used to articulate the discourses of the Egyptian uprising “in the name of” and supposing to represent the whole population. At the same time he notes, most of the residents of the countryside or the urban poor did not take part in demonstrations (273:2012). According to Asad,

the language of dignity epitomized in the slogan 'we have dignity, we are not scared anymore did "not stand for the impoverished masses who remain without dignity - or for the matter, for the many who remain afraid of the political situation for one reason or another.'"(2012:271) If we follow Asad's argument that the "language of dignity" was that of the urban middle class, then what about the people that choose not to participate? An anecdote narrated to me by Randa Shaat, previously a photo editor of the newspaper *Shuruq*, and co-producer of the *Her voice... My Image*, a photographic collection of women and the revolution, is a concrete example of the practice of speaking for others without really knowing what they have to say.

At some point during the eighteen days there were rumors in the square about foreigners being infiltrators and you know my husband Tom is American, in addition to that we had heard gunshots the day before. Especially for this reason my husband decided to remove the climbing plant from the big window which faces the street so it can be kept closed and we would be protected against random bullets. One morning we were still in bed, the house was completely dark, the street silent as all schools and commercial activities kept closed down because of the unrest. Suddenly we heard a voice calling my husband's name "Tom!". We jumped off the bed trying to figure out who was that voice, although the closed window prevented us to look out" The solitary voice was that of a garlic (in Egyptian Arabic *thoom*) vendor inviting potential clients to buy his product. I asked him where was he coming from and he simply replied -from Old Cairo- For him it was just an ordinary working day. (personal interview 02/03/2015)

The story of Randa and the garlic seller was important for me to start re-thinking how the 25th January was experienced and lived differently by the millions of inhabitants of Cairo and Egypt. Those labeled by the revolutionaries as 'the sofa party' were presumed to relate to revolution as a mediatized spectacle, others, like the garlic seller from the Husayn neighborhood sold his wares in a residential neighborhood close to Tahrir square as any other day. The question then becomes to what extent the eighteen days in Tahrir square concealed other possible ways of experiencing (or not experiencing) revolution? Many Damanhour activists came to Tahrir square, only few remained in the small city. Give the distances, few activists travelled to Cairo to Aswan.

Through the “Documenting the revolution in the Sa’id” it was possible to make sense of activists discourses during the uprising and comparing them to those of Tahrir. The project is realized by the Center for rights in the South in collaboration with the Foundation for digital change (Mu’assasa Adaf li-l tagheer al-raqmi). The project aims to document and archive the events of the 25th January revolution, in which the youth and different social groups in the cities of Sohag, Qena, Luxor and Aswan have taken part. The project consists of a series of videos where activists and people of the four governorates narrate their testimonies about the uprising events. All the videos have been archived into a special Youtube section. The technical support and training for the videos releasing was offered by Moisereen, a non-profit media collective in downtown Cairo supporting citizen media since 2011. The project is composed of more than one hundred videos broadcasting street demonstrations, public interventions and individual story-telling which range from January 2011 to June 2013.

Throughout the analysis of the project it became clear that, during the eighteen days in the squares of Aswan the loudly-spoken idioms were really similar to those of Cairo’s Tahrir. In fact videos show people echoing the chants of the capital asking for Mubarak to step down, invoking army solidarity or mourning martyrs. However, what emerged from the stories of women in Aswan and Damanhour was a difference in the way power is represented and subsequently, in the way it resisted, especially in terms of gender violence. As Asma’s initial caption highlights, women who took part in the eighteen days in Aswan and Damanhour individuated in “the tribal issue” rather than the interior ministry and security forces the center of power to be resisted. Emerging is also different discourses of power for which capitalistic processes of social production and reproduction is inscribed in the super-structure of tribe and kinship. Asma Shater is an IT worker who lives in a small village, one hour driving from Aswan. She was introduced to me by Ayat Othman, who works as a nurse in Aswan Hospital and is the founding member of Ganobiyya Horra who came to know her during the demonstrations in 2011. Also Wafaa Ashri Abd Al-Qawi, member of an affluent Aswani family and candidate for the parliamentary elections with the Dustur Party, was introduced to me by Ayat. Talking with Wafaa was very important

to formulate the question: against whom did people rebel outside of Cairo? While sitting in a cafe along the city's corniche she explained

And for what it concerns the tribe, it was also a revolution against the tribes, because tribes are colluded with the regime for land distributions and other benefits. (personal interview 21/03/2015)

What emerges from Wafaa's words is that capital circulation works and it is structured around relations between kinship-connected groups (which she names tribes) and the Egyptian state. The relation she makes between land distributions and tribes' member collusion with the regime makes clear this relation. Wafaa went on explaining that every tribe is assigned a slice of the cake, for instance the Halaliyya tribe controls the drug market, the Nubian tribe controls the agri-business and so on. While tribes and the ministry of interior were articulated as different and opposing entities in Asma's words they are actually two sides of the same state apparatus.

Historical representation of power (and resistance) within the tribal and kinship paradigm is a trope in the narratives of revolution that has to undergo a critical analysis. The trope of gender violence assumes different features from Cairo, because here revolution was not much remembered as resistance to the state as much as resistance to kinship power. Consequently, gender violence is not memorialized in relation with police violence, like in the Cabinet clashes or the virginity test, but rather in terms of struggle against the familial and community violence on women.

During my stay in Damanhour and Aswan most of the women I met were affiliated with two non-governmental organizations - the Nile's Daughter and Ganobiyya Horra. In both cases, founding members met during the public demonstrations and decided, in 2012, to rent a space for discussion, writing and public initiative about gender violence in private and public spheres, women health education, issues faced by women refugees in their socio-political context (the Delta and in the Sa' id). Might the reader know that both organizations are supported by Nazra for Feminist studies, a left-oriented NGO based in Cairo, which has recently changed its legal status into "company" in order to avoid the effects of recent restrictive legislations by el-Sisi government (MadaMasr 18 March and 15th April 2015).

Following Asad's inspirational reflection about "what lies outside the space" this chapter looks at memories of women who took part in the uprisings outside the big city and does it in two directions. The first analyzes the construction of revolution in Tahrir square (Arendt in Butler 2011) vis à vis the space of objection to kinship and tribal representation of power in Clock and Station squares. The discussion also aims to make an analogy with the work of Nile's Daughter and Free Southern about gender representation through the trope of violence as discussed in the context of Cairo. The second direction goes to the potential of living memory and how particular stories of the uprising have been shaping these women's present.

Space and Memory

Tahrir is a place of potent political history. Moreover, the spatial features of the square, its extended surface is ideal to welcome the multitudes which populate Cairo. The memory-image of Tahrir (Burton 2008) has been central in the way the revolution is represented, remembered and lived for women in Aswan, Damanohur, in my own experience as Cairo dweller, in the way the global occupy movement characterized political struggle and in the modern conceptualization of the urban. This is why I wish to relate memory to the description of the midan.

In the historical construction of classical *polis*, the *agorà* is a place where citizens appear to one another and make claims. Modernity has adopted the construction of the square as space where politics becomes visible. Jurgen Habermas' famous conceptualization of public space, the square provides the place in which citizens gather and perform the act of talking about the main issues of their times. The centrality of the square is so vital for the historical representation of politics to the extent that it does not only provide the material space for action but is also part of the theory that proposes action (Butler 2011). In this sense, Tahrir has been the model to which activists referred during the eighteen days in other cities of Egypt.

Hazem Ziada (2015) traces a political history of the square emphasizing its symbolic value as elected space of appearance in the uprising. The first street action dates back to February 1946 when the square's name was still Isma'iliyya and

it used to host British army barracks on its western side. On that occasion protests were staged against the British occupation. Along with Isma'iliyya other squares had a special significance during the British occupation: Al-Azhar courtyard and El-Opera square and Abedeen square and Bab El-Hadid (later Ramses) square in the inter-war period and after world war two. Also Bayt El-Omma, the house of Sa' ad Zaghoul assumed a particular importance as point of protest gathering during the post-1919 anti-British struggle and until 1952. In 1947, after the British withdrawal in the Suez Canal area, army barracks in Isma'iliyya square was enlarged and acquired its current denomination Liberation square (Tahrir meaning liberation). During Nasser rule the square was never used to address the audience while most of the presidential speeches took place in Gomhoriyya (Abedeen) square. This was because Tahrir "does not offer an obvious rostrum from which to address cheering crowds. The square does not lend itself easily to the leader-masses rally format of gathering" (Jadaliyya 2015:3). After 1967 Nakba, Tahrir became a major point of convergence for organized and spontaneous demonstrations, to name a few, the 1977 bread riots, the anti-war Iraq invasion demos in 2003

The square also hosts major institutional centers. On the east side, the ministry of interior in Shaikh el-Rihan street, the parliament buildings in Qasr el-Aini street, the American and British embassies in Garden city and the previous NDP Mubarak's national democratic party headquarters (and previously Arab Socialist Union) on the northwestern part of the square. Other symbolic buildings are located in the perimeter of the square such as the monumental all-encompassing administrative building Mugamma' a, the Egyptian museum, the Egyptian radio and television building (Maspiro building). The square also converges millions of Cairenes in their everyday commuting and the blockage of it during demonstrations had significant effect on the city's traffic.

In November 2011 and February 2012 seven walls were built surrounding the main points of access to the east part of the square and to the ministry of interior and this was the square aspect I observed when I first arrived in Cairo in August 2013.

FIGURE 1: ASR AL-AINI WALL (PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR)



This photo of the Asr Al-Aini wall was taken few months after I moved to Cairo. The wall was part of the residents' and my every day dwelling. Because its

presence made it more difficult to reach Tahrir, we had to find alternative ways to circumvent it. Actually the only way to cross it was through a grocery shop's corridor which had been agglomerated into the wall structure itself. One day a graffiti reading "Rafah crossing" appeared beside that corridor. Amazing sense of humor I must say!

My own memory of the Asr Al-Aini wall and, before that, the Al-Jazeera broadcast images of the camel battle on the 2nd of February and Omar Suleyman's speech on the 11th of February are my own more vivid memory-images of the revolution in 2011.

In November of the same year a memorial monument for the martyrs of the 25th January was erected in the roundabout which faces Mohammed Mahmud street to commemorate the revolution martyrs. Few could attend the ceremony as it was unusually held very early in the morning and I did not notice the memorial despite my daily crossing of the square. The memorial was almost suddenly characterized by activists with red spot symbolizing blood of the martyrs in a gesture of protest (Aswat Al-Masriyya 4th December 2013) For activists and relatives of the victims the monumental memorial was a way to close "the case". On the contrary, they wanted the responsible to be accountable for the deaths in front of the law for the murders committed during the uprising.

In conclusion, the importance of the square as space of politics and commemoration has been part of the modern project globally and in the context of Egyptian modernity as the description of the history and spatial features of Tahrir wish to highlight. Similarly, in my memories and everyday dwelling of the city Tahrir is the place whose geography of struggle shapes my memories of the uprising and emotions more.

In moving outside this space of dwelling the question becomes how Cairo's centralization in general, and the "Tahrir experience" during the eighteen days talk to the memories of people in other Egyptian cities? For instance, the two cities have their own squares, Clock square in Damanhour and Station square in Aswan and demonstrations were held in these squares. The archival project shows that the hegemonic language of people during the protests was very similar to that of Cairo. The language articulated in memories partially use Cairo as a scale of comparison to describe what happened in perceived-marginal contexts, as I will

discuss later. For instance, a fact happened to a colleague during her fieldwork sojourn in Gharb El-Sahel, a Nubian village situated on the west bank of the Nile. One day, walking through the quite, semi-empty alleys of the village she stumbled across a graffiti on the wall of a house reading “midan al-Tahrir”. Amused and surprised she took out her camera and was about to take a picture of that familiar message on a far-away place when a woman addressed her saying "this is our midan al-Tahrir, we do not have revolutionary demonstrations here, we just sit and talk"

FIGURE 2: MIDAN TAHRIR IN GHARB EL-SAHEL, ASWAN (COURTESY OF M. MURAD)



Here there are two things that jump to the eyes. The first resonates with Asma's description Cairo "demonstration" as opposed to Aswan's "acts of objections". In the words of Gharb al-sahel woman the characterization of Cairo as space of violent demonstration vis à vis "the here" where people talk is complex and here will be enough to note the habit of comparing memories of Asma and the Shaeli woman to the image they created of Cairo.

Given that Cairo is in the mainstream imagination the place "where everything happened" there was a sensibility by Ganobiyya Horra and the Nile's Daughters to highlight that actually "things also happened" in small cities. The argument is always structured through a comparison between the capital and the context they live in. For example Asma Dabees, graduated in Islamic studies in the Azhar University and unemployed at the time of our encounter, says she did not participate in demonstrations in Damanhour. She says the only girls in Clock Square were Muslim sisters. Secretly sneaking out of her parent's house with the excuse of work, she kept watching the square by chanting and encouraging the people from afar. In Damanohur, she adds, middle class women cannot move out of their family house and rent a flat by their own nor share it with other girls. Similarly, she says, there were very few women allowed to attend demonstrations and most of them were Muslim Sisters. So compared to Cairo, where she imagined a gender balanced presence in the demonstrations, Damanhour is a minor space of appearance for women. Still she highlights her act of resistance through the act of witnessing demonstrations from afar. Ayat explains that even if there were demonstrations in Aswan people and the media said that there were not "because Aswan is far away town (from Cairo) and in the Sa' id and people there cannot take to the streets and do something." but she kept saying "people in Aswan accepted that there can be women in the streets and they were listening to us" (discussion group 21/03/2015). Wafa Ashri Abd al-Qawi gave a detailed description of the sit-in in Aswan on the 25th January. A total of twenty people and six police vans were present in the square, along with photographer surrounding the scene and taking pictures. Amany Maamon, co-founder with Ayat of the group Ganobiyya Horra comments that people in Cairo were calling for one million on the 30th of January and people in other cities of Egypt also organized demonstrations. However she specifies in a mocking tone that

in Aswan people were calling for one hundred at most. On the 28th of January, Ayat told me there were clashes and teargas in Station square. May, another member of the group, confirms that that day she saw people in the streets demonstrating and teargas was shot by the security forces.

The desire to contextualize the revolution in Aswan and Damanhour, of providing detailed descriptions and names of the participant is a means through which the authenticity of the revolution outside Cairo is asserted, as Wafaa's detailed description shows. Even if in Aswan and Damanhour people were only calling for one hundred and not for one million as in Cairo, people of the Sa'id and the Delta made it to the streets and "did something" as Ayat points out. The act of remembering the eighteen days in these contexts is attached to what the feminist historians Joan Scott calls the evidence of the experience and counterposes an un-narrated story of the revolution outside Cairo to the mainstream Tahrir's eighteen days. The fact of having been witnessing demonstrations, the act of having directly participated and created organization with other women is posed as the proof that "something really happened" also in Aswan and Damanhour.

To the risk of boring the reader I highlight again the first analysis that this section aims to suggest: how the scale of comparison between Cairo and other than Cairo characterize the concern of women narratives, for example in describing the number of participants, the act performed during the protests, the reaction of the civil society to women's presence in the public space. Building from this habit of comparison, women narratives emerge as different re-working of the theme of violence, this too in comparison with Cairo-perceived realities.

Rebelling Against Whom?

It is curious to note that while people chanted against Mubarak women talked about tribes and family. How differently 'revolution' is remembered and how are differently the representation of oppression and resistance deployed in the memories of women in Damanhour and Aswan? Indeed there is a gap between how the uprising is portrayed in the oral history archive *Thawtheeq al-Thawra fi al-Ganoob* and the way in which it is spoken about by the women I met. As Asma Shateer's words point out there is a perception that the eighteen days in Cairo were a

moment of violent confrontation between the state and the people. Opposed to this imagination of Cairo as endangered place of perpetual violence, Aswan's Tahrir was a place where people "just sit and talk". There were many stories of women that were literally evacuated from Cairo by their families because Cairo (and Alexandria) were considered a place of violence. For instance, Reham, which I already introduced in chapter two, moved from Miniya, Upper Egypt, to Cairo before 2011 and used to share a flat with other girls also from Miniya. She compares the different ways in which the events of January 2011 were perceived in her village and in the city. She underlines that fact that her flat mates had to leave Cairo on 25th of January because of family pressure while she decided to stay. Ola Adeel, a lawyer based in Aswan that I met thanks to Ayat connections, was studying at Cairo University in 2011 and was compelled by her family to come back to Aswan. Asma Shateer comes from a small village near Aswan and was working as an IT specialist in Alexandria. After her cousin was arrested in the coastal city she had to make return to the village. Asma Dabees from Damanhour tells a different story whereby on the 28th of January she and her friend traveled to Cairo in order to join the Tahrir sit-in. However, when in Damanhour she was prevented by her family to attend demonstrations in Clock square. What emerges is that in the imagination of people from other cities the uprising in Cairo was a moment of violent confrontation against the interior ministry and the NDP (National Democratic Party, ruling party until Mubarak's ousting on the 11th of February 2011). In contrast with this imagination women build a version of the revolution in the local context as a moment phatic objection against kinship system. Wafaa al-Qawi describes such objection against the attempt to exclude women from the protest by means of discrediting their morality and in turn the morality of their kin

The question at that time was already to exclude women from the demonstrations. Women were not supposed to join the protests. And in the beginning we were only two: me and Ayat and we refused this and of course joined the demonstration. Here in Aswan the Interior ministry does not deal with women the same way they do in Cairo. Here the issue of tribal belonging is important. Because here all what is concerned to women must be regulated by tribes. Whether there's a controversy related to a woman and there is no way someone can bother them directly. You

have to go her family and fix the problem with them. So our presence was keeping demonstrations safe. The worst thing that could happen was that a senior member of our tribe would come and intimate us to leave. In Cairo there were many societies represented. In Aswan there is only one society. There was also this idea that if you come from Cairo you come from outside. It was the first time for men and women to take the streets together. (Personal interview 21/03/2015)

Notably, according to Wafaa's version tribes are those in charge of regulating women moral code while in Cairo there is no such a familial pressure when this is not actually the case. In fact, a close look shows that also in Cairo one of the attempts to exclude women from the demonstration was that of discrediting them morally as the Cabinet clashes and the *sit al-benet* episodes testify. More than that, many women in Cairo referred me that they were prevented to go to Tahrir from their families because that could have discredited their daughter morality in front of kinship members and neighborhood. Mona Prince's memoir also captures the inter-generational conflict between her desire to be in the square and her parents' strong objection to that desire. Hence, Cairo is imagined by people from outside as a space of anonymity when instead there was no difference in the moral stigmatization of women in Cairo and outside it. Still, Wafaa chose to imagine that their resistance against power has been different from that of women in Cairo

Because in the Ittihadiyya protests, the youth were rebelling against the government but here it were the families and tribes that ruled the matter and the interior ministry pushed for that. Also during the 18 days we could not take to the streets in one neighborhood without asking the permission of the local sheikh and they already sent us their people. One shaykh came and told me that the Muslim Brothers wanted to but Nubians told them if you do harm her we will send you out of Aswan because we are Nubians, we speak the same language, we have the same traditions and customs and although one come from the Gezeira another from west Aswan but in the end we are all Nubians. And also what happened to Nagla Bassioumi, because she is alone here, she is from Cairo, and they threatened her.

Also Siham, Ayat's sister and member of Ganobiyya Horra, stresses on the matter of tribes

If a member of your family or your tribe saw you in the street he would told you not to go out, not to share any public gathering and this was one form of torture, or people telling you "you are not a good girl". The idea of patriarchy triumphed and if you sit in the street you were not good. During the 18 days we were filming the actions in the square and there were people wanted to insult us and break all our equipment but we took our stuff and ran away. But violence was limited and also because tribes play an important role, they were scared to harm a girl because of the fact that you are a Nubian girl they fear to hurt you, then every kid can be beaten but not girls. (discussion group 21/03/2015)

For Asma Dabees societal pressure in Damanhour takes the shape of family obligations

Before 2011 I was rebelling to everything and in anger with everybody. The relations with my family were not good. I had a lot of anger inside. Because I was a woman and I couldn't breathe or do anything. In 2011 there I rose against all this all the rage all the hope. I had the hope to work in the streets to attend demonstrations. For example it was forbidden at home to travel or for example they did not want me do found Nile's Daughter. (Personal interview 19/02/2015)

Regardless the nomenclature used to describe power (tribe, family, ministry of interior, NDP) the structural economic aspect is the common denominator to all the three contexts. For Wafaa tribes are colluded with the regime for the issue of land distribution and benefits. For Asma finding a job in Damanhour is very difficult as employers tend to privilege male workers. It is not a case then that the re-working of the gender violence trope focuses on the theme of domestic and familial violence while leaving aside the theme of sexual harassment so central in Cairo's activists and academic discourses of women in the revolution. Kinship system or "the tribe" is the superstructure that interposes itself between labor and capital.

Tropes of Gender Violence in Aswan and Damanhour: Two Textual Examples

Most of the women I met in Aswan differently gravitate around Ganobiyya Horra, a young NGO founded in 2012. Even those who do not belong to the group

are in contact with each other through memories of a common standing in the 2011 uprising. The group's office is situated in the vicinity of the Nile corniche, right beside the bazars area. Most of the group associated are somehow connected through relations of kinship. For example Ayat is Siham's sister, May is Amany's cousin and Nahla is Negma's sister. Group members regularly meet to discuss various topics. The group's political orientation reflects that of Nazra for Feminist Studies in Cairo to whom they were assisted for the publication of a volume in 2014 entitled *Before they said she is only a Little Girl*. Yet the elaboration of gender violence focuses on the "tribal matter". In fact, both the introduction and the conclusion stress the attention on the social construction of the "Southern society" (2014:21). According to this principle, violence is depicted a cultural problem and more specifically coming from the social construction of the 'Southern society'. This society is described a patriarchal and tribal where the father, the brother and the husband exercise an oppressive power upon female figures of the household. The group proposes to be a platform of hope and safeness for those women who want to share their problems, dreams and rights.

Oral testimonies collected in the volume are divided by chapter as follows: chapter one "Not a big deal...it is for my kids", chapter two "The school and the blouse", chapter three "The flat from the spouse's money", chapter four "Myself in freedom" and chapter five "Hey lady look at that". The first story is that of Um Alaa, 49 years old. She attended one year in school and then she had to leave because of her husband and her three children. Her husband, she narrates, used to bring women home for extra-marital relations, taking drugs and using violence against her. Nonetheless, Um Alaa kept silent for the sake of her children, as she put it. After some time she finally convinced him to marry a second wife but the thing was not solved because he came across with the idea of marrying the third wife as well. His only interest was about dating girls and dressing himself up. Fighting between him and the kids followed as he was not providing economically for them till the point they decided to move to their grandparents' house. After discovering that the children left he beat her brutally on a daily basis, inside the household and outside in the streets, in front of guests once he hit her with a glass and she fainted. "None of our neighbors took stakes in the fights" she explains. Um'Ala'a finally

decided to file a case against him which she won because her brother is a “personality” in the army and she decided to leave him. Despite repeated violence Um Alaa states that she was able to take her rights and that of her children.

In the story of Um Alaa the category “woman” is rendered visible through first, the act of denouncing violence and second, the right to be not discriminated against in front of the law. However, the assumption that 'Southern society' differs from others because of tribes does not really differ from the feminist institutional approach aiming to fight cultural and legal discrimination. I am not arguing that a culture of rights is irrelevant. On the opposite, the achievements of such culture should be an objective ever present in the short run strategic practices of resistance. On the other hand, by totally excluding from the analysis the relation between a culture of rights and the mode of production of the 'Southern society' does not envision the possibility of breaking the vicious circle of violence enacted by capital war machine.

Capital circulation in the rural areas of Egypt is highly determined by developmental policies. A concrete example of the policies is the geographical targeting of poverty in rural Upper Egypt project which started during the Mubarak government in 2007 and will end in 2014 (El Nour 2012). The theoretical framework of the project was provided by the World Bank and the Egyptian Ministry of Development while its design and implementation by a group of state functionaries, the MGSD (Ministerial Group for Social Development). Municipal authorities, which were also members of the parliament or the NDP exercised a great deal of influence in determining the selected areas for the geographical targeting of poverty. From local authorities in fact, greatly depend the inclusion or exclusion of a village from the programme.

In the light of this study case Wafaa's words "tribes collusion with the regime for land distribution and other benefits" then roughly translates into "local authorities' collusion with the MGSD functionaries for having their electoral constituencies benefitted by the geographical targeting of the poverty project." It is not a case that the WB has previously individuated all the poorest village in Upper Egypt, the MGSD included two out of five governorates for "political reasons" (World Bank 2007 cited in El Nour 2012)

The second textual example taken into consideration is that of the Nile's Daughter Movement. Nile's Daughter is in an independent organization which saw the light in 2012 and partially founded by the Egyptian Institute for democracy whose commitment is to contrast violence and discrimination against women in Damanhour, the capital of Bahayra governorate, in the Nile delta. In the document given to me by one of its founding members it is stated that the organization is formed by women who refuse oppression and violence, a violence which is due to the traditions and customs of their society. Nile's Daughter's main objectives are to change the legislation and the culture that are responsible for the discrimination and violence against women, to empower women so as they can participate in politics as well as foster community building capacities of women in the Delta. The document structure summarizes a series of initiatives staged by Nile's Daughter since its foundation to raise awareness on gender-related problems in the region of Bahayra. The document mainly shows pictures of the initiatives without discussing its contents. The first section shows pictures of the first workshop entitled "sexual harassment, its forms and how to fight it"; the following section is about the second workshop "forms of violence against women in the Arab countries (Egypt, Yemen and Jordan)"; the third section is devoted to a workshop entitled "they were making history" about some prominent Egyptian feminists and a screening of films about their lives. The last three sections are devoted to an initiative called "how to protect our children from sexual harassment" and "the pretty is still young" about child marriage and lastly a sit-in for a victim of sexual harassment, a woman that was harassed then run over by a car in Tanta, a city in the Delta. The Nile's Daughter Movement is now working on a project about Bahayra women memory of the revolution. The project, *Hikayat al-Makhnuqat* (Suffocated Tales) and it is divided in two parts; the first including a story telling and the difficulties women had to face because of their presence in the demonstrations and how this has changed their political views; the second pertaining stories of violence women suffer from in the everyday life in the Delta such as sexual violence and child marriage. The group is currently working on a document entitled "*Suffocated Tales*" which focuses on violence against women during the revolution as well as in the area of the Delta.

Niqabis and Baltagis - Living Memory at Work

Theorizing gender violence within a critique of “traditions and customs” of the 'Delta society' without connecting them to global dynamics of capital reproduces a trope of marginal areas as “traditional” as opposed to “modern”. In the final instance this analysis enforces the same old developmentalist imagination of social change whose arrival point is unable to push beyond a decrepit, agonizing model of representational democracy. Despite the obvious limits in the culture of rights approach, it is clear that both Ganobiyya Horra and Nile’s Daughter have also meant a moment of political transformation in the context of Aswan and Damanhour. In order to grasp what the 25th of January has been sedimenting in terms of political imagination and praxis I again refer to the memories of women inhabiting the two cities.

But the revolution is not present in our society but is ongoing within us, revolution is also the fight at home to travel in Egypt and outside Egypt, and also if was not for the revolution I would have still married and settled down with kids. And I am satisfied about it. But I know what I am doing and nobody is pushing me in doing so.” (Personal interview 21/03/2015)

I used to wear niqab and when I took the street to protest people thought I was a Muslim Sister. So after Morsi was elected I decided to take off the Niqab. It happened on the 17th of March when me and my friend Nagla were attending a demo for the Constitution referendum. Three men wearing ghallabeyya (associated to working class Egyptian outfit) from el-Gamaat el-Islamiyya (an Islamist group) were standing next to us and I approached them to give them a flyer and they refused to talk to me. They did look at me and said - you cannot stop here - no I can do it - I replied - you are wearing the niqab and you spread fitna into Islam, shame on you - okay so if the niqab I am taking it off, I will show my skin so I can say what I think with all my freedom - They turned their back and went away.

Nagla, journalist at *Tiba*, the local channel in Aswan, narrates the story of her encounter with Moataz, a baltagi recruited by the city major to harm her but revealed instead to be a precious ally and a friend up until the present. “I met him because I asked him to hang down a banner” Nagla says he replied "how much to do you pay?"

Nagla told me that at first she thought he wanted money from her “but instead he wanted to warn me that somebody wanted to harm me”

In 2007 I was working with the Salafists and there was this idea that the country was not marching at the right "Islamist" path. After the 25th of January I found out that these people were crazy. I started going to demonstrations but only once in a while. But after the violence in Cairo it was necessary to demonstrate on a daily basis, continuously. (Discussion group, 21/03/2015)

In 2011 there I rose against all this all the rage all the hope. I had the hope to work in the streets to attend demonstrations. For example it was forbidden at home to travel or for example they did not want me to found Bent al-Nil. Now every dream I had, 60% of the dreams I had came true, I traveled, I took the streets and I attended demonstrations. (Personal interview 19/02/2015)

For Wafaa, it has been about taking off the *niqab*, for Nahla quitting her militancy in an Islamist party, for Nagla breaking the classist barrier between her and the *baltagi* Moataz. For Ayat and Asma the possibility to travel. All these stories extend the “past” of the revolution into the everyday.

As Asma points out, the 25th January was the motor of things to happen and she, along with other men and women, founded Nile’s Daughter in Damanhour. Similarly, the idea of creating the *Ganobiyya Horra* also saw the light during the encounters in Station square demos.

creating *Ganobiyya Horra* was something that we decided to do. It is something done by us so you put your thoughts your culture it is different and it is just yours. Before that I was unable to deal with people from different walks of life. Now I learned to see the two sides of the story, to analyze before taking stake, to accept otherness. We have to live in revolution to constantly find ourselves, to build a picture of ourselves and our culture (Discussion group, 21/03/2015)

as Nagma said I also worked for other organizations but they were organized from above. But here whatever we write or produce it is collective. Even if we embark on a project or research and we diverge in views we learn from that. And also we work among friends and this is nice. (Discussion group, 21/03/2015)

Conclusion

Providing a description of Tahrir Square as potent space of politics and the continuation of Tahrir as memory-image in the narratives of people outside Cairo was the starting point to grasp the phenomenon of centralization in the context of remembering the 25th of January 2011 uprising. Archival projects and story telling in Aswan and Damanhour confirmed the hegemonic role of Tahrir in the articulation of social struggle because they partially reproduce the language of activists in Cairo. On the other hand, memories of the people also propose a different conceptualization of power, which they imagine to reside in kinship and they describe in terms of tribes and family. Consequently, resistance to power is imagined to be a matter of negotiation, of talk as opposed to the capital where people kept themselves busy with violent demonstrations against the ministry of interior.

Political imaginations of Aswan and Damanhour, I argue, are not a mechanic re-propositions of the revolution tropes in Cairo. In the “periphery” I was not able to trace past historical representation of what it meant being “revolutionary” in the same way I did with the context of Cairo. First, because representative entities such as the tribe prevailed over that of *peoplehood*, Egyptians, citizens; second, because both in Aswan and Damanhour activists when recalled historical representation of revolution in Egypt gave emphasis to the territorial representation of the struggle, in the sense of giving a specificity to it as related to the injustices of 'the Southern' or 'the Delta' society while state representation remained in the shadow.

What emerged instead as dominant mode of representing society is that of tradition. Structures such as tribes and kinship which is also part of the idea of “revolution” that this study wishes to critique. Is it so because by assuming that there are traditional societies and modern societies, activists reify the same teleological, developmentalist conceptualization of time.

In the works of the Nile’s Daughter and Ganobiyya Horra, the theme of gender violence partially evoke that of anti-moralization campaigns in Cairo, “revolution” in antagonism with kinship relations. At the same time characterizing the approach of Aswani and Bahairi women “against tribes and patriarchy” has two

implications. On the one hand, it mimics global gender agenda promoting a culture of rights and modernization. On the other it expresses the desire of women to break Cairo's hegemonic narrative whereby Tahrir space of appearance does not envisage of those who fall outside its space. Memories of the uprising in Aswan and Damanhour state that also in other places and not only in Cairo "things happened".

Finally, territorial representation is evident in the politics of naming. Nile's Daughter is, more than an invocation to Doria Shafiq's namesake magazine, a way to highlight the characteristic location of the group. Damanhour is situated in the area of the Nile Delta whereby the river and the lakes give the name to the inhabitants of that area. So the "daughter" wants to assert her belonging to the Nile and the Delta and the same time daughter refers to gender identity politics. *Ganobiyya Horra* reveals a desire to identify with the imagined Southern society but at the same time to break with it. Women choosing to be "southern" is a way to acknowledge and advocate their difference from the "northern" women but they also want to be "free" to travel, discuss and take to the streets. With a little bit of imagination it can be hazarded that both Nile's daughter and *Ganobiyya* evoke the desire to endeavor a relationship with the land (the Nile, the South) that is in antagonism with Cairo and the centralization that it has imposed. On the other hand, by associating the word Daughter to that of the Nile women want to give a preference to a lineage with the land rather than that of the kinship relations (family). *Ganobiyya* instead assert their being from the south but also their being free from the societal constraints

Chapter Four:
**Remembering the Magic Tahrir: War on Terror and the Marketing of
the Harassed Woman**

People remember their power in Tahrir and when they see a policeman they tell him "do you remember when you were afraid of us? (Reham Ramzy, Member of Maspiro Youth Union)

Introduction

When providing a chronological account of the police confrontations for the taking of the square in the eighteen days, Cairo activists frown, the tone of their voice turn deep and their eyes called my attention. The day in which major incident happened seemed to have been the 28th of January 2011, in Cairo mainly because of the Asr al-Nil bridge clashes between demonstrators and police and in Aswan and Damanhour because it was the only day in which teargas were shot on protesters by the police. Despite the intensity filling the narratives about witnessing of violence it is difficult to put it into words. In this chapter I will attempt to elaborate 'violence' in relation to the figure of the harassed woman.

I will give context to activists' narratives by accounting for state discourses of securitization and war on terror to deflect the demands of social justice that were raised during the uprising. In tackling this theme I am drawing on Beck's idea of risk society as re-elaborated by Aradau and Van Munster (2007), Amar's argument about gendered politics of the security state (2011) and from my own experience in the autonomist movement in Italy. Remembering the eighteen days as moment were 'things were peaceful' activists are influenced by the security state.

I will examine the re-working of the figure of the harassed woman in activist political imagination and, subsequently, in the textual production of the three NGOs Nazra, *Ganobiyya* and Nile's Daughter arguing that it has become contended between the desire to continue discussing politics and matters of commercialization. In order to do so I will use Bilbija's essays collection *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* (2011)

War on Terror and the Romanticization of the Eighteen Days

How does the Egyptian state articulate discourses about 'revolution'? Since the 25th of January, the state's discourses about 'revolution' have been privileging certain themes over others.

Political violence by the state has been legitimized under the necessity of preventing the risk of terrorism. In this sense state pre-emptive action to avoid apocalyptic scenarios of state dissolution and foreign conspiracy against Egypt justifies practices of securitization within and outside the legal framework. The reinvigoration of this category, started being part of the policy making nomenclature from 9/11 (Aradau, Van Munster 2007) A perpetual 'risk' endangering post-modern societies is the discursive dispositif coming to justify two distinctive tools of global policy making - "war on terror" and "pre-emptive action".

Mainstream discourses of naming any form of social conflict as "terrorism" are still extensively part of the present. The criminalization of social movements has been articulated - both by the state and by the movement components- through this distinction between the peaceful democratic subject in quest of rights and violent terrorist. On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the uprising, 25th January 2015, I decided to go out hoping to stumble across to a commemorative initiative. It was not possible to reach Tahrir itself as it was closed and heavily militarized with military tanks and barbed wire all over the main entrances. While walking through the alleys surrounding the square, I stopped by a kiosk more to engage a conversation in the midst of an unusually deserted downtown than to purchase items. "So today is the anniversary of the revolution" I said to the woman sitting behind the kiosk's window "I'll tell you, the kids who are asking for the fall of the regime belong to the Muslim Brotherhood! Enough with the revolution, they destroyed the country!" For this woman the militarization of the square was normal and legitimized by the potential dangers that 'the kids of the revolution' posed to Egypt. State discourses resonate in the sense that they portray the army as the rescuers of Egyptian people. Curiously, few hours later on the same day, another part of the state apparatus, the police, assaulted a dozen members of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, who had staged a sit-in in the vicinity of Tahrir to commemorate the anniversary. One of the participants, the trade unionist Shaima

Sabbagh, was throwing flowers on Talat Harb pavements, downtown Cairo, when she was shot to death by a policeman at the other side of the street. The fact that the soldier who killed her has been sentenced to 15 years does not change much of the Egyptian state discourses and practices of 'pre-emptive' repression. The characterization of the Muslim Brotherhood as destroyers of Egypt filled up the media press. Newspapers taken into consideration are: Al-Ahram weekly, the English version of the state-owned newspaper; al-Bawaba and al-Ageel two small independent quarterly papers

Al-Ahram Weekly - Title: Little to celebrate [January Revolution] has started as a genuine protest of frustrated youths against Mubarak corruption but has been stolen by the Brotherhood [...] the revolutionary youths are vilified as foreign agents who conspired with the US to spread the chaos and divide the Arab World (Khaled Dawoud, 22-28 jan 2015)

al-Bawaba - Days of rage, vandalism and... and martyrs: Hasan Al-Banna's sons didn't make it to destroy the country and spread the chaos - all political parties except 6 April and the Socialist Revolutionaries did not take part to the celebration of the fourth anniversary of the revolution, but "a group of Salafists appeared to join the demonstration singing revolutionaries are one hand (Mahrur Al-Bawaba, 27 Jan 2015)

al-Ageel - Revolution against Sisi will begin in 6 months" according to Al-Ikhwaniiyya Research Center "January Revolution... to not forget (Ayman Al-Hakim, 27th Jan 2015)

In contrast with an abundant representation of the revolutionary 'kid' his/her more or less implicit conflation with the Hasan Al-Banna's son, the voices of the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated have been gradually erased from state discourses. The impossibility to physically reach members of the organization - either imprisoned or in hiding or physically eliminated - and the elusive answers of many activists resulted in the silencing of this societal segment in this study about memory.

The construction of a mosque dedicated to general Mohammed Tantawi - head of SCAF and de facto head of the state from the ousting of Mubarak until the election of Morsi - on the road to Nasr City, Cairo provides an example of a representation of the military as guarantor of "law and order" against "terror and

dissolution” during the transitional period of the revolution. On the opposite, no memorials or monuments exist to commemorate the martyrs. I believe that the language expressed by the woman seller of blaming activists responsible no less than of the destruction of Egypt convey the context in which activists want to remember the eighteen days by putting emphasis on the magic moment of Tahrir in which 'things were peaceful'. Whoever has a minimum knowledge about the 2011 however knows that things were not peaceful at all. I met Baadr El-Benderi to interview him for a project of oral history I was working for in 2015, besides the thesis writing. Baadr, a journalist for a local newspaper, came from Mohandessin, a residential neighborhood of Cairo, to meet me at the university campus in downtown. A friend of mine, who had put me in contact with him, had already warned me that Baadr could barely see because he was one of the many youths who had been shot in their eyes by the police during the 28th January Asr El-Nil clashes. The security forces' 'habit' of targeting activists' eyes has already been mentioned to me by other interlocutors. In 2013, Baadr participated to the drafting of a Road Map (Kharita al-Tariq) a project aiming to the reconciliation of social actors in the aftermath of Morsi ousting and rising repression enacted by the security forces against the MB. He went on explaining that the Road Map was initially inspired by the South African Truth and Reconciliation commission model (Nieftagodien 2015) but was later emended by the army, without specifying how. Activists such as Baadr did not stop to attend demonstrations or to be politically active even after the dramatic events of the 28th of January which resolved in their permanent loss of sight. When I asked him the question "what did he think about the use of violence as political practice he replied

on the day of the incident I was marching with a friend when I exchanged a glance with a policeman standing on the pavement. As he was staring at us threateningly I turned to him and said "why do you want to harm us brother? we and you are on the same boat, Egypt is not a real state" I also remember a police agent on the front line of the Qasr al-Aini barricade, right before the incident, and I can tell you that they were afraid of us, because they had weapons and we were standing in front of them unarmed and I saw fear in their eyes (Personal interview 30/05/2015)

In remembering, Baadr stresses on the peaceful character of the protests,

where people were unarmed and the only weapon they had was their bodies. The image of protesters standing defiant in front of the police rows also evoke a certain degree of idealization of the eighteen days. The romanticization of the 25th January and the creation of an idealized revolutionary subject have already emerged in Yara's narration as well as in Prince and El Komsan's memoirs sketched in chapters one and two. Significantly, Reem Bashery described it using the similitude of the 'honeymoon', portraying the eighteen days in sentimental relationship with the Egyptian people.

The eighteen days were the honeymoon of the revolution. [...] on the 28th of January the Muslim Brothers said that they were participating as Egyptians. Only after the square was occupied they started to participate as Muslim Brothers. I started feeling unsafe in the square. During the rule of Morsi the attack on women was harsh. They were blaming women for being harassed in the square (Personal interview 15/02/ 2015)

Reem works as project coordinator for the human rights defense at Nazra and I met her through the intercession of a previous interlocutor. In her account the end of the 'honeymoon of the revolution' happened with MB seizing of the political scene which also she overlaps with the harshening of violence against women in the square.

In reflecting on the Muslim Brothers' attempt to exclude women from participating in protests, Reem wants to remember violence on women as betrayal to the cause of the revolution by Islamists. To the idealized moment of harmony that the first eighteen days are in her memories she proposes the rupture of another moment in which the MB betrayed women's demands of freedom. A different version emerges from Amina's words, ex-member of the MB. According to her, there were already different contending groups during the eighteen days

Both liberals and Muslim Brothers were trying to lead the crowd. I felt I had to be there at that moment, for me it was a moment to test my beliefs. Many of the liberals betrayed the cause because they were not there to defend Tahrir during the camel battle. After Rab'aa and Maspiro massacre I think that neither liberals nor Islamists were able to elaborate the question of violence. Islamists were unable to condemn violence on Christians in Maspiro and

they sided with the army. In turn, liberals didn't express solidarity to the Islamists' mass killing in Raba 'a and also sided with the army (Personal interview 23/02/2015)

Amina's memories de-construct the idealized image of eighteen days by revealing divisions in the square. Namely, the incapacity of Islamists and secularists currents to make a common front in the face of political violence and her feeling of betrayal by both to the "cause". Even if Reem's attribution of blame goes to the MB "anti-revolutionary" politics towards women while Amina's to the lack of solidarity in the face of the movement political repression both remember 25th January 2011 with a sense of betrayal and unjust violence.

Remembering the eighteen days as the peaceful, idealized moment of unity vis à vis the threat of violence works in relation with state discourses of war on terror because it is by its incapsulation within history that the uprising is already framed as part of the past .In 25th January there was a 'revolution' going on whereby 'the people' legitimately resisted structural violence side by side with their historical allies - the army (and Mona Prince's novel is a concrete example of this narrative). This is partially because Tahrir and other squares in Egypt were indeed a moment of phatic encounters, long assemblies and horizontal forms of social cooperation. Yet the desire of constructing a pacified imagination of the square has to be understood in relation to discrimination of activists that of state discourses that have been instilled in the hearts of people. After the 'honeymoon' comes, in activists story-telling, a series of facts in which the relationship between the 'revolution' and activists intertwine with the red thread of violence. In the attempt of critically scrutinizing the way in which activists have been inhabiting violence in the present I rely on Das' conceptualization of sayable and non sayable violence (2007).

Accordingly, discourses of gender violence seem to have become sayable in the sense of being normalized also in state discourses. The partiality of remembering violence of a social struggle as mainly gender violence is part of the discourses promoted by the state as the same as it is in the interest of the state to invest in a certain kind of global gender agenda. Notably, the Ministry of Interior has recently (2015) founded a special department against women violence that is formally entrusted to deal with the problem by framing its action into the archipelago of securitization and through a special body of anti-harassment policewomen.

Right after the eighteen days, attempts were made to create a moment of dialogue between the state and women's organizations. For instance, Hala Kamal, professor at Cairo University and member of the Woman Memory Forum, referred that the Egyptian coalition of women rights organization (*Taḥalloof al-munazzamat al-nisawiyya*) advanced a proposal to include women and labor rights in the new constitution draft in 2014⁵

⁵ the 2014 Constitution was approved after a popular referendum in January 2014 and replaced the version in use during Morsi's office

Council demands were the dissolution of the National Council of Women, headed by Suzanne Mubarak, and the inclusion of a woman into the constitutional drafting committee. Debates in this phase stressed on the importance of endeavoring a dialog between secularists and Islamists and women's recognition in the public sphere - with the aim of building a more democratic society, Hala Kamal referred during the interview.

Similarly to the reconciliation plan that animated the Road Map mentioned by Baadr, the Egyptian Coalition approach's aim seemed that of guaranteeing a level of recognition and inclusion of women rights within the state.

Sexual Harassment and the Tribal Matter: Sayable Violence

It is important to look at how the issue of gender violence in the 'revolution' has been changing in the last four years. A colleague and researcher at the American University in Cairo, notes that raising the issue of gender violence in 2011 was an antagonistic response from SCAF and societal moralization of women against women who took part in the sit-ins, breaking roles of sex segregation and were deemed as un-moral. According to this strategy, she explains, women are moral beings constructed as superior for their maternal role. Discrediting their morality meant also allowing the violence on them. If for example women smoked in public in the square they were not moral anymore and can become the target of violence. Reem Bashery, coordinator of the program for human rights defense against violence at Nazra for feminist studies, mentioned two episodes reported by a state-owned television where two taxi drivers claimed that women were going to Tahrir for prostitution.

The question of women was genuine at the beginning, it was part of the political agenda of the uprising, people in the streets and the media were openly dealing with the issue for the first time but then prevailed the idea that the state had to protect women. Both SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood pushed to convince women they had to stay at home (Personal interview 03/02/2015)

After this first phase, the state shifted strategy by hiring *baltagiyya* whose task was that of harassing women. Paul Amar (2011) outlines a genealogy of the gender politics in the security state in Egypt vis a vis the strategy adopted by non-

governmental organizations and activists. The issue is not new; it is not a product of the revolution. In 2011 Paul Amar was already noticing that the issue of sexual harassment was used to address but also deflect issue of police brutality, labor mobility (2011:303) i.e of structural violence. Amar argues that human rights are not only a product of colonialism and right-based western enlightenment project but can also reverse this logic from within by rendering legible and recognizable these contradictions (to the 'masses') Rising tide of protests during the 1990s brought the government to delegitimize the movement by infiltrating *baltagi*. In response, feminist demonstrations or presence of upper-middle class women in demonstrations were staged to challenge the imagination of the square as a place of violence, chaos, terror and re-assert the respectability of the sit-in (Amar 2011) Egyptian educated women symbolize the 'nation' so when they were attacked in demonstrations it became clear that *baltagis* were cops in plain clothes not men from within revolutionary organizations. The state's next step was then to respond with sexual harassment in order to undermine women's respectability .

The theme of gender violence followed a similar framework. Many of the women I met were working for projects related to sexual harassment, these projects often portray experiences of middle class women assaulted by un-ruled *baltagis* coming from Cairo's informal settlements or women fighting 'traditional' society. Around this theme the reflection and the action of different political subjects and projects such as Harrassmap, OpAntish, Shoof al-taharroosh, Bossi, Nazra were focused. The initiatives have ranged from assistance in cases of harassment during the demonstrations to artistic representation of trauma due to violence. In 2013 I attended a theatrical representation hosted by Nazra for feminist studies, in which a series of monologues by women and men brought to the stage their personal memories of violence during demonstrations in a sort of collective catharsis.

A textual example of the work carried by these organizations in the phase following the eighteen days is that of Nazra for Feminist Studies, a left-oriented organization in Cairo providing support to actors who strive to achieve gender related issues (stated in the organization's website). In 2013 it published a collection of oral testimonies entitled *Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its vicinity: A Compendium of Sources 2011-2013* in conjunction with two others groups -New

Woman Foundation (al-Mar'a al-Jadida) and Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture. In the foreword the authors highlight that the compendium aims to "expose crimes committed against women" because violence perpetrated on women places a weight on the soul of the torture victim and heightens the feelings of shame and self-hatred. The introduction outlines a series of major events that witnessed sexual violence on women. No mention of the numerous demonstrations and sit-ins organized by women in Cairo. Testimonies of the survivors are divided into six sections - sexual assault during the first anniversary of the January 25 revolution; sexual assault on June 2012; testimonies of sexual assault and rape on November 2012; sexual assault and rape during the second anniversary of the January 25 revolution and testimonies of a number of volunteers from Opantish (Operation Anti Harassment) which were working in the places of demonstrations to rescue victims of sexual harassment. The typical narration of the testimonies consists of describing the scene of the crime by the survivor and how the gang rape takes place. It follows the experience of violence and how she got to find a way out. The institutions, security forces, hospitals staff and citizens to which the women turn to are often portrayed as rejecting their plea of help or blaming them for being the cause of violence. In the conclusion, a statement entitled "It's our right... the street is ours" it is argued that the compendium is part of a struggle for a society that is safe for women and men and "women of Egypt will not give up on their full right to be present in the political sphere and will not be scared off by organized crimes of sexual assault." (2013: 49)

Several campaigns promoted by the media since 2011, for example "what made her go there?" emphasizing individual responsibility of women for the violence or explicit act of aggression by the security forces and *baltagiyya*. Wherever in the interviews my question were focused of the first eighteen days of the revolution the memories of 2011 were naturally influenced by those of the last four years in which the theme "violence" emerged powerfully over other aspects. It is through the articulation of this theme that activists represent their political subjectivity vis à vis the revolution and it is through the commitment to this particular remembering of the past that they make sense of their present life.

A basic premise ought to be made by acknowledging that most of the

memory of political violence were narrated by Reem Bashery and others affiliated with leftist NGOs engaged in anti-violence, anti-sexual harassment campaigns. This professional commitment has a determining influence on the preference accorded to gender violence within the memory selection. In Amina's words, a member of the Muslim Brothers, for example the question of structural violence and division between secularists and Islamists is much more marked while that of sexual harassment remains somehow in the shadow. Framing of a gendered political subjectivity whereby the women-political violence relation becomes central in rendering visible the category woman but is also functioning now as a space where social issues can still be debated. The characterization of women in the revolution vis à vis sexual harassment jumps to the front by looking at the media press review between 2011 and 2012 drafted by Diana Abd El-Fattah for the Woman and Memory Forum. Why this particular commitment to gender violence?

In the light of the context I attempted to describe in the previous section, four years after 2011, dealing with political transformations "topically" seems to have become a strategy to avoid political repression. Reem Maguid's *Gamá a Mua'nnath Saleem* (Feminine Regular Plural) is a talk show in which Reem discusses "social issues" through the encounter with Egyptian women. In Feminine Regular Plural using the metaphor of gender might be seen as an attempt by activists to articulate oppositional discourses more indirectly.

It is curious to note that Amina was the only one to remember that women from informal settlements were in Tahrir during the eighteen days. The way in which these women protested was to take off their clothes and mimic a fight - a posture of protest much far from upper middle class women's notion of respectability!

Taking the three documents analyzed previously – Nazra's compendium about sexual assault in Cairo and Ganobiyya Horra's volume *Before they say she was a little girl* - one can note a difference in the approach of the theme 'gender violence'. While Ganobiyya clearly states that violence on women is a cross-class issue because it affects the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant (introduction), in Nazra, they document that the figure of sexual assaulter remains mostly that of the street thug, "unruly" lower-class Egyptian. On the other hand, the conceptual framework of Ganobiyya and Nile's Daughter is centered on the idea of

eradicating 'tribalism and oppressive traditions'. By encoding gender violence into either class politics or the modernization approach all results into endeavoring a hostile otherness - the un-ruled baltagi in Cairo and the retrograde tribal/kinship system in Aswan and Damanhour. The anecdote that Nagla Bassiouni, journalist at the local television of Aswan recounted about her encounter with Moataz, which she describes as a baltagi. The anecdote highlights for the first time a different version of the relation between an upper-middle class woman - subaltern because Moataz warned Nagla off about the fact that he had received money from Aswan's mayor in order to harass her, reverting his role from that of assaulter to that of protector. What matters in this story is that it de-constructs the figure of unruly unmoral masses and that of the morally virtuous woman in need of protection by the state/women rights defenders that often emerges from scholarly and NGO works about gender violence and sexual harassment. In activists' narratives sexual/verbal harassment is deployed as a privileged trope to remember women's participation in the revolution. Initiatives run by non-governmental organizations, scholarly work and ethnography all highlight violence as a preferred theme in the narratives. In Damanhour, violence directed at women is articulated through the category of family and kinship where fathers, brothers and relative circles exercised limits to the will of women from participating in the revolution and more broadly in their personal lives. Analogously, in Aswan, the kinship system is the language through which women address structural violence. However here the theme of gender violence is specifically related to a tribal imaginary for which the tribal confederation has the last word on women's social regulation. Even though the three ways of addressing the issue of gender violence are different in the language they use they share the same social conditions. It is nothing new to say that the kinship system and familial restrictions well exercised their pressure on women in Cairo as much as they did in Aswan and Damanhour. In Cairo, sexual harassment is, in the language of the state and in that of NGOs, inscribed into discourses of securitization and phobia towards the unruly masses. These discourses complement neoliberal urban planning based on gentrification and social seclusion whose main motto is that of building 'safe' spaces of consumption and gated communities for upper middle class Cairenes (Murad 2015). Outside the capital, influential tribes and families have many of their

members associated with the ruling establishment which allows them to benefit in different economic sectors, from agri-business to drug dealing. Hence, by attaching their claims on a language of class or tribe women evoke different ways of disciplining the social yet material conditions share a common denominator - capitalism. At the same time, as my colleague rightly pointed out, women's presence in the squares of Egypt has been an act of resistance towards social restrictions and gender segregation. Many women had to face familial pressures because they were attending demonstrations, many others could not go because their families prevented them to do so. The 'revolution' brought Amina and Mary Daniel to end their marital relationships, because, the experience changed them to the point of not being willing to accept the social role of wives imposed on them. In this sense, the first phase of the uprising was revolutionary on many of the aspects of women's lives and only later became somehow subsumed into the regime of state and international organization discourses of securitization. I remember a comment that was given to me by a professor working at Cairo University in the summer of 2014 remarking that the rising awareness about gender violence had been so far the only successful achievement of the revolution. I argue that this statement is the direct consequence of two factors: first the fervent debates that were really successful in breaking gender-related taboos and social norms; second, a process of subsumption of activists' practices into the regime of state gendered politics and global gender agenda (El Azzazy 2014). As my colleague pointed out, there is a perception that the issue of sexual violence in 25th January was 'genuine' at the beginning and only later became commodified. Activists' desire to render the experience of women in the uprising knowledgeable to the public outside Egypt is problematized by capital logic of commercialization and subsumption of human creativity into the logic of profit (Bilbija 2011). All the three projects in fact were founded by an international human rights organization based in the US. Hence, the production and the consumption of textual projects take place within the neoliberal market and it is ultimately bounded to its logic. The projects' designs therefore, must be suitable to demands set by the market.

It is curious to note that even the temporal framework of my questions during the interviews was that of the eighteen days (and the major case of violence

against women were registered after that moment) the majority of women tended to bring on the fore memories of violence happened later on for example the virginity test, the cabinet clashes and Shaima Sabbagh's assassination. This is because gender violence is a sayable memory and continues variously to be part of the everyday political engagement of women and men. There is a quest for rights and for improving, empowering women in society advanced to the state. Talks about violence of the military and security apparatus instead became unsayable and dangerous to utter without being squeezed into the terrorist slot.

Making the Silenced Speak

The choice of treating political violence "topically" that is only in the form of gender violence has to be critically re-considered because violence against women cannot be envisioned but in the larger framework of structural violence. Important gestures in this direction have been made by El-Nadeem and the Revolutionary Socialists, respectively and via NGOs and independent international organizations. Much of the current documentation projects about political violence have been focusing on an epistolary production in Egyptian prisons. El-Nadeem center for rehabilitation of victims of violence published a collection of letters entitled *Letters behind bars: We are the Voice when you want to silence the World* in May 2014. El-Nadeem is an independent NGO specialized in providing psychological and medical support to the victims of torture. The center has also produced several documents and takes public stake against practices of torture in Egypt. The document gathers a collection of leaked letters from 30th of June to May 2014. The content of the letters varies from denouncing living conditions into the prisons of Tora and Abu Za'bal to poems and incitation not to give up the struggle. For instance, Islam Badr's letter, 17 years old, conveys a sense of bewilderment and incredulity for having been arrested with no reason. According to many activists, in fact, the random arrests are ordinary routine for the security forces

I was arrested from the entrance of one of the residential buildings where I was hiding until the demonstration would pass and the street gets safe for passengers. I was on my way to the playfield to play a match with some of my friends (2014:43)

Farah, a friend and member of the Revolutionary Socialists in Lebanon, notes that in the activist circles “what is happening is that everybody now talks about freedom for the prisoners and all the efforts are absorbed by this issue”. A similar concern emerges from lawyer and prominent activist Mahinour El-Masri’s letter entitled *Down with the classist society* which she wrote in Damanhour prison in May 2014. Mahinour narrates her encounters with other women in the prison ward, who, she said, are mostly detained because they could not pay back debts contracted to meet familial needs. By stressing on the class nature of prisons she aims to bring back the attention of other comrades to the original driving force of 25th January

We must not turn into groups that call for the freedom of X, and forget the demands of the people, who need to eat. Alongside chanting against the protest law, we must work to bring down the classist order, and organize ourselves, engage with the people, and talk about the rights of the poor and our solutions for them, and we must call for the freedom of the poor, so that people do not feel that we are distant from them.

El-Nadeem aims to turn upside down state discourses of delegitimation and criminalization through the use the category ‘terrorist’ applied to that of ‘activist’ and their consequent imprisonment. El- Nadeem’s perspective successfully portrays the conditions of prisoners without falling into “the individualized knot of the traumatic” (Feldman 2004:176). The language that the document captures preserves ‘the flavor’ of a strong political imagination of the revolutionaries without putting excessive emphasis on the aesthetic of trauma. Therefore, the story telling of detainees remains connected to the community ‘outside’. Indeed not many activists were willing to tackle the issue of prisoners during the interviews but it still remains meaningful in their political commitment to the Freedom for the Brave and No to the Military trials for civilians campaign. Menna's words, I think, help to verbalize this necessity of remembering political prisoners

It is important to remember also those who are in prison, and by not remembering we are paying them a disservice. they put their lives for the revolution and then we owe that to them. Also for our children, we have to remember that even if the state was too strong to fight we engaged a good battle (03/02/2015)

Only dealing with the theme of violence and social change in a more encompassing possible way can give context to the question of gender violence and 'revolution'. El-Nadeem's document title "We are the voices when you want to silence the world" is indicative in this sense. "The world" evokes mainstream history and by giving voice to the "silenced voices" of prisoners El-Nadeem implies the political choice of creating solidarity with the 'kids of the revolution' that are now blamed by the neoliberal establishment and popular strands of fascism of "having destroyed the country". Keeping critical light on the role of the security state and question of social justice has to go hand in hand with strategies to combat gender violence.

Violence in the Ordinary: Hope and Despair

Asma's words made me realize that in order to grasp the living memory of violence it is crucial to focus on what she says about hatred towards the MB and the hope that people "will understand". It is by the act of waiting that activists make the trauma of violence descend into the ordinary. Living memory of violence is rendered sayable through the claims of hope. What animates the memories of activists in the suddenness of political repression is the act of remembering prisoners and hope for a better future. However, there are hints of another kind of memorialization whereby a praxis based on violence becomes a choice - maybe at the present moment the only possible choice to act politically - for many activists and Egyptians.

In women's memories violence unleashes not much a reconstruction of the 'events' but rather animates the life and the speech of those who witnesses it. In her ethnography of the partition in India, Veena Das (2007) argues that "the memory of the Partition cannot be understood in Asha's life as a direct possession of the past. It is constantly interposed and mediated by the manner in which the world is being presently inhabited" (2007:76). Representation of violence is conveyed through the descending into the everyday, the register of everyday. Not much through the act of narrating violence but through the stubborn turn to the ordinary. For the women she met it was about re-crafting the symbols of mourning - thus showing not saying -

their contestation to dominant politics. I argue that the past and ongoing state crack down and societal violence is inhabited through postures of hope and despair for the future. Sayable in the narratives is the question of sexual harassment and patriarchy because they are now part of the nomenclature through which neoliberal policies have re-conducted the struggle to the politics of the familiar. However, narratives about the state cracking down are perhaps explicable in the activists' incapacity of 'putting them into words', as if a sense of bewilderment for the magnitude of violence impede them to contextualize violence in the present. In lieu of facing the present of violence there is a tendency to think about revolution in terms of deferral to the future. This tendency is expressed through the articulation of a language of hope

Reham - I am doing it to try to survive! to try to keep alive the revolution. It is a way to see that the change it not big, it is small and gradual and you need to persuade people. Hope. Hope and solidarity. These are the things I am trying to keep. (Cairo, 08/02/2015)

Reem - We are losing a lot of friends for different reasons. We have nothing and the state has media and squares [...] but I have hope for the next generation. (Cairo, no date)

May - They [the people] want to remember the power of being united, they want to remember how hopeful they were, they want to forget how naive they were in thinking that a revolution can succeed in 18 days (Cairo, 10/02/2015)

Ola'a –a revolution is like a volcano, there is nothing lost. I see Egyptians, none of them is satisfied with the situation. Also there's still fighting in the underground (Aswan, 23/03/2015)

Nagla Bassiouni - revolution has different forms, I feel that the people still have a long path beyond. The society still has to understand, if we did not succeed the responsibility is also ours, sometimes it is the people who tell you do not take the streets to demonstrate. Because people here have little patience. They are tired economically. My son stopped talking about the revolution, because all the things that didn't happen, he is one of the most angered - don't talk to me about that - he says. This sensation of people dying for nothing is difficult to accept (Aswan, 22/03/2015)
Hope seems to be a deferral to the future and again reproducing a

teleological understanding of time creating a sort of paralysis of the subject in front of the magnitude of violence. There is a stubborn turn to the future, a refusal to inhabit the present of political violence. Ola's metaphor of the volcano evokes the famous Marx similitude between the mole and revolution. Baadr's philosophy of "give the other cheek" of course goes back to religious discourses of peace. For all it is the hope that the hope will lavish away remembering of violence. Mai, Reem and Reham chose to remember the sensation of hope during the eighteen days and want to make it endure in the present. Reham's solitary statement that "people remember fear in the eyes and behavior of police in Tahrir suggests a different kind of memorialization of violence, a memory that highlights resistance; a violence that opposes the violence of the state and imposes transformation instead of questing it. This does not entail the shedding of blood. The bodily presence and the imposition of this presence was a powerful strategy in the eighteen days. Maybe after all, even hoping becomes a way to resist the sensation of despair that is haunting many activists. Nagla's son, who stubbornly refuses to talk about 'what happened' is emblematic of the way in which the trauma of violence has generated silence.

Conclusion

In this chapter violence emerges as powerfully in relation to state discourses of securitization and neoliberal ways of enacting violence to contain 'revolution'. By tracing a timeline of state approach it seemed that these discourses have exercised a great deal of influence in alienating the favor of many to 'revolution' as well as bringing activists to articulate the eighteen days as a moment of idealized pacification.

According to the construction of leftist secularist activists in all the three cities, the first eighteen days are remembered as the 'honeymoon' of the revolution by many women and a temporal rupture has been created between this 'event' - that became historicized - and the violence that followed later. On the other hand, different voices such as that of Amina from the MB deny this state of unity while highlighting conflicts within the different factions since the beginning of the protests in January 2011.

Theories and practices on gender violence and the uprising has been followed in two phases so far; the first inspired by women breaking societal restrictions along with hegemonic discourses of moralization and the desire to be present in the squares; the second phase marked partially by the continuation of these desires but also by processes of marketing the figure of the harassed woman.

Building upon Vena Das conceptualization of sayable and unsayable violence I argue that gender violence seems to remain the only sayable topic related to the 25th of January. This hints to explain why women extensively and repetitively tackle this issue during the interviews. The fight against sexual harassment has become normalized in institutional discourses because it partially complements the gender global agenda of global south women empowerment and it is a card that the army establishment has decided to play since the very beginning when Sisi apologized for the virginity test in March 2011 or in the occasion of his visit to a woman assaulted in Tahrir in January 2014. On the other hand, it is also to be acknowledged that the fervent debates that were really successful in breaking the taboo for which denouncing publicly violence was considered shameful and morally unacceptable.

The theme of gender violence instead continues to be articulated by women I met as it marks institutional discourses of progress and modernization. In Cairo language of gender violence takes the shape of anti sexual harassment campaigns which denounce societal violence against woman thought with a strong hint of classist perspective epitomized by the figure of the *baltagi* or the un-ruled Egyptian wearing *gallabiyya*. Institutional tolerance to the theme of sexual harassment makes it possible to use this platform as an indirect way to discuss societal issues such as the talk show *Mua'nnath Salim Sahih* denotes. In Damanhour and Aswan instead, gender violence as elaborated by activists passes through the language of kinship restrictions while less present is the 'class component'. The language adopted by the three texts risks to lose sight of the broader question of social inequality which was instead central in 25th of January. Categories of the upper-middle class woman and its "others" - the lower-class male *baltagi* and the tribal system - risk to re-enforce divisions instead of achieving justice. Divisions that the neoliberal system is apt to exploit in the short run and erode in the long run.

El Nadeem and the Revolutionary Socialist projects on violence highlight an awareness that keeps a critical light on capital divide and rule strategies. In particular, documents such as Letter behind bars or Mahinour's letter narrate the stories of prisoners and their living conditions and the political imagination they keep on expressing from behind bars. Producing archives of violence is partially driven by the duty to remember the voices who are silenced by institutional memory and consequently will be forgotten in official history. Stated as it is, memory itself becomes a wounded attachment, a contributory story of a loser who cannot afford forgetting. Memory as way of being in time gives continuity to the past into the present. The memory of the eighteen days are enacted in women's life choices, claims to society and the state.

Concerning violence in particular and beside the reiteration of the trope of sexual harassment and tribal violence, what's new that emerges in the stories of women is the way in which memory of the past - or in Das word's past trauma - is enacted in the present. In other words, how women inhabit the world in the light of the violence they experienced during the 'event' revolution. My analysis highlights a re-elaboration of violence through hope.

When asked about episodes of violence they underwent or witnessed women often reify the category of sexual harassment and gender violence in their story telling. However, what animates their speech is the hope with which they choose to inhabit memory of violence in the everyday. Engaging in the project of oral history, writing volumes about sexual violence and working in NGOs is for them the way of re-crafting the memory of past violence but more than that, making the past to be living in the present constitutes a deferral to the future.

Chapter 5:

Further Reflections and Questions

Revolution in Context

Among the questions that this study has sought to direct a critical attention to – that is that related to the politics of naming social change - What is revolution? What is the difference between revolution and social change? I propose not to dismiss ‘revolution’ but rather to renew it with a new significance. Following Nail’s theorization of revolution and his use of Guattari and Deleuze’s multi-centered topology my approach to ‘revolution’ in Egypt aimed on the one side, to develop a critique to universal history and representative entities (with the features they assume in a specific temporal and spatial context) and on the other to be attentive peculiar revolutionary contingencies, that is, to the multiplicity of political imaginations and practices characterizing the narratives and life choices of those who took part in the eighteen days.

Referring to processes of social transformations naming them revolutions has sometimes equated to cover the magnitude of their complexity under the security blanket in lieu of allowing a lucid understanding. The problem is that revolution in itself is a tool box that automatically activate a line of thought already set on given theories, practices and a conception of time and space deeply embedded in the modern epistemology. In the attempt to resist the temptation of relying on this security blanket one has to be attentive of what, in the social domain, is a reiteration of mainstream narratives of revolution and what opposes it and thrives for the reinvigoration of its meaning in context.

With their ironic laughs activists taught me that the idea of ongoing revolution is something not to be taken too seriously. Even if hope for the future is central in the way they make sense, especially of political violence, the disillusion towards futurity underlined an awareness to the fictional character of a revolution whereby the emphasis is always put on a better future yet to come.

At the same time, a political subjectivity based on individual participation emerged as a way to depart from representative politics. Repeated claims of being in

the squares on individual basis helped to highlight the discrepancy between activists verbal identification to certain ideological positions and the actual refusal to be labeled as part of a particular organizational body. Women's political and professional affiliation mostly referred back to the leftist independent milieu of Cairo. Consequently, women's 'invisible and enduring presence' in Egyptian history, legal rights activism and sexual harassment (in a nuanced developmental approach) were the dominant discourses in the narratives. However, on a concrete level, activists envisioned their engagement in a strong relation to the way they live in the present. Travelling, founding groups of intellectual discussions, cutting old ties and wavered new social relations. All this pointed out to the desire of enacting political subjectivities that transcend identity politics.

A multi-centered topology of revolution also implied to depart from the Cairo-based monolithic dominance in the narrative of the eighteen days. The question of space then became central in the way in which women's political imagination and practices have been crafted. Not only in outside Cairo had people lived differently and rebelled differently but in Cairo itself the event revolution was circumscribed to certain places and social groups. In every place, revolution was re-elaborated and characterized in a unique way. Given the multiplicity of experience emerged from a topological study, what instead emerged as common thread was the way in which women articulated their resistance against power. In fact, even if power was given different names (in Cairo the ministry of interior and in its outsidness the kinship system), woman language and practice converged on a common terrain- political violence vis à vis the state. Toward whom and in response to what this question was directed? Institutional narratives of the eighteen days and discourses of securitization influenced the way in which women wanted to characterize it as a peaceful moment. At the same time, by giving to the question of gender violence a pivotal role, hinted to the fact that revolutionary practices cannot avoid re-thinking the question of violence and state (and capital) opposition to social change.

Memory in Context

The question of how time is to be conceptualized and can be rendered sayable in a context of social transformation is a difficult one to answer. Is revolution to be

thought as moment of 'pure eventness' or instead as a moment of 'pure exteriorization' from history? I suggest a third possibility - one that roots the eighteen days into the present of women practices and stories and in so far, re-elaborate the event into the ordinary.

This study on memory hopes to bring the attention on two points about how it is possible to 'talk revolution'. First, to wage a critique to the historicization of the event a process that creates a temporal rupture between past, present and future while looking at women's life choices, the way they engage with and rebel against power as a new beginning but also as a fruit sowed in an antecedent time. Second, the problem with documentary memory because it aims to make up the fallacies of history instead of deeply re-discuss its epistemological foundations.

Is memory a category of experience alternative to history in the face of postmodern crisis? In an essay about the emergence of memory in historical discourse Lee Klein argues that "even when advertised as a system of difference, memory gives us a signified whose signifier appears to be so weighty, so tragic - so monumental - that will never float free" (2000: 144). Conceived as it is here memory presents itself as, in Wendy Brown's words, a 'wounded attachment' always mourning a past that it cannot afford to forget.

Whenever our desire of using memory to give justice to the silenced is, whenever institutions carry out politics of historical amnesia it is not practicable to resist these practices using the same grammar that they seek to contest.

Also there exists a nexus between how these women are variously engaged in memory projects, documenting projects and keep on discuss, write and divulgate their experiences of the revolution and demands for consumption of 'trauma'. The figure of the harassed woman also results to be further problematized by the classist/developmental nuances that I discussed throughout the three texts.

The idea of memory they proposed is not that which is proposed by the memory recuperation or archival approach. It was not that of bestowing counter-memories but rather grasping the experiences of those whose lives was traversed by the uprising. In this sense, memory grounds its basis not much in the shadows of history but in life itself. In Deleuze's words, "its basis is the entire movement of the material body over the course of its past existence." (Deleuze cited in Burton

2008:329) This unleashed for instance what Nagma said, that living the revolution meant to constantly find herself, to build a picture of herself or when Yara stated that being part of the sit-in in Tahrir deeply changed her professional choices and familial relations.

Memory understood as accounting for the 'event' through the ordinary lives of activist women is different because it gives a continuity to the revolution in the present. Typical of historiography is to break time continuum into past, present and future thereof isolating the past of revolution from the present. Indeed, the testimonies of women were partially caught in this logic in the way they reify the magic moment of the eighteen days vis à vis the present. What was more interesting to me was instead to look at the turn to ordinary in women's story telling about the eighteen days. It was so because the language of the everyday emphasized the uniqueness of their experience without being compelled to complement historical amnesia, that which is always entailed in archival and documentary projects. It was also because the way in which interlocutors think about 'revolution' depended on their material conditions and that waged its weight on the desires they formulated.

In the beginning of the research the main question was why women were particularly committed to the memory project. Some days ago I posed this same question to Amal Ramses, director of the documentary film "The Trace of the Butterfly". Amal is 'a specialist of memory' because her film is exactly about how the memory of the revolution, within the event of the Maspéro massacre but also the change as in the relation to the small inner revolution in the life of Mary Daniel. She reflected on the fact that during the eighteen days it was the first time she felt she was not compelled to document because people were already doing that for her.

Even if Amal took part in the Tahrir sit-in and given her political commitment to documentary projects, the fact that she has not produced any film about that moment is significant. During the eighteen days, she said, it was the first time that she felt not compelled to document what was going on. She simply wanted to be present in the square. The only time she brought her camera with her it broke down so she comments "I thought it was a sign by the providence that I did not have to film anything at that point". Beside the joking tone, she motivated that decision of not filming by saying that for the first time she felt that people by their presence and

action in the square, were already talking loud about what was happening therefore there was no need for further documentation on her part. No need to remember what is not properly voiced by the mainstream narratives, no need to call the attention of the untold stories. This is what archival memory and many documenting projects are about. The constant need of resisting mainstream narratives by building alternative histories. The constant need of making up historic forgetfulness. The illusion of capturing the past, of freezing revolution through archival projects is the mark of defeat because it is framed by the same grammar it seeks to contest. So is it a revolutionary contingency when we are not compelled to document but we just live the present? But what if we just capture the present in life, with all its trace of the past, for a moment and then let it flow free instead of museumizing it? The risk is that, once the generation that experienced the eighteen days is gone, it will be lost forever. Or maybe it will just keep on echoing in the practices and theories enacted in processes of social change. At any rate, it is a risk that we can run.

Bibliography

Amar, P. (2011) *Turning the Gendered Politics of the Security State Inside Out?* International Feminist Journal of Politics, Vol. 13(No.3), pp. 299-328

Abdel Latif, E. A. (2010) *Bayyan al-tanahi wa dhakira al-hazima - madkhal balghi lil-tahlil al-khitabi al-siyyasi* [*Nasser's Resignation Speech and the Memory of Defeat: A Rhetorical Introduction to Political Discourse Analysis*] Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics Issue 30 pp. 146-175.

Abu El-Dahab, R (2015) *Doria Shafiq...Bint El-Nil* [*Doria Shafiq...The Nile's Daughter*] Retrived from <http://nwrcegypt.org>

Agamben, G. (1996) "Forms of Life" in Virno, P. Hardt, M. (eds). (1996). *Radical thought in Italy - A potential politics"*: University of Minnesota Press. pp. 151-158

Al-Samman, H. (2010) *Qalaq al-indithar: al-katiba a-a'rabiyya bayna dhikra Shahrazad wa kabus al-mu'awada* [*Anxiety of Erasure: Arab Women Writers between Shahrazad's Memory and the Nightmare of Infanticide.*] Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics Issue 30 pp. 73-97

Arias,A. (2001) *The Rigoberta Menchu Controversy*, PMLA, Vol. 116(No. 6)pp. 75-88.

Aradau, C., & Van Munster, R. (2007) *Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (un)Knowing the Future* European Journal of International Relations, Vol. 13(No.1), pp. 89-115.

Aradau, C. (2008) *Rethinking Trafficking in Women - Politics out of Security*: Palgrave Macmillan.

Asad, T. (2012) *Fear and the Ruptured State: Reflections on Egypt after Mubarak*, Social Research, Vol. 79(No.2)

Aswat Al-Masriyya (2014) Govt rebuilds martyrs memorial in Tahrir Square
Retrieved from <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/view.aspx?id=8cebda6c-5c4c-431b-aad3-f2ee36518507>

Badiou (2005) *Politics as Truth Procedure*, Megapolitics, Verso.

Bayat, A. (2011) *Paradoxes of Arab Revo-lutions*, Retrieved from <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/786/paradoxes-of-arab-refo-lutions>

Bayat, A. (2013) *Revolution in Bad Times*, New Left Review, pp 47-60.

Benin, J. (1981) *Formation of the Egyptian Working Class* MERIP Reports, No. 94, Origins of the Working Class. Class in the Middle East, pp. 14-23

Bilbija, N., Payne L. A. (eds). (2011). *Accounting for Violence- Marketing Memory in Latin America*, Duke University Press.

Boltanski, L (1999) *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* Cambridge University Press

Brown, S. D., & Reavey, P. (2014) *Vital memories: Movements in and between affect, ethics and self*, Memory Studies, 7(3), 328-338.

Brown, W. (2002) *Feminism Unbound: Revolution, Mourning, Politics* in Brown, W. *Edgework critical essays on knowledge and politics*, Princeton University Press.

Brown, W. (2002) *At the edge*". *Political Theory*, Vol. 30(No. 4), pp. 556-576.

Bromely, R. (2015) *Giving memory a future*. *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol.19 (No. 2)pp. 221-232

Burton, J. (2008)*Bergson's non-archival theory of memory*, *Memory Studies*, Vol 1(No. 3), pp. 321-339.

Cole, J.R.I (1999) *Colonialism and Revolution in The Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement*, The American University in Cairo

Das, V. (2007)*Life and Words - Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, University of California Press.

Davidson, J. (2006) *Will the Real Sex Slave Please Stand Up?*, *Feminist Review*, No. 83, pp. 4-22;

Duboc, M. (2013). *Where are the Men? Here are the Men and the Women! Surveillance, Gender and Strikes in the Egyptian Textile Factory*, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 9 (No. 3), pp. 28-53

El-Azzazy, H. (2014).*From Gender Equality to Gender Justice: the Egyptian Revolution and Public Sphere Debates*, School of Global Policies and Global Affairs, The American University in Cairo

El-Komsan, N (--)*The Freedom of the square: Reflections on the course of the Egyptian revolution and the participation of women*, Printed with the support of the United Nations Entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN women)

El-Nadeem (2014) *Letters behind bars: We are the Voice when you want to silence the World*

- El Nour, S (2012) *National Geographical Targeting of Poverty in Upper Egypt*, in Bush R, A. H. e. (2012) *Marginality and exclusion in Egypt*, Zed Books, London, New York. pp. 148-168
- El-Masri, M (2014) *Down with the Classist Society: A Letter from Mahienour El-Masri*, Retrieved from http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18041/%E2%80%9Cdown-with-this-classist-society%E2%80%9D_a-letter-from-ma
- Esmeir S (2003) *Memories of Conquest: Witnessing death in Tantara, 1948* *Law History Memory* Social Text 75 Vol. 21 (No. 2) pp 25-48
- Fahmy, K. (2015) *El-Thawra El-Mostamirra [The Ongoing Revolution]*, Retrieved from Facebook note of the author <https://www.facebook.com/notes/816035171794633/>
- Fahmy, K (2015) *A History of the Egyptian Revolution* Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFpdb2Rh22I>
- Fahmy, Z (2011) “*Ordinary Egyptians, Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture, 1870-1919*”, The American University in Cairo Press
- Feldman, A (2004) *Memory-Theaters, Virtual-Witnessing, and Trauma-Aesthetic, Biography*, Vol. 27 (No. 1), pp-163-202.
- Fraser, N. (1995) *From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age*, *New Left Review*, Vol. 1(212), pp. 69-93.
- Ganobiyya Horra [Free South] (2014) *Awal ma Qalu di Benya [Before they said she is only a Little Girl]* Dar Hibatiyya lil-nashar, Aswan
- Geiger, S. (1990) *What's So Feminist About Women's Oral History?*, *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 2(No.1), pp-169-182.

- Grosz, E. e. (1999). *Thinking the New: of Futures yet Unthought*” in Grosz, E. (ed) *Becomings - Explorations in Time, Memory, and Future*, Cornell University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Hardt, M. Negri, A. (2000) *Empire*, Harvard University Press.
- Hardt, M., Negri, A ; Brown, N.; Szeman, I. (2002). *The Global Coliseum: On Empire*, *Cultural Studies*, 16(2), 177-192
- Kadri, A (2012) *Accumulation by encroachment in the Arab Mashreqin* Bush R, Ayeb H. e. (2012). *Marginality and exclusion in Egypt*, : Zed Books, London, New York.
- Kandil, H. (2012). *Why did the Egyptian Middle Class March to Tahrir Square?* *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol 17(No. 2), pp. 197-215
- Katz, S. (2001) *On the grounds of globalization A topography for Feminist Political Engagement. Signs*, Vol. 26(No. 4), pp. 1213-1234.
- Khalifa, H and Shaath, R (2014) *Sawṭha...Suraty* [Her voice... my image] (photographycatalog)
- Khalifa, H (2015) *From the Inside* retrieved from <https://www.lensculture.com/projects/94801-from-the-inside>
- Khalili, L (2014) *El-Nisaa' fi El-Initifadat El-A'rabiyya wa ba'da* [Women in the Arab Uprisings and Beyond] Retrieved from <http://permanentrevolution-journal.org/ar/node/62>

Khorshid, S (2014) *How State Failure is Deepening Class Tension in Egypt*, Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sara-khorshid/how-state-failure-has-ign_b_6107904.html

Lee Klein, K. (2000) *On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse*, Representations, No. 69 (Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering), pp. 127-150.

Mada Masr, 18th March 2015 *With latest crackdown, state dissolves 380 NGOs in just two months* Retrieved from <http://www.madamasr.com/news/latest-crackdown-state-dissolves-380-ngos-just-2-months>

Mada Masr, 5th April 2015 *Ministry to investigate NGOs over awareness program for same sex partner* Retrieved from <http://www.madamasr.com/news/ministry-investigate-ngo-over-awareness-programs-same-sex-partners>

Magdy, Zainab. 2012 *Egyptian women: performing in the margin, revolting in the centre*, Retrieved from <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/zainab-magdy/egyptian-women-performing-in-margin-revolting-in-centre>

Makram Ebeid, D (2015) *Talking Back: Masculinity and the Right Time for Politics* retrieved from <http://www.madamasr.com/opinion/politics/talking-back-masculinity-and-right-time-politics>

May, T (2013) "*The Dignity of Non-Violence*" in "*On Violence*" Vol. 1 2013-2014, Histories of Violence

Marx, K (1968) [First Published 1932] *A Critique of the German Ideology*, Retrieved from Marx/Engels Internet Archive (marxist.org) 2000

Marx, K. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte* in Tucker, R. C., Marx, K., &

Engels, . (1978). *The Marx-Engels reader, New York: Norton*"

Massumi, B (2013) *The Remains of the Day* in *On Violence* Vol. 1 Retrieved from <http://historiesofviolence.com/on-violence/>

Mosallam, A. (2012). *Hikāyāt'Sha 'b'– Stories of Peoplehood Nasserism, Popular'Politics and Songs in Egypt 1956-1973*. PhD Dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Mostafa, D. S. (2015) *Introduction: Egyptian Women, Revolution and Protest culture*, *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol. 19 (No. 2) 118-129

Nail, T. (2012). *Returning to Revolution. Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo*: Edimburgh University Press

Nile's Daughter [*Harakat Bint al-Nil*] *Nabdha 'an majmu'a Bint el-Nil* [*Presentation of Nile's Daughter association*] Power point document, courtesy of Nile's Daughter

Nazra for Feminist Studies; New Woman Foundation; El Nadim Center (February 2013) *Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its vicinity: A Compendium of Sources*, *Cair*, Retrieved from <http://nazra.org/en/2013/05/sexual-assault-and-rape-tahrir-square-and-its-viceinity-compendium-sources-2011-2013>

Nieftagodien, N. (2015). *The Economic Freedom Fighters and the Politics of Memory and Forgetting*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 114(No 2), pp. 446-456

Nora, P. (1989) *Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire, Representations*, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, (No. 26); pp. 7-24

Piperno, F. (1996) "*Technological Innovation and Sentimental Education*" in Virno,

P. Hardt, M. (eds). (1996). *"Radical thought in Italy - A potential politics"*: University of Minnesota Press.

Prince, M (2012) “*Ismi Thawra*” [*Revolution is My Name*], Cairo

Ramses, A (2014) *The Trace of the Butterfly: A documentary film*, Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/84543646> (Courtesy of Amal Ramses)

Rosaldo, M. (2006) [First Published 1980] *The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflection of Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding* in Ellen Lewin (ed.) *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp-107-128

Sahat Said, A (2015) *El-Tatawrat El-Siyasiyya fi Masr mundhu Itaha Hosni Mubarak* [*Political Developments in Egypt after the ousting of Hosni Mubarak*], El-Thawra El-

Daima, Magalla Marxiyya Thawriyya Fasaliyya Arabiyya [The Permanent Revolution, Arab Marxist Revolutionary Quarterly Magazine] Retrieved from <http://permanentrevolution-journal.org/ar/node/128>

Sabea, H. (2014) *I Dreamed of Being a People' Egypt's Revolution, the People and Political Imagination*. In P. Werbner, Webb, M, Spellman-Poots, K (Ed.), *The Political Aesthetics of Global Protest: The Arab Spring and Beyond*, pp. 67-92): Edinburgh University Press.

Sasnal, P. (2014) *Myths and Legends- Modern History and Nationalistic Propaganda in Egyptian Textbooks*, The Polish Institute for International Affairs

Schenker, J, *The Struggle to document Egypt's Revolution 15th July 2015* Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/15/struggle-to-document-egypt-revolution>

Scott, J. (1991) *The Evidence of Experience*, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 17(No. 4), pp. 773-797.

Singerman, D. (2013). *Youth Gender and Dignity in the Egyptian Uprising*, Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, Vol. 9 (No. 3), pp. 1-27.

Sholkamy, Hania (2011) *The Jaded Gender and Development Paradigm of Egypt*, IDS Bulletin Vol. 43(No. 1): 94-98

Sorbera, L (2014) *Femminismo e rivoluzione in Egitto. Un secolo di storia* [Feminism and Revolution in Egypt: a Century of History" in Aita, S. ; Bini, E. ;

Lawson H. L. ; Sorbera, L. Trentin, M. Le rivolte arabe e le repliche della storia, *Le Economie di Rendita, i Soggetti Politici, i Condizionamenti Internazionali* [Arab Revolts and the Encores of History - Rentier Economies, Political Subjects, International Constrains] , pp. pp. 84-110

Wahba, D (2012) *Gendering the Egyptian Revolution*, Thesis dissertation, MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Winegar, J. (2012) *The privilege of revolution: gender, class, space and affect in Egypt*, *The American Ethnologist*, Journal of the American Ethnological Society.

Ziyad, A. (2014) *The Rise and The Fall of Egypt's Middle Class*, Retrieved from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/culture/2014/05/egypt-middle-class-rise-fall.htm>

Ziada, H (2015) *What brings them there? Reflections on the Persistent Symbolism of*

Tahrir Square, Retrieved from <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21254/what-brings-them-there-reflections-on-the-persisti>

Zizek, S.(2009) *How to begin from the beginning*, New Left Review, Issue57, pp. 43-55.