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Constellations of Mobility: The Politics of Dream-making

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By Yara Mamdouh Ahmed

Under the Supervision of Professor Martina Rieker

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with how we navigate the labyrinthine nature of our lifeworlds; as we build futures, we dream of other time-spaces. We hope; we wait; we feel stuck. More particularly, this thesis is concerned with the processes of movement that occur when precarious queer bodies dream of a somewhere else, echoing what is brewing in the body, what spills over the boundaries and categories of the possible and the impossible. I take an ethnographic approach in an attempt to trace the multiple projects of dream-making that are becoming around my interlocutors. These projects translate to a crafting of paths that navigate the tensions of moving out of a parent's house, confessing an infatuation, getting out of bed in the morning, and imagining that life is elsewhere, can be otherwise. As bodies cultivate attachments amidst a colossal of heavy objects, they are often infested with uncertainty, fear, a constant diverging from one site to the next. They attach themselves to one object of desire and detach themselves from another. This temporary being in one world then the next, a constant searching for the somewhere else, reflects a complex relationship with hope, desire, fear, helplessness, stillness, depression, and frustration.

Dream-making in my analysis is a site of temporal and spatial constructions. In this thesis, I investigate the architecture that surrounds dreaming of a better life and explore its sociopolitical implications and its incarnation in the everyday. The kind of architecture I am referring to here does not have a blueprint; however, it is endlessly shifting and changing. In taking a spatio-temporal approach to these questions, I am hoping to open up the borders of inquiry and rethink time-space through dream-making projects of the imagination for a more nuanced understanding of movement.

Chapter 1: The Architecture of Dreams: Queering the 'here' and 'there'

Introduction

In his short story, "The Garden of Forking Path", Jorge Luis Borges (1964), a writer and essayist, has his protagonist, come across the mysteries of a long-lost labyrinth, one that was created by his great ancestor Ts'ui Pên. We learn that Ts'ui Pên left his job as a politician in order to write a novel and construct a labyrinth. Having died before finishing his novel, he left behind an "indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts" (Borges, 1964, p. 36) and a cryptic letter stating, " I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths" (Borges, 1964, p. 36). Ts'ui Pên's labyrinthine novel is narrated in fragments, with different outcomes unfolding around the same events. The storyline diverged and forked, bordering on incoherency, leaving readers as confounded as the protagonist himself, who felt like his existence was "infinitely saturated with invisible persons" (Borges, 1964, p. 39) .

Borges' short story (1964) told of a fragmented spatio-temporal scape, where the author and his characters wandered around in labyrinthine paths, in maybes, drafting and redrafting their stories. The plot of the novel is saturated with endless possibilities, a plethora of maybes layered with multiple threads of desires, hopes, and fears. It unfolded hesitantly, unexpectedly, the ebbs and flows of what is and what is yet to come blurred. Borges seems to wander around in the 'yet to come', engaging in life making projects, experimenting, trying on different movements. Each unfolding possibility lent a different path, a different self.

This thesis is concerned with how we navigate the labyrinthine nature of our lifeworlds, as we build futures, we dream of other time-spaces, lives, we hope, we wait, we feel stuck. More particularly, it is concerned with the processes of movement that occur when precarious queer bodies dream of a somewhere else, echoing what is brewing in the body, what spills over the boundaries and categories of the real and the unreal, the possible and the impossible. Queer in this context is "understood less as an identity than as a movement of

thought and language contrary to accepted forms of authority, always deviating, and so opening up spaces for desire that would not always be openly recognized within established norms" (Butler, Gambetti, & Sabsay, 2016, p. 17).

There is a specific sense of urgency in the movement of queer bodies that I am engaging with. This has to do with the particular socio-political conditions in which I am conducting the fieldwork for this thesis, that frames those bodies as undesirable. Marking the body with undesirability and subsequently illegality shuns bodies outside the arenas of living, they wander around as strangers and nomads. Against the backdrop of such a structure, where the nation-state has come to play the sole arbitrator of rights and its governing capacity normalized, intense expulsion and precariousness shove undesirable bodies to the periphery (Menon, 2004).

Imagination in this instance, becomes a "major power of human nature" (Bachelard & Jolas, 1994, p. xxxiv) that plays a role in the assemblages of desires and dreams, as a moving away from an undesirable status. The making of dreams is akin to the act of situating one building block next to another; a movement that attempts to grab something that has not yet become, a testament to life in the making. Its operations rely on the movement of the imagination, from possibility to impossibility; what can be and what remains impossible, what moves us and what hovers over us as an unreachable somewhere else. In this thesis, my interlocutors are detained in the frames of undesirability and illegality that the state and its apparatuses has set out for them, subjected to the differential distribution of uncertainty, stuck in cruel attachments with friends and family, and torn between the different temporal and spatial projections of what their life could be, and what it isn't. What happens when they aspire for a 'somewhere else', and what are the politics that surround those dream-making projects? How does this constant desiring, and imagining of other lifeworlds, reflect in the way they move; in their making and unmaking of tomorrows?

In taking a spatio-temporal approach to these questions, I am hoping to open up the borders of inquiry, and rethink time-space through the imagination for a more nuanced understanding of movement. Movement is not only a kinetic faculty, but also an affective and imaginative one. The movement I am concerned with here, is related to shifts in the imagination, dreaming of what is yet-to-come, constructing another time-space. We migrate with our senses and bodies as we situate ourselves in a plethora of different scenarios that speaks to our fears, desires, dreams. The selves we desire, how we imagine who we are, or who we want to be, what we want, and where we want to go, is crucial in our understanding of processes of becoming. I attempt in this thesis to get a glimpse of how the spatio-temporal scapes of our lifeworlds get de-territorialized and re-territorialized in projects of dream-making? And what does that say about the ideas of a "better life" in the advent of a neoliberal discourse of rights, laws, and citizenship, where a certain understanding of what is inside and outside, possible and impossible, legal and illegal, real and unreal have come to be established? What is it that washes over the projects of dream making, shaping the potentialities of movement—the time-spaces we can imagine and create and the time-spaces that seem unreachable?

In this chapter, I want to lay out the methodology, and the theoretical backdrop of this research. My approach will have a theoretical engagement with the questions I pose as well as an engagement with people and their lifeworlds. The aim of a theoretical engagement in this context is not to reveal 'truth' but as Brown (2002) contends, theory will always remain limited in its encounters and in its efforts to represent. It's a project that is never complete, and the infinite production of meaning and knowledge is always replete with holes and inarticulateness (Brown, 2002). This thesis draws on ethnographic fieldwork to explore the complex ways that people dream, create other selves, and aspire for other time-spaces. Ethnographic engagement here will stretch the modes of inquiry, for delving into the

imaginative faculties of bodies moves us beyond hegemonic narratives that enframe reality as a palpable dimension of time-space. What is 'real' goes beyond the projections of desires onto "other" places, cities or countries, but reality also entails the affective dimensions of the body, its desires, and dreams; projections of romance, friendships, intimacy with others, a longing for a body that is uninhabited by fear, a body that belongs to itself.

On a broader scale, this investigation intends to tell us something about the spatio-temporal politics of dream-making projects. Drawing on ethnography situates this exploration and gives glimpses of the constellations surrounding movement, so that we see movement beyond the traditional conceptions of time and space. Thinking of time and space as linear, flat and progressional, reduces movement to a target driven project, one that is devoid from the tensions of the everyday, the tensions that occur in the body as it migrates from a 'here' to a 'there' and its in-betweens and back again. The 'here' and 'there' in this context are not understood as strictly spatial but are spatio-temporal. The modern assumption that time and space are separate, erases the temporal aspects rooted in our everyday use of terms like 'here' and 'there'. 'There' or '*henak*' in Arabic is situated in space as well as time. According to Boyarin, "the metaphorical structures of our language betray that bifurcation, displaying in particular a tendency to borrow terms connoting spatial relations in our references to change over time" (1994, p. 7). The metaphorical connotations of language assume that one exists without the other, whereas by referring to the 'here' and 'there' we are also inevitably referring to the temporal scapes of the present and the future. Temporalizing the here and there allows for the recognition that in the everyday when we speak of another place we are also speaking of another time.

Ethnographic enquiry steers us away from universalist abstract claims, and instead invites the exploration of the unfolding of lifeworlds within an unmappable everyday 9/5/2018 5:41:00 AM. It agitates categories and leaves space for the unknownness to break

the confines of constructed theory and its frameworks. As João Biehl and Peter Locke contended in *Unfinished* (2017), there is an inevitable "tension between empirical realities and theories" (p. 7) and an anthropology of becoming does not steer away from this tension, but entrenches it within the empirical inquiry process and adopts its unplannedness in an "unstable assemblage" (p. 8).

Approaching this peripheral movement suffuses the hesitancy, the doubt, the fear and the unknowness into the witnessing of lifeworlds. It is in that sense that we recognize that the tracing of fragmented meaning, that decompose as they come together, reflect not only the nature of dream-making projects but also the ethnographic process itself, and as the Paper Boat Collective put it *Crumpled Paper Boat* (Pandian & McLean, 2017):

> "This has long been the promise, largely implicit within anthropology itself: to affirm that actual, existing circumstances are always imbued with the possibility with being otherwise—that actuality is never coincident with itself, that the real is always more than what is actually present somewhere" (p. 19).

Field and Methodology

Since my research is largely dependent on processes of movement that are slippery, people in motion, imagining, retracing their steps, and experimenting, defining my field is tricky. As desires and dreams are crafted and destroyed, splattered with streaks of hope and hopelessness, my field makes and remakes itself. A constant oscillation between a 'here' and a 'there' deterritorializes and reterritorializes the spatio-temporal spheres of my so-called field. Borders and categories that give a semblance of fixity exist, but they remain unfinished: Egypt, Cairo, queerness, the state, the body. This project is largely dependent on fieldwork conducted with and around mostly cisgender, queer young women and men in Cairo between March 2017 and July 2018. My fieldwork is a concoction of interviews, and field notes from hanging out, listening, and witnessing the multiple ebbs and flows of conversations, silences,

waiting and movement (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007). It is a witnessing of the multiple projects of dream-making that are becoming around my interlocutors. These projects translate to a crafting of paths that navigate the possibilities and impossibilities of moving out of a parent's house, confessing an infatuation, getting out of bed in the morning, imagining that life is elsewhere, can be otherwise.

This research revolves around those affective characteristics of movement, those that are erratic and inconsistent, and it is those same features that were a challenge to me in this research. It has been hard to trace these projects of dream-making, or in one way or another, capture snippets of them. It was limiting and exciting at the same time to work with a concept that slippery. The movements I explore are subtle, and I stumbled by them in conversations with friends and/or interlocutors; it was reflected in the ways they held themselves and their bodies, or in shifts in tones and attitudes.

I conducted my ethnography with a particular age-group (early 20s to mid 30s), all seemingly aware to some extent with one or all these terms—whether they choose to identify with them or not—: LGBT+, queer, gay, lesbian. Some of my interlocutors were university students, others worked as teachers, sales assistants, researchers, translators, graphic designers or in NGOs and others were stuck in asylum processes, or were waiting for visas. Some were financially dependent on parents or guardians, while others have moved out of their parent's houses and were for the most part financially independent. Although my fieldwork was conducted in Cairo, a lot of my interlocutors were from other cities in Egypt, like Alexandria, Damanhour, Benha. All my interlocutors for this thesis belonged to what we call the middle-class, which afforded them what Anouk de Konig (2009) calls "cosmopolitan capital": college education, access to various knowledge hubs, digital literacy, and a second language, to name a few.

My interlocutors belong to a generation that lies at the cusp of complex class politics.

The scope of my fieldwork does not cover a diverse socio-economic spectrum, mostly because of the conditions this fieldwork was conducted in. I met my interlocutors through snowball sampling, which entailed reaching out to people from amongst my network of acquaintances and friends that referred me to others and so on. I faced some limitations throughout this process; the most pressing being in terms of access. The topic I deal with is sensitive and required certain precautionary measures around the safety and security of my interlocutors and myself. There is no law against homosexuality in Egypt, but any suspected 'homosexual conduct' is charged under the law of "debauchery." This then requires a certain underground existence; extensive security precautions and measures are taken around gatherings and events that involve queer people.

My investigation in this thesis is not necessarily concerned with revolutions with a capital R, nor with radical social movements, but is concerned with a form of movement that does not necessarily prescribe to revolutionary sketches. Movement here is not synonymous with revolution or resistance. This assumption tends to enforce a hierarchal tradition that scrambles to define what is revolutionary and what isn't. However, it is concerned with what Jackson (2012) calls the playfulness of our lifeworlds; how people navigate the encountered assemblages and how do projects of dream-making come about in spite of the heavy and cruel infrastructure of a precarious everyday?

My research is also cognizant of the role that language has to play in identity production and there has been a rich corpus that deals with the role of language in constructing and shaping sexuality (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Ehrlich, Meyerhoff, & Holmes, 2014; Hall & Bucholtz, 1995). Language is complicit in the enframing of meanings within a certain rhetoric. It is loaded with histories and connotations

that are always moving. However, by using a particular set of labels like Meem[1] or queer in

my thesis, there is an inevitable reference to a certain politicized identity. Not all my

interlocutors however related, used or were familiar with the word queer. Not all my

interlocutors used a certain identity category to identify themselves, and if they did, it seemed

like it was not that long ago that their choices were different. My investigation however, is

more concerned with the language of 'I want' rather than of 'I am' (Brown, 1993). In that

sense, I am interested in exploring projects of "reflexive wanting," projects that are in

becoming, on their way to something otherwise (Brown, 1993).

In that sense, I hold on to the belief that the "ethnographer like the translator is the

self-embodiment of a transitional space"(Churchill, 2005, p. 4). All my engagements with my

'field' as an ethnographer, whether through field notes, observations, reflections,

interpretations of interlocutors' words, and theory making, involves a form of translation

(Churchill, 2005). I will constantly be making choices about "what to report", "how to

report" and what I refuse to report (Churchill, 2005). I go into this research with the

conviction that these endless processes of meaning making that I will engage with do not aim

to reach the "exact essence of things" (Foucault, 2001, p. 142), but to open up "a breathing

space between the world of common meanings and the world of alternative ones, a space of

potential renewal for thought, desire, and action" (Brown, 2002, p. 574).

This chapter is an introduction that delves into the theoretical framework that guides

my research. I engage with discourses on the imagination and on time-space to establish a

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[1] LGBT is translated to م.م.م.م in Arabic (the acronyms stand for *mitliyy*, *mitliyya*, *mughayer*, and *muzduj* which in English would be translated to gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual). Some interlocutors identified with this translated vocabulary; however, to say that it connotes the same cultural meaning as LGBT+ is reductive. Language plays a crucial role in carrying meanings that are ascribed to it and by translating the Arabic back into English, the ascribed meanings shift and change.

ground through which we can unpack dream-making projects, and the movement that echoes through them.

Illegible Imaginariums

The imagination is often dismissed as unreliable, 'not real', fictious, and made up. It is seen as outside the realms of knowing. Its ambiguity and abstractedness guaranteed for it a spot amongst other secondary forms of knowledge, along with myths, stories, and anecdotes. In rethinking the imagination through practices of dream-making, I argue that the imagination offers a fertile ground for movement and potentiality, and is in itself an element of the assemblage that animates the desire for a better life. It is in the abstractedness of the imagination that becoming happens.

The imagination and its articulations were often considered by social scientist as uncharted territories that have to be 'controlled' by the "mind's rational faculties" (Schlutz, 2010, p. 7). In a sense, the ambiguity inherent in the scapes of the imagination posited a threat to the "rational faculties of understanding and reason" (Schlutz, 2010, p. 4). The scarcity of social science discourses around the imagination reveal the traces of a colonial legacy that ignores the different everyday forms of expression and instead reiterates "the emergence of the modern notion of a rational and autonomous individual subject" (Schlutz, 2010, p. 6). Subsequently, discourses around subjectivity have rarely engaged the imagination, at least not directly. Subjectivity instead was always posed as a set of rational and relational articulations that bounce off of each other, and are less likely to be seen as a "meshwork of entangled lines of life, growth and movement" that are prone to the sensory-scapes of the imagination (Ingold, 2011, p. 63).

Engaging the faculties of the imagination shifts the way we look at subjectivity, and the way we understand processes of becoming. Imagination is akin to the flashes that occurs simultaneously with movement. It is a vital faculty in the making of the self. In debating the

relation between imagination and subjectivity, most social scientists perceived the imagination as a threat to the stratums of progress (Schlutz, 2010). At the same time, in considering the imagination, philosphers like Decartes and Kant, recognized its indispensability to the constitution of the self (Schlutz, 2010). However, in both Cartesian and Kantian texts, according to Schultz (2010), imagination remained a "willingly subservient handmaiden" (p. 141) to the faculties of rationality and reason. The existence of the absolute and autonomous 'subject' was made possible by guaranteeing the explicability of subjectivity and the self. It is imagination's instability and oscillating capacity that made it dangerous and unmappaple (Schlutz, 2010). However, it is those same features that makes it indispensable to the rethinking of the affective scapes around becoming.

In moving beyond the neatly articulated binaries of rational and irrational, Schultz (2010) suggested that we think of imagination "as a dynamic force" (p. 10) that intersects and intertwines with other forces within the self, which are constantly in becoming "without a stable organizing center" (Schlutz, 2010, p. 10). Subjectivity can then be understood as the processes of endless becoming, and "as a state of indetermination" (Schlutz, 2010, p. 164). Imagination and its articulations in the various acts of narrating the self, bring about a poetic process of thinking the impossible.

The building blocks of dream-making are scattered within the scapes of our imagination, a meshwork of images, ideas, words, and memories, a constellation that is constantly making and remaking itself, extending its grasp onto our senses, our paintbrush, our pen, our movement, our 'becoming'. For movement does not have to be palpable to the mind's eye, we dream all the time; create other selves, other time-spaces. We imagine the impossible, articulate it in words, in images, translate them and retranslate them. We are always resorting to different lingos to narrate our dreams. The imagination is not only a scape where we construct desired dreams and aspirations, but it is a tense sphere where all our

affective expressions of hope and hopelessness meet. It is where our fears and nightmares incarnate themselves, construct and destroy our lifeworlds.

Venturing Beyond: Time-space becoming

This section does not intend to map out the properties of time-space in western literature, or to summarize the corpus in the field. However, it intends to venture into the different understanding of movement that come about in agitating the master-narratives surrounding time-space. Queering urban typologies: time and space, can give us insight into the potentialities of movements that occur in the everyday.

The rift that hegemonic discourses created between reality and fiction assumes that what we imagine is phantasmic and wasteful. In order to understand where we are, Ernst Bloch (1995) contends that we need to be more attuned to the relationships we have with our pasts, how we relate and imagine them, and also the attachments we have to the futures we imagine. Reconceptualizing practices of dream-making in relation to Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* (1995), a different understanding of movement comes about, one that decrowns the conceptual hierarchy that separates what is real from what is fiction (i.e. dreams, imagination, myth) and that agitates temporal discourses that conceive of time-space as neatly structured and fixed.

For Bloch (1995), dream-making or what he calls "venturing beyond" is never attached to a particular space or time (for example, what we understand as the past, present and future), but cruises spatio-temporal scapes and "never goes into the mere vacuum of an In-Front-of-Us" (p. 4). In venturing beyond, our imagination clings to our bodies and prompts a sensory reaction; a desire to become something otherwise. Dream-making or venturing beyond is then "a mode of temporality, a cognitive and affective relation to time and a way to approach the relationship among historicity, presentism and futurity" (Weeks, 2011, p. 186).

In venturing beyond, a thick interplay between what has passed, what is in motion, and what is not yet conscious, comes about. We experiment with what we desire, what could be, we experiment with different selves and the "ways to fulfill them" (Weeks, 2011, p. 193). This shifts the lines dividing past, present and future. As the lines blur and the articulation of a somewhere else is in constant becoming, and so in venturing beyond, temporal scapes are in constant making and remaking.

In considering dream-making, we are looking at acts of production, projects in the making. When we talk of spaces and time in the everyday, we usually imagine physical places, or dates on a calendar, we rarely discuss the abstract in terms of time-space, whereas in dream-making, we use another language, that of dreams, imagination and fantasy; implying that dreams and the imagination float in a nowhere place. It is almost as if they are non-temporal, de-spatialised. To understand time-space from the site of the imagination, I will draw on the Deleuzian notion of assemblage which conceptualizes the coming together of heterogeneous elements into "the always emergent conditions of the present"(Farías & Bender, 2009, p. 15). Coming together here implies the relational aspect of assemblages, so that it is not understood as a meeting of, but an enmeshment, a constellation of multiple faculties (Farías & Bender, 2009).

In *Remapping Memory* (1994), Jonathan Boyarin insists on talking about temporalizing and spatializing discourses instead of time and space. He contends that the western separation of time and space were born out of a modern notion that was founded on "a nation with a sharply bounded, continuously occupied space controlled by a single sovereign state, comprising a set of autonomous yet essentially identical individuals" (Boyarin, 1994, p. 2). The assumption that time and space are separate dimensions, homogenous and linear in nature contrasts with perception of progress for example, where the politics of temporality and spatiality are most profound, complex and intertwine.

When we talk of space, we are inevitably also talking about time. Henri Lefebvre understood space as "social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopia"(Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 2011, p. 12). It is not homogenous in its constitution but is endlessly produced, always in the making, amidst the agitative potentialities of vulnerable bodies. Our imagining of different spaces, entails projections that are temporal. Separating time and space without being cognizant of the politics that surrounds these constructs: nation, progress, and the intense appropriation of the imagination into a neoliberal agenda, washes over the intricacies of movement.

Temporalizing discourses

Temporality in the sites of dream-making breaks the confines of linear progress, it is often malleable, incomplete, constituted out of affective elements that are in constant transition. For dreams of a somewhere else involves at times a leaving behind, an untangling of attachments, that sometimes happens violently. It also involves a making, a putting things together, a laboring to make a home within the world. Possibility and impossibility dance with each other, construct and destroy, and we get lost in stacks of crumpled papers, labyrinths of tomorrows.

For Boyarin (1994), memory is not a detached entity that remains in the past, nor is it "a projection from the present," instead it is the collaboration between expressions of what we think of as past and present. Dreaming (at least in wakefulness) is exemplary of this relationship. The temporal scapes of the imagination are not a linear expanse, but an assemblage of flashes and constellations that move beyond what we think we expect from time. Our imagination deters conventional understandings of temporality and as we migrate with our senses, and cross boundaries, we imagine the self in movement, and it becomes a process through which we become.

Aliaa Al-Saji (2004) takes Boyarin's contention further and by engaging with Deleuze and Berguson, argues that "time is not internal to consciousness" (p. 204) but that "it is we who are internal to time" (Al-Saji, 2004). In other words, it is we who move between the vast expanses of time, and time is not a construct of our perceptions alone. Al-Saji (2004) also moves away from a tradition of theorizing temporality in terms of a "chronological succession of instants" (p. 204) arguing that it hides the extended threads between what has passed and what is in-front-of us. It imagines it to be a temporal line that is akin to "a closed system where the new and the unpredictable are excluded" (Al-Saji, 2004, p. 205). Conceiving of time as a flat linear passage erases the plethora of connections that are intrinsic to time. It also leaves no space for the multiple expressions of the past and the overriding presence of the future in the everyday, which entails a certain blindness to the overarching effect they pose in our experiencing of temporality.

Al-Saji (2004) also argues that this "standard" understanding of temporality "stem from our habit of identifying reality with presence" (p. 204), and in that sense, a reality/irrealtiy binary is created, and anything outside immediate presence, is assigned to the unreal, sometimes marked as dangerous. A denomination is assigned to the present, and in turn underplays the effect of the "phenomenological past" (Al-Saji, 2004). This understanding recognizes time as a progressional passage, a movement that is based on a before and after (Al-Saji, 2004).

Al-Saji (2004) challenged this theoretical tradition, for an alternative understanding of time, an ontology that considers the crisscrossing of temporal scapes and the "different ordering of past and present" (p. 205). In accounting for the coexistence, the intersecting of temporalities, she introduces a theory that explains the unrelentless movement of the temporal scapes, one that emphasizes the endless becoming without blurring the lines between past, present and future (Al-Saji, 2004). Berguson's theory, the "Paradox of the

Leap," lies at the core of her exploration, in which he contended that even though the past and present "may seem to form a psychological continuity, the one following upon the other in degrees, ontologically they are discontinuous" (Al-Saji, 2004, p. 207). This entailed a conception in terms of planes and leaps, not as a bounded incessant line (Al-Saji, 2004). The past, present and future coexist simultaneously in different planes or sheets, caught up in "a relation of transmission or exchange" (Al-Saji, 2004, p. 207). In this view, past and present are not simply moments of before and after, but "two jets issuing from a common source, simultaneously" (Al-Saji, 2004, p. 209).

Al-Saji's (2004) alternative theory of time, resonates well with the practices of dream making that I am concerned with in this thesis. Dream-making involves a continuous conjuring up of planes of the past and future. It involves a complex relationship with hope, memory and desire. Dream-makers engage with the sheets of temporal scapes in their hoping for something otherwise. Seeking the 'somewhere else' is not a simple looking towards the future, but always interplays with other planes of what has been and what is. In that sense, in this research it is not conceived as a relationship with a single temporal plane that is fixed towards the future.

In process of imagining a somewhere else, the 'here' and 'there' are not understood in terms of a three-dimensional physical fixed space or in terms of a linear expanse of time. They are however attached to a particular kind of corporeality, related to the body and its mobility, so that perceptions of safety, security, home, family, familiarity and affective expressions of desires play into their making. These expressions change over time-space. They shape imaginaries of belonging and dis-belonging, not necessarily as opposing spheres, but as affective dimensions that are mapped onto bodies as well as geographies.

Chapter Breakdown

In the coming chapters, I explore the movement in the labyrinths of lifeworlds, the 'maybes' and 'almosts' that are recreated, and trace the fragments of dream-making projects that unfold with my interlocutors. As the everyday breaks the structured walls of theory, strays from the coherent, the stories I engage with and around, are not stories of victims, nor heroes for that matter, but testimonies of living around the ruins of the world. Energies are spent picking at ruins, forging paths, escaping others, oscillating between hope and hopelessness, feeling stuck. In those moments of creation and destruction, uncertainty, fear, and dreaming, life ensues. It is an incessant movement between spaces of homeliness, and spaces of despair, where projects of coming into yourself, lured with objects of attachment flash and then disappear.

In chapter 2, I introduce the socio-political backdrop of my field. I then explore Ghassan Hage's (2009) notion of existential mobility through the stories of two of my interlocutors, Ahmed and Karim. Mobility in this thesis is not contigent on actual kinetic movement alone but also the ability to imagine something else. The uncertainty and fear replete in dreaming amidst those anxieties of the everyday and the movement that occur inspite of and because of the existential dilemmas of being. My interlocutors find themselves asking "What am I doing here?" in moments of intense stuckedness and fear. Amidst this uncertainty, wantings pull at each other, and desires shrivel as they clash with the violence of large heavy objects. "What am I doing here?" as an affective response provokes a tension, existential flashes of movement, wanderings that ensue with a making and an unmaking, a creative destruction and a construction. By exploring existential mobility, I also explore this tension and the waiting and stuckedness that ensue with existential immobility.

In this chapter, I look at mobility and immobility not as separate ends of a spectrum, but as an oscillating tense relationship between possibility and impossibility in the sites of the

imagination. As bodies experience the temporariness of their uncertain situations, their everyday becomes a labyrinthine wandering that works with and away from it.

In chapter 3, I engage Judith Butler's *Frames of War* (2009) in exploring the precarious geographies forged around queer bodies and their oscillation between scapes of vulnerability. I look at the metamorphosis of the body that occurs with the trumping of the heavy objects of the state, and the cruel optimism that comes hand in hand with the attachments that bodies retain in situations of detention and imprisonment. Drawing on Mohamed Abd El Naby's novel *Fi Ghurfat Al-ankabout* or *In the Spider's Room* (2017), a novel that follows the lifeworld of a gay man in Cairo, I ask questions surrounding the rewriting of the self and the creative reorientation of movements that queer bodies engage with.

In chapter 4, I take on a spatial approach to connections and relationships and look at the infrastructure of people that scape complex affective geographies for my interlocutors. Relationships, friendships and collective coming together of people are core constituents of processes that witness the making and remaking of lifeworlds. Approaching the spatio-temporal assemblages from the social lends a more intricate understanding of the collective movements and enmeshment of dream-scapes that comes about in my field.

Chapter 2: What am I doing here?

"becoming involves a basic tension—or perhaps alchemy—between destruction and creation" (Garcia, 2017, p. 113).

Ahmed and I sit at a cafe near where I live. It did not take time to set this meeting up, even though we barely knew each other then. We met through Farid, a good friend of mine, and also Ahmed's boyfriend. He seemed nervous, hesitated before he sat down. He had a quiet personality, rarely talked about himself except when asked direct questions. He was very shy that first time we hung out, but as months passed and we spent more time together, I could see him becoming louder, angrier and more assertive, partly because he was more comfortable around me, but mostly because he was becoming comfortable taking more space around others. The café was busy, and although we were outside, loud music was emanating from a speaker nearby. I wished then that we could have met somewhere quieter. I worried about introducing my topic, especially that most of the time I felt like I was talking about something too illusive. I worried that the abstractedness of the movement I was interested in, would perhaps make it less valid, less 'real'. I was surprised then that Ahmed could easily get what I meant. He talked about his wants, dreams, moments of hope and hopelessness. As he got into telling me his story, he would occasionally stop and say "this is probably not relevant." No, I thought, everything is, and although I could not tell all his stories here: why he stopped drawing, or how his mother took away his sowing machine, or the night he spent in prison, or the friendships he made and lost, or the crushes he had, or the relationships he thought were impossible; I thought everything was relevant. The messiness of where he was and the experiences he had gone through projected onto his immediate lifeworld its own set of borders and paths, an imagining of where he was and where he wants to be.

I noticed that he kept lowering his voice, looking around too much, he was anxious about being overheard. Barely 2 months had passed since the 22nd of September (2017) rainbow flag incident, when during a concert held in Cairo by the Lebanese band Mashrou' Leila, several

concertgoers, queer and queer allies, held up a rainbow flag. The incident was followed by a severe crackdown against non-heteronormative bodies who condoned same-sex relationships. The atmosphere was tenser than usual then, arrests were taking place on a daily basis. But as we shifted our chairs further from the tables near us, he started talking more freely again.

Ahmed was 21 then, had just graduated law school and was working at a store in a mall as a sales assistant. He told me about the hard time he was having at work, the bullying, the gossip. He told me about his tense relationship with his parents, the fights he tried to avoid and the ones he had to have. He told me about the isolation he felt from family and friends; the spending weeks on end at home, mostly in his room, going out only to do house chores; the dreams he had for the future, his desire to get a place of his own, to move out, to carve more spaces where he can "be himself," to not have to lead what he called a "fake life." He felt pressured most of the time to perform a certain idea of masculinity and if he failed to do so, he was bullied and harassed. He wanted things to be different, to not be forced into this isolation. He was afraid, that he would end up stuck; "I want to go somewhere else..., instead of pretending to be someone I am not, or acting like something I am not just to please them, just because I am afraid…" We wandered around stories of distress, survival, and hopelessness. He explains:

> "I cannot keep this act up, I end up breaking at any moment. I am not always able to pull it off, to act like someone I am not… so sometimes, things show. Like at work for example, until today they are still bullying me. The day before, a bunch of guys were walking behind me, and I was heading to this store to buy something before they close, and when they walked past me I heard them saying, "who did this to you?" in a loud voice."

Ahmed told me about a lot more of these incidents, at work, in the street. The bullying and homophobia followed him everywhere, by colleagues at work, by bosses, by strangers in the street, by old men. People talked about him behind his back, gossiped, made snide comments, harassed him. He told me about this one guy who worked in the same mall he did and came up to him with

unsolicited advice, telling him he should change the way he walks and dresses.

The second time we hung out, he asked me to meet him at the store where he worked as a sales assistant. It was a favor. He wanted people with him at work to think I was his girlfriend. He thought that if people saw him with a girl, the rumors and bullying because of his assumed gayness would stop, or at least would die down. As a teenager, he was bullied for not abiding by certain ideals of masculinity. His friends thought he was too quiet, too soft, too uninterested in girls. He spent a lot of time alone, thinking, reading, watching. He was unsure of himself, where he wanted to go, what he was doing. He struggled with self-acceptance and worth, and suffered from psychological distress.

> "For two years, I barely got out of the house, except to attend exams and classes and that's it. Since I found out I was *keda* (*keda* is an Arabic word that means 'this', here referring to being non-heterosexual) I felt that there was something off. I was so sensitive about everything my friends said. Sometimes I thought it was okay, they are joking and what not. They say I am *keda* and whatnot, I would try to take it lightly, as a joke, but I would go home and feel depressed, so I decided to stay away from them" (Ahmed).

Ahmed also went through an isolating experience with his family. He was not able to share anything with his older brother. And whenever he opened up any topics about sexuality, their responses discouraged him from sharing anything with them. What happens when your coming into yourself entails a disowning of the space that surrounds you; your home, your family, your friends, an enforced isolation? Your dreams of another time-space incarnated themselves in a form of escaping from, a disowning of the 'here 'or everything that you have come to know in the 'here' with its spatial and temporal aspects. And so, the process of looking for a different space to stretch your being begins, an architecture of a lifeworld that entails a constant experimentation, a crafting and a destruction and so on.

In this chapter, I am going to look at the uncertainty replete in dream-making projects

and the destruction and construction that occur with dreaming of the somewhere else. I will explore moments from which the question: "What am I doing here?" arises. These moments speak of a certain precariousness that is felt in the everyday life of queer bodies in my field. A sense of "existential immobility" reverberated from their movements, in moments of pushing through, escaping, letting go, waiting, or giving up. What Ghassan Hage (2009) calls "existential immobility" is not about a physical stuckedness, but refers to moments of intense hopelessness, a state where one can not envision where they are going. Through following snippets of Ahmed and Karim's stories, two queer men who live in Cairo, I will look at how existential immobility manifests in their day to day lives. I attempt to show that the relation between where we are and where we want to go is not a linear transition from one fixed point in time-space to another, but a continuous reinvention of possibility and a reterritorialization of impossibility.

In the coming section, I explore the geographies of hope and hopelessness in Egypt's national discourses and how they have come to play a role in imaginaries around the "better life." I also explore how morality infused security-state discourses around queer bodies have affected the everyday construction and destruction of possibility and dreams and posed as heavy objects that obstruct movement.

A Tilled Field for the Consumption of Hope

Egypt's past decade has witnessed a strenuous eruption of projects of hope and hopelessness with the 2011 revolution and its aftermath impacting projections of the future, and the potentials, frustrations and anxieties the moment held. The last few years witnessed more pronounced disappearances, random arrests, police violence, torture, and a complete sweep of any semblance of opposition to the status quo. We are handed a governing body that uses direct threat merged with the usual tactics of fear and violence to maintain control.

In the sites of the state and its apparatuses, dispositifs of control and management

coopt the affective scapes of the imagination to promote futures that fit within national agendas and regimes. Progress in a neoliberal Egypt has brought with it accelerated infrastructural developments and a middle-class aesthetic, which shifted perceptions around time-space. I briefly trace those transformations, to see how neoliberal ideals packaged in a façade of democracy and liberal governance, shifted the national imagination and discourses around the 'better life'.

We are a long way away from Gamal Abd El Nasser's (1952-1970) nationalistic discourses, with his pan-Arab ideology, socialist politics and state-led developments. The abandonment of Nasserite welfare policies—although not necessarily successful in their application—for a more privatized economy started with Sadat's *infitaah* (open-door policies) in the early 1970s (Koning, 2009; Mitchell, 2002). "Market" narratives often exaggerated this shift as the start of a financial flow from international investors and private enterprise (Mitchell, 2002). The move was sold as a liberalization of the economy from the regulation of the state. However, "Economic relations had been formatted as a mix of government and so-called private processes since… the nineteenth century..." (Mitchell, 2002, p. 211). The state remained the core facilitator of a fast-growing neoliberal market (Koning, 2009). The government went through a series of economic policy shifts that were not so much about the withdrawal of state support[2], but more about "a change in who received it" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 277). In *Rule of Experts*, Timothy Mitchell (2002) contends that the so-called liberalization of the market was more of a "multilayered political readjustment of rents, subsidies, and the control of resources" (p. 277) . The market was far from "liberalized" from state intervention; instead the government managed arenas of

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[2] Lines between public and private blurred as the story of the flow of money towards a seemingly "private enterprise" ignored the fact that many large government-enterprises "had their own "private sector" subsidiaries or joint ventures, typically run by members of the same family managing the public sector parent" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 280).

investment, issued revivals and reforms that influenced the market, supported the banking sector from its subsidies to prevent its collapse, and pumped millions in development projects and property (Mitchell, 2002). It also controlled the revenues for the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation and the Suez Canal Authority, two of the most profitable public resources the country owned (Mitchell, 2002).

The flattened stories that the government sold the public brought with them a shift in political discourses around state responsibility and shifted the national imagination (Koning, 2009). In 1991, Egypt signed two agreements with the World Bank and the IMF with the publically announced intention to work on its pressing economic imbalances and to repay its foreign debts. The agreement, the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programs (ERSAP) was sold as a move towards "transforming [Egypt's economy] to a market-based economy, and to restore the country's creditworthiness" (Korayem, 1997). However, the motives and politics behind the agreement was more complex than that; the agreement was part of the conditions for the creditor nations decision to cancel $22.8 billion of Egypt's external debts, which cut its debts almost in half (Greenhouse, 1991). The creditor's decision came after Egypt sided with the U.S. against Iraq in the Gulf war (Greenhouse, 1991; Mitchell, 2002). Economic reforms that served privatization policies packaged in structural adjustment programs accelerated Egypt's initiation into a neoliberal global market, as its policies moved towards amplifying privatization, foreign direct investment and export led growth (Korayem, 1997). These policies extended onto the body a narrative of the entrepreneurial self, with a debt-like responsibility that expected 'responsible citizens' to work, produce, consume and abide by the 'law.'

Progress narratives have since hardened their grip onto the social strata to encompass a range of consumer goods, life-style codes and practices that widened the gaps between social-classes (Koning, 2009). Dreams of a "better life" in those moments were

incarnated in the illusion that whatever is coming is towards something better, that the future held progress. It startled us into thinking that we are on a linear path towards the better life, which has come seeped in capital's promises of the better house, the better car, technological advancement, more progressive sciences, the best spatial and temporal scapes to bear the body.

In the popular imagination, what Egypt "should be" is torn between the promises of political parties, global capitalism, religious-moral narratives, and regimes of consumption (Schielke, 2015). Circulating ideals of the good life are reliant on a navigation of the body in a lifeworld infested by those dominant narratives. There is no one ideal that dominates the scapes of the imagination but all contesting ideals intertwine in the body for a continuous rewriting of the self (Schielke, 2015). Promises and grand schemes are often multilayered spatio-temporal scapes that co-exist in the body rather than trump one another. In thinking about how bodies navigate these searing narratives and promises, what we can call the regimes of hope and hopelessness, Samuli Schielke (2015) uses the term "grand schemes" to identify "persons ideas and powers that are understood to be greater than one's ordinary life located on a higher plane, distinct from everyday life, and yet relevant as models of living" (p. 13) . The appeal in this context lies in the untouchable status of those model lives, and their sanctity is contingent upon their ambiguity (Schielke, 2015). They are futures suspended, unrealized and unshaken by it.

In *Global Dreams Cairo*, Anouk de Koning (2009) explored the reorientation of Cairo's national imagination with the restructuring of neoliberalism. Reorienting the national imagination was centered around the capital city, Cairo, a city that became the bearer of the burden of modernity. Koning (2009) reflects on the sentiments used in TV advertisement devoted to regulate the images around modern Cairo. Whether in TV commercials or the endless stretch of massive billboards around the city—a phenomenon that sprung up only in the last 10 years—, these ads portrayed images of the future and modernity

that excluded the majority of the population (Koning, 2009). This was a semblance of the contradictions within capital relations and goes to show the significant gaps entailed in class politics. And thus "…only certain people were to be part of the future generation that would take Egypt into the future" (Koning, 2009, p. 17).

"Picturing an other Cairo" entailed promoting a certain aesthetic of the modern that fitted the affluent upper and upper-middle classes (Koning, 2009). Imaginaries circulated of clean, tidy and technologically advanced cities, where skyscrapers sprung for businesses, and green lush compounds for residential areas. As markers of a First World aesthetics, these imaginaries rung of a postcolonial legacy that scrambled to imitate the West (Koning, 2009). To be part of something bigger and better entailed an inclusion in a transnational model of modernity, becoming a 'global city' spelled out "inclusion to an exclusive reality: elegant, fashionable and First World, as well as elite and restricted" (Koning, 2009, p. 24). Koning (2009) contended that imagining a life-style that bore the cosmopolitan fashionable West was largely reliant on the consumption of goods and on familiarizing yourself with lifestyles and behaviors that were characteristic of transnational modernity, or what she called "cosmopolitan capital." For example, being fluent in a second language, going to a private school, attending university abroad, etc.

Throughout my field, these First World aesthetics featured often in the imagination of the better life; as my interlocutors mentioned clean streets, nice homes, and a more technologically advanced infrastructure. These grand schemes were sharp and shiny. Not only did they imply a certain aesthetic around modernity that bears a heavy colonial legacy but also as Ferguson suggests in Global Shadows (2006), dreaming of the 'modern' does not necessarily imply blind copying but is "also part of a powerful claim to a chance for a transformed condition of life..."(Ferguson, 2006, p. 19).

Larkin's (2013) "Poetics of infrastructure" reflects on "the deeply affectual relation people have to infrastructures—the senses of awe and fascination they stimulate" (p. 334). Infrastructure holds the potentiality for transformation. Clean roads, technology in all its forms, contained a movement of the self to another condition of being, another experience for the body, the mind. The "somewhere else", the "better life" bore the markers of modern infrastructure, a representation of a future in sight, the markers of possibility (Larkin, 2013).

> "…infrastructure is not just a technical object but a language to be learned, a way of tuning into the desire and sense of possibility expressed in the very materials of infrastructure" (Larkin, 2013, p. 337).

The promises that modern infrastructure bore, echoed a transformative affective, spatial, political and temporal experiencing of the everyday that cast out the heaviness of the present (Abourahme, 2014; Larkin, 2013). Narratives of the future were founded on exclusionary politics. Phenomenon of expulsion accelerated significantly with the movement of the production cycle (Lazzarato, 2009; Weeks, 2011). Bodies were dubbed undesirable, labeled and excluded from the schemas of the state and its imagination (Agier, 2011). The government needed its scape goats, its "terrorists" and its "*Baltageya*" (an Arabic word that means vagabonds) to posit as an evil that is scampering to poison the nation and its progress (Agier, 2011).

Dreaming of alternatives was considered a threat, a betrayal to the nation. A sense of defeat pervaded those bodies that did not fit within the criteria of desirability, especially after the 2011 revolution which had for a brief moment given off a semblance of hope. The 2011 revolution passed, and shortly after, the hopes for an alternative future. That is not to say that the revolution and its promises have come and gone, but that the imagined 'somewhere else' that was created at that moment was crushed in a whirlpool of state violence. Popular discourses are now torn between buying into the state's empty promises of security, even if

that translated into police violence and brutality, or a cynical apathy, and a regret bordering onto "I wish we can go back in time".

It is no surprise that dreams of leaving have become the go-to aspiration for many. Financial insecurity, a high sense of alienation, the trauma of the 2011 revolution spread an atmosphere of political depression that left people scrambling for a sense of hope elsewhere in time-space. Leaving for some translated to migration outside of the country, which entailed investing in a complex paper route of applications, and visas, or packing up a few possessions and hopping on a boat in search for the somewhere else, the "better life", even if it came packaged with its own sets of violence and fears.

Amongst these ruins of the modern, the endless waiting, the sense of defeat and stuckedness, how do bodies create a living space? How do they construe a 'somewhere else' that encompasses their desires and hopes? As bodies cultivate attachments amidst a colossal of heavy objects, they are often infested with uncertainty, fear, a constant diverging from one site to the next. They attach themselves to one object of desire, detach themselves from another. This temporary being in one world then the next, a constant searching for the somewhere else, reflects a complex relationship with hope, desire, fear, helplessness, stillness, depression and frustration.

Maher, a 35 years old queer activist expressed to me how thinking back to the 2011 revolution, leaves him with a sense of overall stuckedness, the future is gone, and there is no way out. The fatalist political atmosphere has thrown off the imagination. Stuckedness has become a feature of the post-revolutionary moment. Queernesss in those moments wavers between utopianism and anti-utopianism. On one hand, it reflects an ideality, that other potential future that is beyond the here and now (Munoz, 2009). On the other, it seems unreasonable, dangerous.

The Detention of Morality

Since 2001, Egypt's state police has been targeting and arresting men suspected of "homosexual conduct" (Human Rights Watch, 2004). Categories like queer are nonexistent for the state, and instead non-heteromormative bodies are lumped under the word *shezoz*. Almaany dictionary lists the meaning of *Shaz* to be "abnormal", or "someone who is outside of the group/community," "what deviates from the rule or the standard." *Shaz*, however, is commonly used as a derogatory term for non-hetronormative, with the same connotations as deviant or faggot.

Shezoz marks the body with undesirability. Precarity in this instant is entrenched in that undesirable status. In 2001, the state initiated a crackdown on non-heteronormative bodies that started with the Queen Boat incident, and saw the arrest of 52 men during a raid on a boat that was also a disco where queer people gathered. Even though there was and still is no explicit law against homosexuality, people who were suspected of same-sex relations were accused of "debauchery". As per the penal code in article 9(c) of Egypt's "Law on the Combating of Prostitution" practice of "fujur" or debauchery and "di`ara" (meaning prostitution) "are punished with up to three years imprisonment, plus fines" (Human Rights Watch, 2004). In his dissertation, Mohamed Zaki (2013) comments on the divorce of debauchery and prostitution in court legislations. As pleading innocent to the practice of "di'ara" or proving that there was no financial compensation involved for the sexual act did not exempt some defendants from being charged with "debauchery" (Zaki, 2013) . This division "allowed and continues to allow the police, prosecutors and courts to wield the charge of 'debauchery' as an instrument of societal moral control" (Zaki, 2013, p. 50).

In *The Security Archipelago*, Paul Amar (2013) examines the cooption of notions of human morality and dignity into national discourse around securitization and protection. What he calls humanizing securitization established it a national duty to protect the 'morals'

and 'traditions' of a said society (Amar, 2013). The state's understanding of what was moralistic or traditional was arbitrary and often relied on a set of heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality (Amar, 2013). What was moral conflated with what was legal in a violent strategy shrouded under the guise of human protection (Amar, 2013). These forms of securitization framed the body under a "moralistic," "paramilitary" understanding of citizenship, rights, security and territoriality (Amar, 2013). In a predominantly Muslim society, a sense of religiosity accompanied militarist-national discourses. Homosexuality was considered a sin by the majority of Muslims and Muslim legislative bodies. What was "*haram*" (sinful) and what was "*halal*" (permissible) blurred with what was "legal" and "illegal". Persecution and management of queer bodies, provided an opportunity for state apparatuses "to 'perform' a discourse of national security through which national sovereignty was (re)produced and political order was maintained" (Pratt, 2007, p. 129).

Arguments have varied as to the reasons behind the 2001 crackdown on same-sex relations in Egypt. Hossam Bahgat, the founding executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) argued that the crackdown was an attempt to divert the attention of the public from politico-economic crises in Egypt, "a strategy of distraction" (Antoun, 2017; Bahgat, 2013). Nicola Pratt (2007) takes Bahgat's argument further and explores how "the punishment of homosexuality was not only represented as a means of securing Egyptian manhood but also as a means of protecting Egyptian national security" (p. 137). Heteronormative discourses in Egypt are not only confined to the domestic sphere of the household where it is conducive to ascribing gender roles, but are also essential in maintaining a hetero-social structure that extends to definitions of citizenship and to the blueprints of the nation-state (Pratt, 2007). This process is particularly blatant in a religio-political framework where religious narratives have become part and parcel of state legislations and is complicit in the regulation of bodies (Pratt, 2007):

"Sexual relations and identities are not only a private/intimate matter but also 'an arena of constant surveillance and control' and an inextricable part of the national and state processes that constitute the sphere of international politics (Pratt, 2007, p. 130)."

Arrests have also increased noticeably since 2013, marking the military coup on Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. The crackdown this time, started with the Bathhouse incident, which occurred when TV journalist Mona Iraqi coordinated a raid on a bathhouse which served as a gathering spot for queer men in Egypt (Antoun, 2017; Mada Masr, 2016). It is posited that the increased crackdown attempted to stretch the regulatory capacity of state apparatuses after the revolution, and to push forth a façade of control, morality, and religiosity. The crackdown on same-sex relations in Egypt mainly targeted men and transgender women;[3] this entailed online surveillance, raids on private homes, torture, and invasive anal examinations. The aim of such purposeful hounding was to gain favor of a dominantly Muslim society by positing the new regime as conservative, while at the same time pushing forth a seemingly more "liberal" stance that was promoting itself as more appealing than the "radical" Muslim Brotherhood regime (Bahgat, 2013; Luongo, 2012). The production of the figure of the "other" demonized "loose secular" sexuality on one hand, and vilified the "radical" Islamist regime on the other, which ensured the status of the new regime as the paternal protector of the nation.

The administrative body involved in these cases is known as "shortet El 'adab" or the Morality police, a division under the Ministry of Interior with the official title: The Public Division for the Investigation of Crimes against Morality. The division sets itself out to be a tool for the protection of the nation against the offences done in breach of the moral codes of the nation(Human Rights Watch, 2004; Zaki, 2013). In cases of "debauchery," the non-

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[3] "Transgender women are usually prosecuted as men because the police, courts and news media in Egypt… make no meaningful distinction between gay men and transgender women" (Stack, 2015).

heteronormative body is framed as a threat. In referencing the prosecution in 2001, Zaki (2013) states that "The public prosecution of gay men in 2001 was heralded as the nation's quest to purge itself of immoral elements through legislature that draws explicitly on understandings of morality" (p. 50). The body becomes a sight of the nation's moral territory, and the non-heteronormative body a threat that is cause for moral panic.

The queer body in that instance is in a continuous state of becoming in the backdrop of a de- and reterritorialized map that is formulated through a constellation of political, socio-religious frames. Some interpretations perceive the motives of queer aspiring migrants as the outcome of a desire for a move from the "dark East" to the "enlightened West," from an "oppressive" heteronormative state structure to a "liberal" homonationalist state[4] (Puar, 2007), translating queer aspirations to a mere transition from point A to point B and erasing the spatial, affective, and subjective dimensions that are complicit in their movement. Such narratives have been assimilated into political discourses to serve processes of international policymaking. It also fueled the othering of bodies, producing the image of the oppressed Arab homosexual other who, like the brown Afghani woman, needs to be saved from an "Islamist radical state."

In the U.S. for example, a country that figures in the migratory aspiration of some interlocutors I have talked to, queer bodies have been incorporated within the state apparatus in a way that is conducive to nationalistic discourses about patriotism and the liberal rights bearing citizen (Puar, 2013; Richardson, 2015). This is an instance where the state has adapted its dispositifs of discipline in order to encapsulate sexualized bodies within

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[4] Coined by Puar in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), the term "homonationalism" is defined as "a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality" (Puar, 2013).

constructs of national identity. The control and management of bodies guaranteed the security of the nation-state. Homonationalism has established itself as "a facet of modernity," which prompts us to question to what extent such narratives actually reiterated heteronormative discourses and adapted to neoliberal structures (Puar, 2013; Richardson, 2015).

The Multiple Heads of Control

Circulating hegemonic narratives around the lives of queer bodies in Egypt are torn between Egyptian state narratives of the undesirable, the incarnation of moral terrorism, and Western narratives seeped in homonationalist politics. In breaking away from these narratives, how then can we understand the multiple dispositifs of control that manage queer bodies. I have found that Lazzarato's corpus lends a more nuanced understanding of control and management that manage lives in a neoliberal age.

Lazzarato (2006, 2009) moves away from deterministic understandings of the subject as solely driven by monetary constraints and a slave to the accumulative capacities of a market driven economy. Lazzarato's (2006) explanation of the modern structures of neoliberalism also complicates our understanding of expulsion. For the expulsion of bodies and their marginalization is not a sole consequence of the global structures of capital. Instead, "regimes of signs, machines of expression and collective assemblages of enunciation (law, knowledges, languages, public opinion, etc.)" play a significant role in the subjection of bodies (Lazzarato, 2006, p. 172). This is not to deny or dismiss the power that capital employs in the sorting of people, places, economies, and bits of life (e.g., the environment) (Sassen, 2014). However, Lazzarato's (2006) argument considers the intersection of various dispositifs of discipline, control and biopolitics in creating not a supranational structure, but a complex multilayered intersecting assemblage that modulates neoliberal bodies. In brief, Lazzarato's (2006) society of control is characterized by an assemblage of (1) technological dispositifs acting at a distance, or in other words, the affective power extended by the

circulation of words, writings, images and symbols through technological means like the Internet, the telephone, the radio, etc.; (2) biopower that invests in the control of "overall processes that are specific to life—such as birth, death, production, and illness" (Lazzarato, 2006, p. 178); and (3) the control of population through the manipulation "of collective perceptions and collective intelligence," which is extended through "the brain's power to affect and become affected" (Lazzarato, 2006, p. 180). The society of control is then constructed by the disciplining of bodies through various modes of intervention and management, those being the capturing of bodies in disciplinary institutions (school, hospital, etc.), the administration of territories, and the control of knowledge circulation, signs, images, language and symbols (Lazzarato, 2006; Linke, 2006). It operates in unexpected zones, and "[flows] through the pleasure zones of sex, leisure and consumption" (Linke, 2006).The societies of control in a sense modulates the production of desires, knowledge, beliefs and aspirations. As Lazzarato contends:

> "The capture, control and regulation of the action at a distance of one mind on another takes place through the modulation of flows of desires and beliefs and through the forces (memory and attention) that make these flows circulate in the cooperation between brains. (Lazzarato, 2006, p. 185)"

That is not to say that bodies are absolutely governed by these structures, for although bodies are bound to these apparatuses of control, the society of control is complex in its operations. It is not a fixed arena of management and control, but a sensory body that is alive. We often think of control as incarnated in a fixed body that is outside of the realm of 'ordinary living'. However, these power structures are in the end, managed by living bodies; politicians, judges, police men, etc. They are apparatuses that de- and reterritorialize; and do not have a fixed regulatory framework but are always in becoming. These fluid organisms occupy a site of tension and movement that is constantly remaking itself, reorganizing its

grasp on the body, reterritorializing its control. In thinking about the state and the society of control as in themselves in a constant state of becoming, we move away from a master narrative that contends the state as the be all and end all of governmentality and absolute sovereignty. Instead of looking at state sovereignty then, as an extension of capitalist agendas only—thus marking the superiority and inevitability of its deterministic capacities—,in this research the sensual life of the state and its affective dimensionalities is revealed as a less solidified terrain (Braidotti, 2005). With such a stance, the blurriness and messiness within the terrains of the state and the bodies that it supposedly governs are made visible. The insides and outsides intrinsic in our understanding of public/private spaces do not operate within a binary, and the assemblage is constantly shifting (Cupers, 2005).

Cultivating Hope in a world of heavy objects

Queer bodies in the site of control take on a nomadic role, as they oscillate between the familiarity and strangeness of their positions (Cupers, 2005). For Ahmed, his upcoming military conscription has come to bear heavily on his every day. He suffered from panic attacks, intense bouts of depression, unrelenting anxiety. It was projected onto his relationships with his family, his friends, his job, his ability to wake up in the morning. He stalled the paperwork despite his friend's pleading he should do otherwise. He refused to talk about it for months. In finally opening up he said, "I won't be able to keep it up." Knowing that as an easy target of bullying, he might have to act against himself, maybe swallow a few doses of toxic masculinity to 'fit in', or basically to not be harassed and bullied.

Military conscription in Egypt is known to be a harrowing experience. For men, between the ages of 18-30, it is mandatory. Young men who studied in University like Ahmed are required to undergo a military course to graduate, and are required to enlist upon their graduation. Although a taboo topic among most, for fear of being condemned by the military, it is commonly known that most young men are often objected to humiliation, harsh

treatments and exploitation, especially if they do not have a 'connection' or a fancy degree to guarantee them a good spot in the army. The distressful yet limited reports surrounding military service left Ahmed in a state of crippling fear. He told me "I am sure that something is going to happen to me if I enlist." Ahmed's dread intensified because of stories and accounts of anal examinations that the enlisted soldiers had to go through in order to find 'proof' of homosexual conduct.

The conscription with the uncertainty and fears surrounding it hovered like a massive wall over Ahmed, and for a few months, the labyrinth turned into a prison, with no way out and nowhere to go. This experienced stuckedness, or existential immobility was part and parcel of the machineries of hopelessness that a neoliberal securitized state invested in. In *Revolutions in Reverse*, David Graeber (2011) explores the projects of hopelessness accumulated in the arenas of capitalism and determined that "large heavy objects" manifested in the structural violence of the state; the construction of prisons, expansion of armies and maintenance of intense security apparatuses (i.e. military, police, propaganda engines, etc.) are a determinant of capital structures. He contends that:

> "Hopelessness isn't natural. It needs to be produced. If we really want to understand this situation, we have to begin by understanding that the last thirty years have seen the construction of a vast bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness, a kind of giant machine that is designed, first and foremost, to destroy any sense of possible alternative futures" (2011, p. 31)

The real power of these apparatuses, lies in weakening the imagination, and by the cooption of the imagination into the machineries of control. What lies at its core is the destruction of any potential alternatives and so the imagination can instead be devoted to dreaming up 'better lives' that are soaked in capitalist promises. Imagining a 'better life' instead relied heavily on the market, and on having an equal opportunity to invest in it (Graeber, 2011).

As the state coopts fear into its schemas of governance and control; it promised deliverance from uncertainty by tightening its apparatuses, and by packaging the better life into neatly tied gifts of civilization that manifest in what Graeber referred to as "heavy objects", i.e. more securitization, policing, surveillance, censorship (Graeber, 2011). The contradiction of state power is incarnated in "unleash[ing] fear to control fear" (Narula, Sengupta, & Bagchi, 2010, p. 11). Progress and development are sold as "antidotes" from urban unrest, and instability (Narula et al., 2010).

In constituting the image of the model modern city, the state being the lifeline to this imagination, attempted to govern, regulate, and control the deviations and disorders that fueled the uncertainties through "managing the undesirable bodies" (Agier, 2011; Zeiderman, Kaker, Silver, & Wood, 2015). Managing the undesirables, entailed a management of the social, political, economic, temporal and spatial aspects of everyday life; a management of "your politics, your affiliations, your nightmares, your ideology, your rights, your friends and neighbours. Your dreams" (Narula et al., 2010, p. 90).

For Ahmed, the future was dark and all his projects and dreams were getting dimmer and dimmer. He finished all his university undergraduate requirements to graduate in 2017 but postponed registering in the military education course that he was obligated to take before graduating. It was always a tomorrow or a next week that he planned to go to school to register. On some days, the only thing that got him out of bed in the morning was work. In that instance, it seemed the violence of heavy objects defined his existence and suffocated his imagination. Ahmed was depressed, he was panicky, woke up with anxiety every morning, fought with his mother a lot, and with Farid, his boyfriend, and did not have the energy to talk most of the time. It took time and a few tries to actually go ahead and register for the course.

"Farid helped a lot with this, and we talked about things together. Also my therapist talked to me about it, and helped me a lot, asked me to put down the goals I wanted to achieve. If I want to stay with Farid, and maybe leave this country, get married or whatever, then I have to

get through this, the military conscription. I am trying to think of it as a goal that I need to achieve.. or maybe not a 'goal', but… umm.. well yeah a goal so I can reach the next goal. That's it, so that's what pushed me to get it over with, get the paperwork done and what not. If it hadn't been for that, I could have disregarded all of this, stayed at work, and been like whatever. But I wouldn't have been able to travel. I would be putting a stop to other things [I wanted], my future would be halted..."

Ahmed's dreams found refuge from the darkness, in the tight spaces where he encountered the objects of his attachment, his relationship with Farid, and in the prospects of leaving the country with him. He moved from stuckedness to possibility in the intimate conversations he had with others, and in encountering others' dreams. Movement here does not necessarily refer to an actual kinetic movement, but to the capacity of the imagination to "spring forth" at "the moment there appears to be any sense of an opening" (Graeber, 2011, p. 33).

Processes of dreaming are pushed in and out of the reality of heavy objects. We dream, unhindered by boundaries, borders, obstacles then are pulled back in, then back out. These boundaries are determinates of the multiple spatio-temporal scapes that we navigate. Throughout my fieldwork, dreams sprung forth, and I have had interlocutors narrate to me an image of their projections and their somewhere else then follow it up with "…but I am not sure that x is possible, I haven't done enough research yet," or "I haven't mapped things out yet." In these instances, there is a tension between the world of heavy objects where hope desists and the world of venturing beyond them.

Between 'here' and 'there'

In *Cosmologies of Credit*, Julie Chu (2010) explores the lives, subjectivities and desires of Fuzhou's aspiring immigrants. Chu (2010) attempts to show the intersectionality of forces that underlie a transnational mode of existence for the residents of Fuzhou. In her book, she traces the Fuzhonese's perpetual pursuit of departure, their aspirations for mobility,

and their navigation of stuckedness against the backdrop of modernity's promises (Chu, 2010). Her conceptual framework is useful in understanding the affective dimensions that constitute the spatio-temporal architecture of the 'here' and the 'there' and the tension between them. For even though the 'here' and the 'there' might imply separate spatio-temporal territorial scapes, their architecture is malleable and the binary desists the moment it comes in contact with the everyday.

Chu (2010) starts us off with a story of her friend and interlocutor, a young woman, Deng Feiyan who dreamt of leaving her small town for a "better life" in New York. Deng Feiyan's "sense of imminent departure… enchanted her every move" (Chu, 2010, p. 3). Attached to the object of her desires, and dreams, she went about life entertaining the dream of leaving. Though we never get to see Deng Feiyan actually leave China, her story echoed a mobile force, a reflection of an insistent becoming of life in transition (Chu, 2010). In this act of pursuing movement, channeling energies towards the creation of routes and paths, an adamant creation of "wriggle" room for the body to be takes place.

Like Deng Feiyan, my interlocutor's everyday was infested with dreams of the somewhere else, some more intensely than others. In their becoming, a contstant de- and re-territorialization of the affective scapes of the imagination around the here and there occurs. For Feiyan, her everydayness found refuge in the transitory state, "constantly at the cusp of departure". Even after years of trying to 'leave' to no avail, she still found solace imagining a version of herself in New York (Chu, 2010). Her sense of movement was tied to what Hage (2009) terms "existential mobility," a "type of imagined/felt movement" (p. 98). The felt potentiality of movement and the imagined possibilities it offered fueled her becoming. The 'here' and 'there' were not premised on an actualized physical transition, but on the affective reterritorialization of possibilities and impossibilities. Looking at the here and there through a de- and reterritorialization can be useful in determining the scapes of the felt movements that

Hage talks about.

Territoriality is not bound by geographies that conceive of space and place as autonomous. It is not pronounced in terms of lineage or nationality as essentialized features of belonging, but oscillates with wantings, dreams, and their agitative capacities. Neil Brenner (1999) argues that the process which takes place in a hyper global age encourages a continuous fragmentation and rearrangement of space, or what he calls reterritorialization. Brenner's (1999) thesis is premised on the idea that space is a political, social, and economic product rather than a static realm, fixed in time and space. Although Brenner's theory focused on the spatial aspects of territoriality, the territorialization that I explore here is also temporal and involves a rethinking of how my interlocutors imagined and experienced time. The affective features of territoriality accounts for the state of in-betweeness that my interlocutors were constantly navigating. Even though conceptually, the 'here' and 'there' are often posed in conversations I have with my interlocutors as two separate points on a map, their constant reterritorialization has them wash over each other. As imagining a 'somewhere else' became part and parcel of the everyday, the here and there sometimes blurred, sometimes stretched apart farther and farther away from each other, sometimes fragmented to the point of incomprehensibility, and in the constant playfulness of the here and there, the body narrates itself. The tendency to assume that as we talk of the 'here' and 'there', that we are only talking about spatiality is refuted as the reterritorialization of the 'here' and 'there' engage heavily with the temporal aspects of the everyday: the geographies of time, the heaviness of waiting, and the histories that are narrated, navigated and escaped.

In the speculation between going here or going there, my interlocutors' dreams move between attachments and detachments, between possibility and impossibility. This unplanned production of life leaves traces in their movement, and shape the way they articulate their dreams and their aspirations. Karim's story, which I narrate snippets of below is an example

of how territoriality of here and there blurs and makes way for a nuanced understanding of movement.

Last January (2018), I sat with Karim (cisgender, gay male, 24) in a café around Downtown Cairo, it is a place where he and his friends often hung out. He sat on a stool in front of me. He had a cheerful, lively personality. Throughout the conversation he laughed a lot, even when he recalled a tense or stressful time. After giving a long introduction to my topic, I asked him whether that triggered any thoughts, or ideas before we move on to questions, he laughed hesitantly and told me that it was very ironic that I should be asking him these questions now, especially that he had just gotten the news of another delay in his travel documents, and explains to me that he has been trying to apply for the Schengen visa for around 2 months now. The flag incident of the 22nd of September last year (2017) and the anxiety and fear of arrest he faced after the concert, prompted him into putting a long-contemplated plan into action: leaving Egypt to seek asylum in another country. The only prospect staying offered after the concert, was of arrest. He spent months unable to shake off the feeling that the police were coming for him at any time. Having raised a flag himself in the concert, and the fear of being recognized after a picture of him was circulated on media outlets, intensified a feeling of hopelessness, depression, and anxiety.

As he waited for his visa and other paperwork to be processed, an intensified state of isolation struck him. He withdrew into himself, isolated himself from friends and family. He was making himself invisible, changed his phone number, closed all his social media accounts, hid out at a friend's house. In incognito mode, he also spent most of his time researching possible futures. "You open google maps and ask yourself… where?" And in that moment, he started constructing the building blocks for a movement that is both an escape from stuckedness, and a movement towards a potential somewhere else. He decided to go to a European country that he knew the language of. He built this other life in this somewhere

else, and at the same time attempted to cut off any semblance of attachment he had with the 'here'.

> "Karim: I spent a month almost, not seeing any kind of prospect in staying here. I spent so much time online. You end up building a life somewhere-else, down to every detail, the rent of the house, where you will be living, everything, the food, the drinks, the streets. Egypt for you is over with; I look at the houses, and feel nothing, I won't have a dramatic exit even. I can't live here anymore, especially after the 2 months I spent in fear after the concert. I felt like I was leaving behind one of the worst experiences, and I was leaving with a lot of hate for this country. But after that, when I started thinking, and after talking to friends about stuff… I thought to myself, I am not ready to leave this country anyway. With the way things were, I was in a very bad state. I was in a very rough spot. Everything had ended for me… I couldn't deal with family, with my dad, and with my mum, even though they treated me very nicely…"

Being struck with intense fear, and impossibility, Karim was suffering the consequences of the existential immobility of his situation. In a dissociative state, he was bringing about the destruction of the life he had been living. His dissociation from past attachments was his way of trying to live without fear, his way of leaving space for something else to come about. He inscribed his desires onto an imagined somewhere else, a country on a google map that was a potential for renewed possibility, a territory where mobility was possible, a temporal somewhere else that was associated with a certain experiencing of time that doesn't involve a constant waiting for the fear to subside. "If I stay in Egypt, I will reach 70 and afraid of the same thing" (Karim). Staying in Egypt translated to a suffocation of possibility, a stuckedness in fear and the threat of detention. The overwhelming impossibility was felt more palpably when walking down the streets, or hanging out with friends became in itself a threat to life.

"Anyone who is in a position where they feel endangered all the time, even if there is no actual thing threatening them, spend all their time dreaming and are faced with two choices, either start fixing where you are, or just dream all the time, and even if they are fixing it, they are fixing it because they dream of a place where they aren't worried about anything" (Karim).

Fixing in this instance is about making space for the somewhere else in one's life, navigating away from a detained self, towards a mobility that extends a breathing space for the body and its dreams. Dreaming of the "somewhere else" becomes in itself a wandering in movement, a process of regaining the mobility that has been stripped away. In mapping his dreams onto another country, Karim was seeking a landscape for his existential mobility, to feel that something else was possible. Actual migration, although a symbolic "launching pad" for the somewhere else in some instances, isn't a vessel that held the dreams of the somewhere-else that my interlocutors desire. Instead, it is existential mobility as the affective foundation of potentiality, that fuels movement or the desire for it. Fear however didn't only manifest in the staying in Egypt, but also in the stuckedness he might face in leaving. The other manifestation of fear stemmed from reaching a long-awaited destination and then not knowing what to do with yourself. He tells me that even though he wants to leave, "I don't want to lose [what I have here]."

I ask Karim about friends who have left, or stories he heard of people who left, and how that might have shaped what he himself imagined. Both his friends are queer, the first a gay cisgender man, and the second a transwoman.

"I can talk about two of my friends, one of them, sought asylum last September (2017) and he was very happy at first, kept telling me that I should do the same thing, and told me about how life there was easy and beautiful and about how he was living the way he wanted. He was impressed with the streets, the people, with everything.

He had travelled before, but this time, it was different, he wasn't going back. This is it, this is his new country. He was so happy, but then, when we talked like two weeks ago, he told me, "I'm depressed, I'm unhappy, I have no friends, I can't go out." Slowly you start to notice what you have lost, what you left behind… at first, when he first arrived there, he didn't have to go through the asylum procedures right away, he had a chance to have fun, to come and go, and enjoy the country and what not. He was exploring the country he will live in and will build a life in, and he was happy with it and with the people. But then, when things started to stretch out, and five months passed, he called me up and told me he is depressed, and that he has no one to talk to. This will probably not be the case when the asylum procedure is over with, and when he has a life of his own, a school, a job, or when he figures things out, he will get tangled up in all of this and will have his own circles of friends, but despite all that, there are these moments of "I have no one, I have nothing." These are the scariest moments. When Hana left also, she had the same problem. When I talked to her at first, she was so happy and would post live videos online and was all over social media… but now, she is depressed. Leaving was her dream, but it was about what she lost, she was sad because of what she had here and lost. What we all have here that is so important to us, that is a source of support, it is what we live for, but there, it is all gone. That's the scary part…Before this, I didn't think of leaving because I knew all of that. Maher (a common friend of ours) used to tell me: "you leave one big problem here, only to drown in a bunch of other problems there."

Actual migration doesn't incarnate 'the way out' of the stuckedness, but produces an ambivalent feeling for Karim, and represents an imagined existential mobility. He wants to leave the 'here' (towards a somewhere else) but doesn't want to detach himself from it, however fragmented and infested by fear it is. Both the 'here' and the 'there' retain possible

features of stuckendess, of the feeling of going nowhere, of not knowing where you are.

As for Ahmed, it was the idea of pretending to be something he isn't, of going against himself, his body, walking differently, talking differently that constituted his existential immobility. For his most prominent fear whether with the military conscription or otherwise was being stuck in what he referred to as a "fake life. That going against himself is his existential immobility; the losing one's footing, the trail in the labyrinth, the prison, and its incarcerations, the waiting for nothing, the lack of scapes to try on different selves.

Ahmed didn't necessarily dream of leaving Egypt to x country, but his somewhere-else was bound up with an affective being in potentiality, a feeling that movement is possible. Mobility for Ahmed was bound up with a movement of the self, a safety that was tied to "not living as someone else, not leading a double life." Migration in that sense becomes symbolic in that it constitutes a possibility, a space where the "somewhere else" might carve a path towards the objects/scenes of attachment.

> "…we can say that people migrate because they are looking for a space that constitutes a suitable launching pad for their social and existential self. They are looking for a space and a life where they feel they are going somewhere as opposed to nowhere, or at least, a space where the quality of their 'going-ness' is better than what it is in the space they are leaving behind" (Hage, 2009, p. 98)

Temporary People, Temporary Dreams

Uncertainty becomes an important aspect that reiterates the precariousness of spatiality and temporality within dream-making projects, as plans are imagined, they get reshuffled time and time again. A sense of temporariness permeates my field, the temporariness of a precarious politico-economic sphere, the uncertainties that the heavy objects bear, the fragility of attachments, of dreams. A reshuffling occurs of my interlocutors'

sense of their temporality. "Maybes" pervade the scapes of their everyday, and washes over the body.

I talked to Mazen in August 2017, a month or so before the concert. As a 21-year-old student in med-school, Mazen expressed a lot of maybes: maybe seek asylum in Germany after his two-month internship there; maybe stay where he is till he graduates, then work on migrating on the basis of furthering his education; maybe arrange a marriage of convenience with a friend in another country. He told me that thinking long term doesn't sit well with him, and that he is more at home in short-term planning. He likes to plan according to what might be happening in a month, a week, tomorrow, a day. He feels that he is getting more and more comfortable with short-term plans, a month turns into a week, into a day. It is the anxiety involved in anticipating what is yet to come that vexes him.

This uncertainty is not necessarily a negative or positive element of queer dream-making, but involves a particular kind of movement, and generates a multitude of responses (Zeiderman et al., 2015). So that in dreaming of the 'better life, a constant movement of the self occurs. A constant roaming around for a somewhere else, lends endless possibilities and spaces disperse when they come in contact with the imagination (Bachelard & Jolas, 1994). So, even though architecture usually implies an end-point, a fixed infrastructure in its way towards completion, the kind of architecture I am referring to here, doesn't have a blueprint, but, is endlessly shifting and changing. Movements towards the somewhere else does not necessarily have to materialize in terms of a migration from country A to country B, but could be a forging of a potential lifeway towards imagined others.

That is not to say that some dreams do not come to fruition, but that once the dreams are almost graspable they move again, the future is always suspended (Abourahme, 2014). With uncertainty, queer bodies occupy the periphery. The periphery is many things, but in

this context, it is a notion that connotes those sites that are away from the center, that are both inside and outside, both visible and invisible (Simone, 2010). Abdou Maliq Simone (2010), uses the notion of periphery to investigate the sites that are at the outskirts, that are integrated within the administrative apparatuses of the state but up to a point, as they don't bear the "'stamp' of the city" (p. 39). These sites remain liminal in their status and contribution to the polity (Simone, 2010). The periphery is always present, dispersed across the city, in its "built environment and social composition" but unrecognized, dangerous and unwanted (Simone, 2010, p. 43).

The notion of periphery is also helpful in rethinking the movements that occur within the sites of aspirations and dreams, and flips over the hierarchies that homogeneous narratives adopt in their understandings of movements. Considering mobility against the backdrop of the periphery allows for an understanding of mobility not in terms of the kinetic or the material alone, but also in terms of affective mobility; carving a space towards something else. Movement in that sense, doesn't have to register when it is a leap, nor a migration from one place to another, but a movement of the affective state, a movement of the body and the senses.

In talking to Ahmed about his aspirations to migrate to a somewhere else, where he can be "himself", he enumerates all the obstacles latent in that act of dreaming: getting through his obligatory conscription of military service, finances, finding a job to gain experience, and learning a new language; all those little checkpoints, that he calls "necessary." In this seeming waiting for the dream to come to fruition, that deferred hope, things happen, an endless making of other dreams that intersect in his emergent self. He tells me of other dreams that don't seem as filled with cruel attachments and heavy objects: moving out of his parents' house, living with his partner, pursuing his knack for making clothes, all these acts of re-envisioning the self. Things that aren't there yet, but are always

becoming. For "the pursuit of survival involves actions, relations, sentiments, and opportunities that are more than survival alone" (Simone, 2010, p. 38).

Waiting-out

In the precarious states of temporariness, a lot of waiting occurs. Sometimes we wait, for one thing then another, stuck in an endless loop of almost becoming. Some wait for the obstacles to melt, for paths to open up. Some wait but move in their waiting. Others wait but forget that they are waiting, for everyday involves a movement that deters us. And sometimes waiting is violent, we are "kicked around" the borders of possible and impossible. Sometimes, we try on one lifeworld then another in our imagination, traveling between screens of potential selves, or we are faced with the clasps of hopelessness.

Karim was already waiting, long before the 22nd of September concert. He tells me that as he went about his everyday, "I keep thinking to myself, you are leaving, you are leaving." He felt that the waiting for change was endless, and that deterred him somehow from living. There was always a sense of temporariness in his staying in Egypt. He says "It is a horrible moment when one is stuck there, having no idea where you are going and what you are doing" (Karim). After the concert, he felt that he had no choice but to leave and at the same time, didn't want to leave. He told me that after the concert, things were tough also with his family. His mum found out about everything.

"Me: How? Did you tell her?

Karim: I had so much anger pent up inside. A lot happened in the two months following the concert. It was also like, I wanted to throw away everything I had here. I wanted to destroy everything, everything that was good, to fight with them (my parents) and have them kick me out of the house, so that I would have enough reason to leave. It was something like that. [After the concert,] we spent three tense days, not talking to each other, but then things started going back to normal, and we swept

things under the rug. She was in denial. It was better though, than the insanity that could have ensued… right after the concert she had felt that something was up. I couldn't hide my fear… Dawn time was horrific for me, I spent two weeks without sleep… so she felt that something was wrong. I couldn't deal with things at home. I didn't talk much with friends. I didn't go out a lot, and didn't like hanging out with friends. Umm so, literally you are leaving everything here and spending your time building a life there on your own in your head. I chose the university that I wanted to study in, even though I have no idea when I would be able to start in the first place… I am going with this asylum application, and have no idea when things will work, but I did all I can… and in working all these things out in my head, I couldn't see anything here. And it was like an escape, which made a lot of my friends feel sorry for me. The situation touched them one way or another. They were like 'no, you don't have to do all that, you are losing yourself' I couldn't see anything left for me in this country… They were like, 'if you end up not leaving, you wouldn't be able to go on here, because you are destroying everything.'"

In *Cruel Optimism*, Laurent Berlant (2011) talks of the attachments that one makes to the objects of optimism. This optimism being "a force" that pushes you to engage with the world in the hopes of bringing ones objects of desire into being (Berlant, 2011). The optimism she refers to here however, does not generate what we commonly think of as optimistic feelings, but "at any moment it might feel like anything, including nothing: dread, anxiety, hunger, curiosity..." (Berlant, 2011, p. 2). A wounded attachment to the object of desire moves one towards the possibility of optimistic feeling, towards what is imagined to be the good life, but the cruelty of the attachment lies in the double sidedness of it, as the object or scene that holds possibility also becomes a threat to life (Berlant, 2011).

Ghassan Hage (2009) looks at the politics and the power geometries around waiting.

He contends that "we all wait for futures", especially in the advent of late neoliberalism, where futures are gushing with the promises of the modern (Hage, 2009). The modern is a labyrinth with multiple routes and overlapping effects, hence waiting is articulated differently in the different stratums of life and is experienced in a variety of different ways by individuals.

> "In general terms, waiting occurs on the boundaries between the time saturated worlds or social imaginaries and the everyday experiences of subjects. Waiting is the tension of subjects as they exist on a boundary between a present (or even a past) world that they cannot leave and a future one that they cannot automatically or immediately enter" (Hage, 2009, p. 45).

In that sense, waiting can entail a sense of temporariness that echoes a peripheral existence. Karim was in-between state, in a temporary relation with the everyday, walking its margins like a stranger, all the while engrossed in a future that is at that moment out of reach. In *Lifeworlds*, Jackson (2012) engages Husserl and Arendt to reflect upon "the relational character of human existence," (p. 5) or what Husserl called intersubjectivity, which is meant to articulate a sense of being part of the assemblage of persons that interact in and with the world, and its "techniques, traditions, ideas, and nonhuman things" (p. 5). What happens then when one loses this relationality with the world, as Karim deconstructs—whether intentional or forcefully—the relations he has with other peoples, family, friends, community and constructs in the imagination another life in a somewhere else out of reach. The sense of stuckedness he expriences is one that doesn't necessarily entail a stillness, a stagnation. Rather, Karim invests in an existential movement, building other lifeworlds where relationality is possible, at least in the way he imagines it. The streets, the food, the place, the apartment he will sleep in, those objects of desire that represent some emblem of being in relation to an imagined space of being.

Hage (2009) was also interested in the question of agency in relation to waiting. He nuanced master narratives around waiting as a passive activity, where nothing really happens. Waiting is an expression of power, for it says something about time and value, about the subject in waiting and those or what they are waiting for (Auyero, 2012). Although he talks of the stuckedness and uncertainty in waiting, he contends that it is not merely a passive activity, but determines that "waiting indicates that we are engaged in and have an expectation from life," (Hage, 2009, p. 1) which doesn't necessarily turn waiting into a jollyous state, but has us look closely at the interstices of waiting, those relationalities that we develop as we engage with life.

My interlocutors' labyrinthine wanderings made way for imagining different possibilities of being. They constantly navigated hopelessness, the sense of impossibility, and the apparatuses of control and governing. They conjured up imaginations of a better 'there', they exchanged stories, aspirations, tactics of mobility that infringe on state regulations, and that make malleable the boundaries between legality and illegality. They created paper routes, made use of their networks, and through a multitude of strategies forge paths of movement (I will elaborate on those tactics in Ch.3 and 4). As Massumi (2015) contended "the ability to move forwards and transit through life, isn't necessarily about escaping from constraint" (p. 12) but through a tactics of "walking as controlled falling" (p. 12), where you move along with the constraint, constantly playing with it to regain your footing.

Chapter 3: Spiders and Weavers: Precarious Bodies, Precarious dreams

When I first approached this research, I was trying to wrap my head around the ruins of the moment, the impact with a world in constant battle with itself. Dreary master narratives left me crippled; there was nowhere to go from here. I fell into the determinate clutches of narratives that spewed impossibilities. Narratives that left no space for movement and set themselves to be the be all and end all of living.

Rosi Braidotti (2005) reckons that impossibilities are a part and parcel of neoliberal structures, as they impose borders around the body that determine its capacity to imagine, and instead, they construct the illusion of fixity. The contours of these narratives oriented themselves around the "inevitability of the market economy" and on "biological essentialism" (Braidotti, 2005, p. 1). Braidotti (2005) reckons that these narratives are akin to the return to "different forms of determinism, be it the neoliberal or the genetic brand: the former defends the superiority of capitalism, the latter the despotic authority of the DNA" (p. 1).

Amidst such forces, the imagination is crippled, movement posits itself as a slave of the accumulative capacities of state structures. In this chapter, I shed these master narratives for a more complex understanding of the ruins that queer bodies navigate in their everyday. I explore what happens to the geographies of the imagination in undifferentiated geographies of precariousness.

Precariousness manifests itself in an assortment of different ways in my field; bodies are entrapped in prisons, bound by the heavy objects of the state, and bereaved by the anxiety of relationships. Bodies float through the agitations and unknowness of "maybes" and "anywheres." As we have seen with Karim and Ahmed's story in the previous chapter, their precarious conditions washed over their sense of mobility, remapping the sites of possibility

and impossibility. I will look at these manifestations as well as projects of rerouting the spatial and temporal scapes of the body amidst uncertainty.

In his corpus, Bloch (1995) talks about darkness as a precondition to the venturing beyond. His notion of darkness bore an interesting contradictory dynamic (Garcia, 2017). Angela Garcia elaborates about Bloch's concept of darkness: "It is what limits and threatens our existence, as well as where our hope stirs and expands" (Garcia, 2017, p. 114). The darkness that is provoked by the violence of the everyday partakes in agitating the movement beyond it.

In this chapter, I will look at this "darkness" through the precarious queer body. In talking about precariousness, I am also talking about how the body is enframed in terms of value, how bodies are detained, and how they navigate the terrains of attachments, boundedness and dependency.

I want to explore precariousness as a scape for the constant reterritorializations of possibilities and impossibilities that courses through the body, its attachments and dependencies. In exploring these questions, I will draw on ethnographic material from my fieldwork as well as a novel by Mohamed Abd El Naby titled *Fi Ghurfat al-Aankabuut* or *In the Spider's Room* (2017), which narrates the story of Hany, a gay cisgender man, against the backdrop of the Queen Boat incident in 2001.

Precariousness and the Crisis of Getting by

The stories I witnessed and lived were saturated with uncertainties. Conversations surrounding precarity have taken a great deal of precedence in contemporary anthropological literature as scholars investigate the contours of the notion. What do we really mean when we say precarity? Is precarity a recent phenomenon? How do people get by in the searing

vulnerabilities of the times?

Most theorists have posited that precarity is a phenomenon tied to the hyper neoliberalization of the age and the restructuring that has accelerated the accumulation of profit.

In *Empire* (2001)—to consider one of the key texts that influenced the conceptualization of precarity—Hardt and Negri reveal a structure of the new world order that is built on a "post-modern" deconstruction of the international structures and regimes, and a transition to a more centralized, global order. According to Hardt and Negri (2001), Empire marked a shift to a form of immaterial labor that situated the production of knowledge at its center. This, they argued, created a new phenomenon within the labour process: precarity, which they viewed as, according to Silvia Federici, "Expressions of a trend towards the reduction of work and therefore the reduction of exploitation, resulting from capitalist development in response to the class struggle" (Federici, 2008, p. 2).

This conceptual framework reveals that so many of the old categories (class hierarchies, gender and sexuality, colonialism, etc.) we operated by are no longer functional in a hybrid, scrambled world that continuously defies the hierarchization of powers (Hardt & Negri, 2001).

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2001) ignored a great deal of what the searing illusion of Empire actually does—for one, its capacity to restructure and affect different parts of the world differently (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Federici, 2008). Their conceptualization of *Empire* represented a one-way street to the understanding of the world order (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Federici, 2008).

Both Silvia Federici (2008) and Castro-Gomez (2007) problematize this approach as it focused primarily on the illusive structures of the global instead of looking at how constituents of the global affect the local; hence, it does away with the divisions ensuing from

the restructuring capacity of neoliberalism and with it the hierearchies that exist on the basis of race, sexuality, and gender, for example, as well as the power relations replete in the legacies of colonialism.

In pronouncing these structures dead, Hardt and Negri (2001) invite a very "colonial" outlook of the world order and its power constituents (Castro-Gómez, 2007). This structure systematically ignores the politics of expulsion taking precedence today; a politics that leads to the exclusion and the economic, political, and social stigmatization of those whose "profiles of subjectivity, culture tradition and ways of knowing would not adjust" (Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 436) to the needs of the Empire as it manifests itself differently in different parts of the world. Along the same lines, it ignores the "differential distribution of precarity" that ensues with the creative destruction that comes hand in hand with neoliberalism (Butler, 2009, p. 25).

With these critiques, a more nuanced understanding of precarity comes about, one that moves away from understanding precarious labour as a new phenomenon and instead considers, for example, that in some parts of the world, precariousness is a norm.

In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) looks at "the politically induced conditions of maximized precariousness" (p. 25) like state violence and the techniques of modern governing that feed of a promise of security as a means of managing precarious bodies (Lorey et al., 2015). She introduces the notion of grievability as a marker of the exclusive politics of the state and the society of control (Butler, 2009). The lived dystopia of our moment creates a system that measures the value of bodies. Grieving becomes a political issue, as bodies are lined up and tagged, and "the implicit frames of recognizability" (Butler, 2009, p. 36) in that instant recognize certain bodies as grievable and others as not. They are shoved instead to the periphery of existence, marked with labels like "vagabonds," "thugs,"

"illegal", or "*shezoz*" (deviants).

Butler's (2009) argument thinks of precarity not only in terms of the changes that occur in the organization and division of labour that came hand in hand with privatization policies and the doing away of the welfare state, but also in considering precariousness as a "shared condition of human life" (p. 13). Differential distribution of precarity doesn't amount to its conglomeration in the conditions of labour alone but also relies on "social and political conditions" as well as "a postulated internal drive to live" (Butler, 2009, p. 21).

Butler's (2009) rethinking of precarity considers the laboring that happens in all nodes of life, not only in the sites of waged work. Recognizing the differential distribution of precarity in all its forms and that precariousness is "coextensive with birth itself" (p. 14) leads to the questioning of the conditions, whether political, social, or otherwise, which allows for lives to be livable and, by extension, grievable. It also highlights the frailty of life, the precarity intrinsic in birth; as life cannot sustain itself without what Butler calls "a social network of hands" (Butler, 2009, p. 14).

As Bulter (2009) states in *Frames of War*:

"We can think about demarcating the human body through identifying its boundary, or in what form it is bound, but that is to miss the crucial fact that the body is, in certain ways and even inevitably, unbound-in its acting, its receptivity, in its speech, desire, and mobility. It is outside itself, in the world of others, in a space and time it does not control, and it not only exists in the vector of these relations, but as this very vector. In this sense, the body does not belong to itself" (p. 52).

The body does not belong to itself and neither does it belong to a particular power or authority. Its unboundedness means that it is floating in a constellation that is outside itself, a web of relations that it does not have control over. The labyrinth that it moves through isn't an architecture that the body makes on its own, but it is always made and remade in relation

to other people, objects of attachment, of heaviness and an assortment of spatio-temporal scapes. The geographies of precarity that I came across echoed the frailty of life and the crisis of getting by when life is inexorably entangled within itself.

Grievability and precarity in that sense are distributed differently across bodies. Precarity is a condition of birth, which means that every body is not precarious in the same way. This is how apparatuses of control direct the body, by converting it into an arena in which it can exercise its power. Precarity, although a reflection of the uncertainties pervading our lifeworlds in unstable socio-political and economic conditions, affects bodies differently.

This begs us to ask the question, Who can afford to dream? And who can afford the movement that is contingent with dreaming? Some bodies are given a greater share in the distribution of uncertainty and are excluded and shoved to the peripheries. This echoes the "differential distribution of precarity" that Butler (2009) discussed in *Frames of War*, which marks which bodies are granted recognition and grievability and which aren't.

This is important to consider when we are talking about dreams, because what people imagine and what they dream of is affected by the possibility and impossibilities that the frames of value have afforded them. These frames of value are distributed according to a body's socio-economic condition, gender, race and in this case particularly, sexuality. This is particularly essential when we consider which bodies can actually migrate or seek asylum and which bodies cannot. Gender and socio-economic background intersect with other factors to bound bodies and their movement.

A month or so after we first talked and during a 2-month internship in Germany, Mazen applied for asylum. We talked again in July to catch up and he told me that in talking about migration or leaving the country in general as a "dream" or a desire, he thought that it was imperative to consider socio-economic conditions.

"Travel procedures have become more complex and obtaining a visa harder, and leaving the country has become harder for those from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Applying for a visa needs money and travelling needs money as well as the insurance the visa necessitates, like a bank account with a certain amount of money. These things are not possible [to obtain] in many situations. I think when we talk about migration, actual migration outside the country, it is important to think of those who do not have enough income or a good job. Because people who have a high income or a first-rate job like a doctor, engineer, petrol engineer, or people who work in big companies that provide them with good salaries or a reputation that is received favorably by embassies…I think that to some extent, these people have it better, even if they are from the [Meem] community. I mean...I know that we are all screwed—there is no question about it—but those who have some sort of material insurance have more of a choice to leave at any point. If there is a crackdown for example, they can simply go to Lebanon, Jordan, or Georgia. Even if their passports can't take them to Germany, Europe, Canada or the States. But at least they can have a temporary place, that is far away from everything that's happening and there are people who did that in the past months after the concert."

Uncertainty in that sense is distributed differently according to the frames that measure the value of the body. People with privileged socio-economic backgrounds own a capital that allows them a larger sense of mobility than others. Those frames of value are multiple and intersect in a variety of different ways to bind the body. Socio-economic capital alone sometimes doesn't translate to a greater sense of mobility, but it intersects with a lot of other zones of management that bodies are forced to navigate; a complex terrain of impossibilities and heavy objects. Women, for example, don't have as much ground to navigate as men do. Movement becomes harder when you are a woman because of the social

restrictions enforced on you. For one interlocutor, for example, travelling entailed running away from her parents, which came with its own set of impossibilities. Many of my interlocutors, although from a comfortable socio-economic background, were still very much reliant on their parent's financial and emotional support. For some, telling their parents why they needed to leave or disclosing their queerness, entailed the threat of breaking that bond, and opening up possible violent terrains.

Despite that, thinking of affordability in terms of dreaming suggests a different set of questions. How far do frames of value and the structures of heavy objects implicate the body? Can we dream away those frames of value even as they bind us? Dream-making entails crossing the boundaries that frames of value have fixed around our bodies. Maher, for example, as we see later from his story, amidst the anxiety of the crackdown that followed the Mashrou' Leila concert in September 2017, told me that he was in denial. He went out with friends and went to parties, all the while following up with lawyers and actively getting involved in the activism surrounding the anti-crackdown movement. He tells me that, in hindsight, he thinks that he was in denial, as he suspended the possibilities of his arrest and how his involvement in the juridical process was putting him in danger. He suspended the impossibilities of the heavy objects of the state and the frames that bound his body. He contended that existing after the crackdown was premised on ignoring all the indicators that told him that he could not exist or that he could not move as he desired. He thought that if not for this 'denial', he wouldn't have been able to move at all, or get out of bed in the morning. He would have been too crippled by fear and worry for himself and his friends.

Although the heavy objects surrounding my interlocutors set fixed borders around their bodies, dream-making entailed creating that wriggle-room, exploring and experimenting, a pushing against those borders and creating routes for the body to become.

Existential mobility is contingent upon imagining that movement is possible, even if all the signs indicate otherwise.

"What If They Find Out?"

Butler's (2009) rethinking of precarity is useful here in accounting for the anxiety that permeates the familial ties and relationships of my interlocutors. The intermittent nature of the social network of hands that my interlocutors navigate maps onto the body a feeling of temporariness that produces anxiety around its loss, or around its violence (Butler, 2009). These networks, and the web of familial relationships, appear in my field as both a sight of possibility and impossibility. My interlocutors were often haunted by the question of, "What if my parents find out?"

Whether the relationships that an interlocutor had with their parents were tightly knit, or were filled with turmoil, the uncertainty surrounding familial ties was a site of precarity that they had to navigate in their everyday.

Zaki (2013) explores the anxieties associated with "the ever-presence of 'the family,' as actual kin, family friends, and acquaintances of kin" (p. 75) for gay men in Egypt. For many of Zaki's (2013) interlocutors as well as mine, family is a large source of emotional as well as financial support. A family finding out for some was an invitation for physical and/or emotional violence, and it posited a threat of being thrown out of the home, losing financial support, etc. There is always a sense of fear surrounding family or family friends finding out.

Zaki (2013) draws on Suad Joseph's (1999) notion of connectivity to explicate how dependencies and attachments constitute a person's perception of self. He states that

"In contexts where such an intense sense of connectivity prevails…self and other are so enmeshed that persons derive their sense of being through their emplacement within such networks of connectivity" (p. 76).

Farah, 28, a queer female from Alexandria, comes from a very tightly knit family; her

parents and her sister continue to play an important role in her life even after she moved out. She is especially very close to her mum, whose support and care she tells me are insurmountable. She used to confide in her mother from a young age. Farah's struggle with depression and anxiety have affected those relationships as she struggled to justify her unhappiness to her parents. The heaviness of the relationship started building up even more when she fell in love with a girl. Farah went through a hard time, but she was unable to confide much to her parents. When she told her mother, her unhappiness and disapproval weighed heavily on her. She loved her mother and felt guilty and responsible for her unhappiness. Even though she has come to try and distance herself from her mother's pain, there are days when that is hard:

> "I wish I didn't have to censor myself because I am close to my family and they are a big part of my life. I wish I could be more open with them. Like I said, I feel like I am more or less the same person with them but I would like for them to be part of my other life…"

For Farah, the connections she has with her family constitute a large part of her personhood. Losing these connections is akin to losing herself. She often felt anxious about the distance that she had to create between her and her parents, the things she kept from them, the things she couldn't share, the tension that ensued with being distant and being too close.

In *Cruel Optimism,* Berlant (2011) talks about the double bind of attachments. Every attachment bears a promise and a threat. When we talk about precarity, we rarely consider the precarity contingent in relationships; the fragile bonds that one develops with others. Dependency, emotional or otherwise, becomes a threat to life, as the body binds itself to others, depends on them, lives with this reliance, but at the same time, it cannot control the violence or loss that might ensue. These attachments bear an impossibility as well as a possibility. The cruelty in these attachments take shape "as an affectively stunning double bind: a binding to fantasies that block the satisfactions they offer, and a binding to the

promise of optimism as such that the fantasies have come to represent" (Berlant, 2011, p. 51).

Every attachment bears a promise and it is that promise that represents a threat. My interlocutors are bound to the optimism and promises that an attachment offers, and it is in the absence of those promises that the body is revealed as unbound to itself.

Nadine, a 28 year old queer woman, and also Farah's partner, writes:

"I want to have a close relationship with my mum. I often imagine telling her about my relationship with Farah, confiding in her when things are tough, sharing my plans with her. Telling her all my thoughts about life and the way I want to and not want to live it. It's funny because I actually don't imagine her responding; not with a smile, not with shock … I think that at some instant, there is no one in that imaginary room with me; not my mum, no one. She isn't there. That version of her is impossible."

The cruelty of the attachment lies in the impossibility of this fantasy that Nadine has of her mother. Tensions course through the relationships my interlocutors have with their parents. These tensions are sometimes manifested in a resentment of the dependencies and connectivity that these attachments bear.

Lamaa, a 20 year old student, tells me that she wishes that she could live away from her parents. She often struggles with navigating the control that her parents impose on her and panics when she thinks of what they could do to her if they find out. The tension in the relationship is also tied to a resentment of the dependency she was born into, and she wants to run away to a space where that dependency isn't a threat. She tells me that she wants to go anywhere where nobody knows her. On asking her what she meant, she said,

"…anywhere my parents aren't… I don't feel safe, because of my dad, mum, brother and my whole family. It is because they know where I am now. I felt safer when I ran away from home. I spent a month or so, nobody knew where I was. I felt safe then, even though I was anxious about how to get by financially."

Nada, who is 24 and who moved out of her parents' house when she was 19 to attend school in Cairo had a different experience:

"If I am to imagine something, I would imagine that the struggle I am facing would end by talking with my parents. To be my whole self in front of them. They are the biggest source of support in my life. And among the people I love the most in my life. But I always feel that this love is threatened. What if they find out? It isn't something I think about all the time. And it isn't something that bothers me all the time. But it's always there at the back of my mind. Mama asks out of nowhere, 'Is your life going to go on like this? I always feel like there is something mysterious about your life, something you aren't telling me.' I feel that this is a big part of my struggle."

Nada is haunted by that "what if" of loss, as she struggles to reorient herself to the precariousness of her relationship with her parents. She depends on her parents and on her mum for support, whether emotional or otherwise, but this affective bond is threatened.

My interlocutors struggle with the precariousness that these attachments represent, the immobility they bear, and the potential losses and violence that could entail. These relationships affect the architectures of the 'somewhere else'; at times manifesting in dreams of running away from these attachments, a leaving behind of the anxieties they bear, and at other times, a "fixing" or shifting of the impossibilities that they entail.

Something ought to happen when the dependence status of the body is threatened by the very scapes that sustained its life. Precarity in these instances forces the body to reimagine itself. Nada tells me,

"At a stage in my life, and when mama had doubts about my sexuality, I thought it was impossible. I would never tell my parents. I felt that she was so close to finding out... for certain reasons. In those instances, I felt that I would never be able to face it, so I will leave. It was one of the few moments in my life when I started to wonder

about my legal status. What is my legal standing as someone who is 21?

Is it possible for my parents to force something on me? Can I be prohibited from travelling?"

The uncertainty around that familial bond isn't only clad in the anxiety around its loss, but also the threat that this bond poses onto her movement. In Nada's case, it provoked a search for a different form of authority to trump the threat of the first, the state. The violence of living replaces one form of precarity for another. For Nada, to escape the precarity of one dependency, she is forced into another. The state posits itself as a protector of life and the living, and it is that same authority it claims that binds the body to another type of precariousness.

It is true that the body doesn't belong to itself as Butler claimed, and the cruelty as well as the "optimism" in these attachments ring true in my field. We are bound to others, and these attachments have their share of 'cruelty'. The risk factor in these attachments are based on a complex enmeshment of lifeworlds, their impossibilities and possibilities. The dilemma with such attachments plays out in the blurring between these scapes. Possibility and impossibility do not fall at different ends of a spectrum as a binary, but neither are they exclusive of one another other. Referencing Melanie Klein (1935), Butler (2009) writes:

"We are bound to others not only through networks of libidinal connection, but also through modes of unwilled dependency and proximity that may well entail ambivalent psychic consequences, including binds of aggression and desire" (p. 30).

The Metamorphosis of Detention

"I sleep endlessly, I run away endlessly, I am afraid endlessly. I feel as if I am a new born! But my birth today is different from the one before it! My birth today is a birth from agony! A birth from cruelty! I am not able to distinguish night from day—nothing is clear—the spider passes near me. He is my friend in this cell. A spider looking for a way out! Damn it,

damn it! Maybe this insect too, is a prisoner, detained! Why not? They bear enough

irrationality, fear and cowardice to prosecute even insects, for whatever reason. Maybe that

spider disturbed the detective. Maybe he disturbed one of the government officials. Or maybe

it was an insect that lost its way and is looking for its people, just like me! I don't know my

friend, I don't know.

3-10-2017, from "Memoirs in Prison" (Hegazi, 2018).

In the aftermath of the rainbow flag incident last September (2017), the Egyptian state

instigated a series of violent measures to put a cap on the existence of queer bodies. More

than 60 people were detained by the police in the two months following the incident on the

charges of "inciting debauchery" (Abdel Hamid, 2017), either by randomly arresting them

from the streets or by raiding their homes (Abdel Hamid, 2017).

Sarah Hegazi and Ahmed Alaa's case were particularly well-known. The news of

their arrest circulated internationally and locally, mostly due to their popularity as activists on

social media, and because Hegazi was the only woman to be involved in a case of this kind;

hence, her case gained much coverage. The charges against them were as follows: "Joining a

group formed in contrary to the law," "propagating that group's ideas," "promoting sexual

deviancy and debauchery" and "illegally procuring foreign funding" (Abdel Hamid, 2017).

After their arrest, Alaa and Hegazi were held in remand detention for 15 days pending

investigation. As often the case in the juridical process in Egypt, the 15 days stretched out;

every 15 days, the court announced the menacing news of the renewal of their detention

(Abdel Hamid, 2017). Rumors and reports of violence the detainees underwent in prison

circulated. The media attention that Alaa and Hegazi received internationally pressured the

government into an early release on bail pending trial, whereas other detainee facing similar

charges remained stuck in the vicious cycle of remand detention, or received sentences of one to 6 years in prison.

The precariousness of the event posed as a moment in which fear and anxiety reterritorialized themselves onto the queer body. Day to day becoming was haunted by the dispositifs of control, the heavy objects of the state. Imprisonment as a metaphorical and actual threat to becoming stupefied the sense of potentiality. The event triggered a collective experiencing of existential immobility, a shock that left some with depleted imaginations, a crisis of getting by, a moment of: Where do I go now? On social media, people vented about the stuckedness surrounding that state of detention, a young queer woman in her 20s wrote on social media:

> "I'm tired of being constantly worried. I want to come back but I am scared of coming back as well. I keep telling myself. I'm too unimportant to be arrested, I don't pose any threat of any kind. I also feel stuck, I hate to feel stuck and incapable of doing anything…"

The fear and anxiety of the event interfered with people's movement, whether they chose to go out or not, express themselves in certain ways, where they chose to go, and whom they chose to see. In talking to Nada about her experience, she tells me that the fear triggered by the recent crackdown reminded her of an instant a few years back, when she heard that someone reported on two women for suspecting that they were in a relationship. Same sex relationships between women were nearly invisible to the state, so it came as a shock to her that the invisibility she sought refuge in was crumbling. She asked herself then:

> "What does the way I look say about me?
> I started thinking about how short my hair was.
> Do I come off as dyke?

About how often I am seen with the person I am in a relationship with.

Shit, what if the neighbors figure something out?

I will face a similar fate!"

A reimagining of the self occurs at the encounter of heavy objects, the body reorients itself to its labyrinthine structures. As the uncertainty of the event crept onto her every day, the threat of arrest forced Nada to reimagine herself through the frames of the state, from the lens of the panopticon. The way she performed herself, her sexuality and gender were under the watchful eyes of the state. Policing becomes the state's tool of controlling the body. At that moment, a reterritorialization occurs of the self, the scapes of desire and its temporal and spatial architecture. Similarly, in her encounter with prison, Sarah Hegazi (2018) describes something akin to a rebirth, a "rebirth into the wombs of agony." The shock of the encounter destroys one architecture of the imagination and replaces is with another. It is in those moments when the body senses its intense precariousness that it metamorphoses into something else, something that shakes its being. Hegazi (2018) writes, as she confides to a spider she meets in her cell:

> "I too am an insect, and anyone who is like us are insects - and all who stray from the herd are insects. We are insects - they look at us with disdain and discontent like they look upon insects. That is how Kafka described it in his Novel Metamorphosis - Those who stray from the herd, wake up to find themselves metamorphosed into insects. But, it is okay—we are going to make peace with it!"

For Sarah, the geographies of grievability were reterritorialized, as the body collided with prison, and she was like Kafka's (2009) Gregor Samsa who woke up one day to find himself turned into a "monstrous vermin." In prison, the suspension of the heavy objects was nearly impossible, as the body gets violently pushed into the insect-like existence through the dehumanizing gaze of the state. The heavy objects of the state: the cuffs, the cells, the walls,

the prison, the police officers, decree a new sense of being for the self, and the precarity of the body is heightened. Detention's sudden and fierce impact on the body invokes a metamorphosis, a reterritorialization that is accelerated, a reorientation of the self that is violent and sudden. Prison decreed a binding of the body and its faculties of expression, an intensified precariousness. In Abd El Naby's (2017) novel, *In the Spider's room*, Hany, our protagonist, writes about his experience in prison:

> "I learned that the body has its own decree, and that I need to pay attention to all these trivial things: a hot sip of tea or a cigarette. My day turned into a long series of concerns with these matters: food, tea, sleep, defecating. And only when we are free of these urgent and primary burdens, we can go back to other important matters, the crisis, the case, the scandal, and what they are going to do with us. But a piece of bread with cheese was sometimes more important than anything else" (p. 86).

Prison wakes up the body to its own precarity. For Hany, the preoccupation with the base needs of his body was a new terrain for him, as someone belonging to the upper middle-class. Prison introduced him to a new form of precarity, the minimal basic sustenance that the body needs to survive.

Rewriting the self

> "Move Hany don't stop moving, if you stop, that's the end of you… Write Hany don't stop writing." (Abd El Naby, 2017, pp. 135−136)

Fi *Ghurfat al-Aankabuut or In the Spider's Room* (2017) begins with the arrest of Hany Mahfouz, a gay cisgender man in his 30s. Abd EL Naby's novel reads like the spider webs he uses as motifs in his novel, as it moves between the sheets of time-space, with Hany's narration leaping between his childhood, his adolescence, and his adulthood. He

writes as if he is weaving a spider web. He writes in search for a way to get by, even if that way is an escape, a distraction. He also seems to be rewriting himself into his labyrinth, into his architecture of the constellation; his fears, his desires, his questions, and the invocation of something different than what he is in.

Abd El Naby's (2017) novel is inspired by real events and interviews, but doesn't claim to be biographical, instead it is a spider web of affective scapes that play around with what we think of as real and what we think of as fiction. Hany's arrest is set up against the backdrop of the Queen Boat incident and the ensuing case thereafter. He spends a few months in prison during which he suffers extensively from anxiety and panic attacks. In the process, he loses his ability to speak. Following his release, he isolates himself in a hotel room, his "new prison" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 93), where he writes in his journal. He writes about his childhood, his relationship with his father, his sexual ventures, his love affairs, his arrest and subsequent release. He writes about his mother, who worked as an actress after his father died to provide for them, but ended up gaining national stardom. He writes about his marriage that was more of a cover-up for his gayness and to appease his mother; and about the double life he was leading and the hope, desperation and distress around it. The narration of events don't follow a linear temporal frame, but Abd El Naby (2017) jumps around between the past, present and future. The events of the novel combine in flashes and sheets of memory that don't belong to one temporal scape.

Imprisonment in the novel, posits itself as a physical imprisonment of the body in the arenas of securitization and judiciary structures (laws, prisons, court rooms) as well as a metaphorical one that crams the body in the impossibilities of its situation. The body is shocked into its sudden rebirth. At Hany's arrest he writes:

"In less than five minutes we found ourselves in a nightmare, amidst more than 10 other men. My gentle world was receding with every passing second, while the impending nightmare was descending from every corner" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 11).

That nightmarish existence that Hany describes doesn't seize with his release from prison. But he is shocked into the intensity of the crisis and is stuck in his encounter with it. He writes, "I haven't gotten over this long nightmare yet, even if I am no longer near it" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 42). His imprisonment seems to have heightened all the excess struggle he had stored in his body for years. Growing up, he struggled to find himself amidst the void, the secrets, the kempt desires and the pressure of those he was surrounded by. He got stuck in the pastime he used to take up as a kid, when his father would ask him to imitate scenes from movies to entertain him and his friends. He performed other characters, and got lost in them. He writes about his teenage years into adulthood, reflecting on his life after a heartbreak he experienced in college, his temporary pursuit of a momentous intimacy, a glimpse of something else as he passed through the bodies of other.

> "And so, the clown goes back to his mirror at the end of the day. I return to my isolated room, my naked loneliness. Goosebumps erupt over my skin for a moment as I take off my clothes and get ready for bed around dawn. I feel like I am my own mother as she takes off the costume of one of her characters. I am not Anoushka[5] in real life, that was just a role that suited me, just a role, nothing more. Maybe I got too comfortable in it, until I wasn't able to recognize who the real Hany Mahfouz was, nor how I can get him back when I needed to. I have too many versions of him. True, all of them are identical to the original, but none, none of them are me, all of them are

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[5] An Egyptian singer and actress

facades, but nothing lies behind them, just a terrifying emptiness" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 82).

His imprisonment intensified his loss and emptiness. Before his prison sentence, he wandered through a labyrinth that he couldn't recognize anymore, a foreign architecture. In prison, he realized that his body was not his own and he was unable to live with that. After his release, he avoided the mirror "to avoid the stranger looking at me with his dead eyes" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 93). He spent most of his time sleeping and showering, "they have succeeded in tainting you from the inside forever, and not even a waterfall can erase their fingerprints" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 94). The heavy objects have defiled him to the point of misrecognition. He doesn't belong to himself, he never did, and that imprisonment only heightened that reality.

The writing that he took up after his release and in his isolation, was his way of rewriting himself after years of literal and metaphorical detention. It was his opening of the google map, to reorient himself to his labyrinth. The metamorphosis into an anxiety ridden eating, sleeping and defecating body left him feeling like a stranger to himself. In the moments when he glimpsed himself in the mirror he saw a dead body. In prison, he found solace imagining the spider in his cell to be a prisoner as well, a companion in a peripheral existence. He accompanied him in the misery he faced in prison and subsequent release in the hotel room he lived in after. The spider web was taken up as a motif in the novel to indicate the weaving of possibilities that occurs in moments of silence, in moments when the darkness hovers over the body to the point of suffocation, the threshold of death. He takes up writing because it was the only way he could move at that time, it was as if he was "a mute spider weaving a fragile home so as not to get lost" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 41). It was either writing or death.

Hany's release was a release into the mouth of another beast, the beast of new fears, and uncertainties. The minimal concerns of eating and sleeping were all he knew for a long time. His release came with a new form of precarity, a set of questions that haunt and overwhelm him, "what am I going to do with my life?" These questions trouble him because they come with a recognition of his existential immobility. The "what am I doing here?" moment. He says that there was a kind of relief in prison, a freedom in the boundedness, he didn't belong to himself and thus wasn't responsible for anything. But upon his release, he was trying to reorient himself to his surroundings, his body, the mirror and those objects of attachment that he had lost, the objects that constituted the scapes of his existence. It was hard for him to reorient himself to a movement that was intertwined with these scapes. He couldn't shake off the threat of arrest, of being followed, of being watched. His body left prison, but the nightmare was engraved on his skin. He couldn't shake off the accumulated dirt from that insect-like existence, he was obsessed with showering, as if he was trying to clean off the impossibilities that were tattooed on his skin. In that instant, writing was his way of reterritorializing himself, finding himself amidst the ruins of his life

> "With the succession of page and lines, I felt that an old skin was peeling off my body. It fell off with a painful sweetness. At the same time, I didn't know what kind of new skin was replacing it. I wasn't sure I would be able to recognize myself in the mirror if I stopped writing for a second, lifted my eyes from the pages. I became a ghost, dissipating away slowly with every passing sentence" (Abd El Naby, 2017, p. 319).

A Survival of One's Own

During my fieldwork, I met people who were scraping to find a way out of the country, even if that meant going to a place where they worked dead-end jobs, scrubbing the

floors and washing the dishes. They realized mostly that their leaving the country didn't mean that there were economic prospects waiting for them in this somewhere else, that they were going to face racism, discrimination, the stern conditions of asylum centers, the economic precarity of not having enough to get by at times. Yet, they would give anything to go somewhere else, to forge a path for something better, they imagined that their leaving the here was definitely better, and migration was yet again the scape through which their imagination reterritorialized itself. Those other spots on the google map promised "a space where the quality of their 'going-ness' is better than what it is in the space they are leaving behind" (Hage, 2009, p. 98).

But what about those whose leaving, didn't entail migration, a crossing of nation-state boundaries? Maher and Nada didn't want to leave, or to put it more accurately, they wanted to leave, to somewhere else, imagined other spatio-temporal scapes but these scapes were imagined through navigating the heavy objects that threatened their immediate survival, to not losing their grasp on their existential mobility.

"The older I grow, I tell myself, I don't want to leave. That is so fucking weird since every year, our lives get worse, and the overall situation gets worse. And the percentage of hope debilitates.

(…)

For me… that better life, or that wishful thinking, would be more about having a home, and people I love, and we come and go in each other's lives.

(…)

And in the end, we won't be screwed over; our jobs won't get us thrown in jail. And we won't be forced to leave the country because we have to. That's what I wish for, that these things don't happen. And I survive the way I want" (Nada)

Living in the peripheries involved an everyday act of survival, a pushing against the overwhelming heavy objects and a carving of existential mobility, a survival of our own making. Nada's mobility was entrenched in the terms she set for survival, the not leaving; an attachment to the familiarity of her spatio-temporal context and the infrastructure of people, friends and family. Her mobility was staked on always finding the capacity to imagine that survival is possible where she is, and that her seeking after what she desires won't end up throwing her in prison. She invested in concocting those different routes of survival.

Being forced to leave this home-space she has created was like chipping away at her existential mobility, diminishing her "maybes" and the architecture of her labyrinth. Nada's sense of mobility was in a way attached to a navigation of the peripheral, uncertain existence she was in; her socio-political stances, her work, and her sense of self. The self is tied to a particular precarious geography that gives meaning to the labyrinthine wanderings, a sense of existential mobility that makes it relatable. For Nada and for Maher as well, a collective creation of routes and a sense of homeliness was premised on pushing against the heaviness of their existence, a building and a navigation of the labyrinth despite the impossibilities that threatened them.

Berlant (2011) discusses the effect of the objects of attachments on our everyday, and the expectations we associate with these objects. What she calls the objects of optimism "promises to guarantee the endurance of something, the survival of something, the flourishing of something, and above all the protection of the desire that made this object or scene powerful enough to have magnetized an attachment to it" (Berlant, 2011, p. 48). The everyday chores of living and the weight of getting by comes with the expectation that whatever violence we come across, and whatever obstacles that threaten life will not overwhelm us to the point that life becomes impossible, but "will allow zones of optimism a kind of compromised endurance" (Berlant, 2011, p. 48).

Although Nada and Maher are middle class and somewhat bear the cosmopolitan capital in terms of bilingualism and education for a ticket out of the country, they both felt an affective attachment to their immediate lifeworlds, even if its architecture was heavy and precarious. Their mobility relied on a survival in and with the impossibilities. In asking Maher about why he doesn't want to leave he tells me:

"In the darkest moments, I feel grateful that I am here, not that I am somewhere else. If a friend is going through trouble, I feel thank goodness I am here. When the crackdown happened, I felt thank goodness I am here. When I lost [a friend], I felt thank goodness I am here.

(…)
Every person for me represents a fragment in a story that I am part of, so if I leave, I am missing those stories. I am missing those pieces. When I am here the story makes sense. When I am here in those dark moments, we are completing each other's narratives. And this is something that you can't pack and take with you when you leave" (Maher).

Reterritorializing the architecture of the "somewhere else" involved a weighing out of your maybes, of the scapes of uncertainty. Maher tells me he isn't ready to leave, his readiness involved exhausting the imaginaries around the emotional attachment he had with his spatio-temporal scape. Maher works diligently in his personal and professional life towards the creation of spaces and conversations surrounding human rights and freedom for minorities, that also involved a personal dedication to a spatio-temporal scape even if that scape was of crisis and trauma. In the process however he faced a constant threat of violence, whether through arrest or bullying. So many of his objects of attachment are in themselves "threats to both the energy and the fantasy of ongoingness…" (Berlant, 2011, p. 48). In

talking to him about it, he tells me that in the cusp of the fears and frenzied anxiety of the crackdown:

"Maher: I think I was in denial. If I remember those days correctly. I think if I had felt back then, the real danger that was taking place and how we were targeted because of our identities, I think I wouldn't have left my bed. I wouldn't have done any of those things. I did it because I was in denial. I did it only because I thought everything would pass.

Me: why do you call it denial and not hope?

Maher: Hope can be premised on something. Denial is premised on ignoring all the indicators. There was a law that was about to be passed and I would take my boyfriend and would go clubbing, as if there was no tomorrow. This is not hope, this is denial.

(…)

I am not a hopeful person. I am not hopeful. Hope for me is only a cheesy feeling that a better tomorrow might come, but based on facts and lots of things. And I know this is not happening at least now or maybe I am a person who is actually afraid of hope. Hope makes me anxious, because it makes me anticipate something, and if it doesn't happen I feel disappointed and frustrated

(…)

Before I leave my house, I open a closet, and in that closet, I leave fear, and I leave the hope and I leave the anticipation and I think I go out and do what I want to do and whatever I can do. I don't know what to call this."

Maher's 'denial' was akin to a suspension of the heavy objects that threatened to overwhelm his "ongoingness" (Berlant, 2011). Berlant (2011) tells us that the violence that people face in the everyday is a type of forced relinquishment of possibility, of the objects of optimism, the forced compromise of the bond one has with "what's potentially there in the risky domains of the yet untested and unlived life" (p. 48). That fear of forced relinquishment was what haunted both Maher and Nada, so they held tightly to their objects of survival, and constantly recreated possibilities from impossible situations.

Chapter 4: Cruel Attachments and Concatenations

In a hallway underground, near our cubicles, my friend and I sit and talk. We are sitting close together, facing the only source of light in a long and winding labyrinth of corridors: a glass window that stretches up along all 4 floors of the building where we work, even the bleak underground ones. We get a bit of natural light, a sad excuse of light. It was that year that I saw the sun the least.

At 7:45, I would take the elevator 2 floors below the ground level where I worked, start work at 8:00, and by the time I was done, the sun would have gone down. I was stuck there; we were stuck there. The luminescent light, the modern architecture, the grey floor boards, the identical cubicles all aligned along the corridors, heightened that feeling for me. I was a fresh graduate, and I was lucky and privileged to have found a job so soon after graduation, and at what people would call a 'prestigious' place.

My then closest friend and I were lucky also to have been working together. It was almost a year since the 2011 revolution, when all the enthusiasm for change and the exuberance of the moment was slowly waning. It was settling in. "Is this it?" It was in that ill-lit corridor that we imagined we were somewhere else.

Looking at the rain as it painted water constellations on the glass, we imagined a world far away from all of this: my existential fear, questions of where we are going and what we are doing, her crippling anxiety, the depression that infested our everyday and the sense of defeat. We roamed instead an invigorated peninsula that harbored a picture-perfect town too similar to the ones we read about in YA English novels. Houses that had no ceilings, walls lined with bookshelves, chocolate makers, streets that smelled like freshly baked bread in the morning, moonstones, magical hidden doors. It was as if we had remembered a game we used to play as little kids, and we couldn't stop playing. We

imagined, drew new spaces, and stretched the spatial scapes of the somewhere else to our desires. Occasionally, we would build a house for a friend, a neighbor, someone we knew, others we made up

I often go back to this moment, the instance of conjuring up other spatio-temporal sites, the making of a breathing space. What happens in those instances of meeting and encountering of others and their lifeworlds? For bodies are sites of exchange, a meeting point of dreams, desires, an engagement with or away from an assemblage, a collision. The spider web of our imaginations stretches and reproduces as labyrinths occasionally mesh together.

In this chapter, I explore how bodies assemble the building blocks of dream-making projects in relation to one another. I use Simone's theory of people as infrastructure in light of my fieldwork to look at the role that an assemblage of people construes in the everyday life of my interlocutors.

In talking of the continuous movement of bodies and dreams and their non-fixity, I might have neglected to mention the lingerings and attachments that we retain throughout these processes. The infrastructure of the labyrinth, although malleable and prone to change, is crafted by an assemblage of objects and attachments that stay with bodies. Attachment to other people is an element of the constellation of many affective bonds that bodies flow into and through. The precarity of that boundedness which we have seen for example in the agitative scapes of familial relations (in chapter 3) reterritorializes possibility and impossibility.

In a Latourian depiction of the social, I trace social association and nodes of connection instead of talking about societies and communities. A Latourian reassembling of the social follows with the micro-readings of movement that I pursue in this thesis. I am interested then in those "minute elementary acts" (Latour, 2005, p. 15) of the social, the

coming together of dreams, the collision of bodies, and the enmeshment of labyrinths. What happens when our dream scapes come together? How do projections and wanderings come in contact with each other?

People as Infrastructure

In "People as Infrastructure", AbouMaliq Simone (2004) moves away from a physical conceptualization of infrastructure to look at the social elements that constitute the sites of the everyday. In his article, he examines the "ability of residents to engage complex combinations of objects, spaces, persons, and practices" (Simone, 2004, p. 407), and looks at how people engage with these multiple assemblages to break away from the administrative capacitates of urban life. However, I am interested here in using the notion of people as infrastructure to look at how queer bodies engage with these multiple assemblages to de- and re-territorialise the spatio-temporal architecture of their dreams (Simone, 2004). And how affective relations with others contribute in the assembling and reassembling of 'the somewhere else.'

People (friends, families, relations, coworkers, bosses, etc.) represent spaces of possibility as well as of impossibility. They constitute a deep affective element in the aspirations of queer bodies. One interlocutor particularly told me that she wants to take her friends and leave to 'somewhere' her family wouldn't be able to find her. Ahmed, whose story we read about in chapter 2, experienced bullying from his coworkers and expressed his desire to go somewhere where people would not bully him. People contribute to the architecture that imagines the getting away from something towards an alternative future.

In thinking of the uncertainties and precariousness of the everyday, we often ignore the precarious infrastructure of people, the encounters that stay, the encounters that are lost, the dependencies. Our unboundedness is hence affected by the presence and absence of other

bodies within the social, the concoction of social infrastructure that assembles our lifeworlds. Butler writes as follows:

> "Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all" (Butler, 2009, p. 14).

The territorial scape of bodies are always interwoven together around that precariousness. There is always an unknownness around these bonds and relations, where they may take us, or where they may stop us from going. The precarity that my interlocutros encounter is also premised on the fact that the everyday concatenation could give way to anything. One day you are here, the next you are not. The unfoldings of the everyday bear with them a precariousness. In taking an urban approach to that precariousness, cities set themselves out to be a scape of possibility, as people run into each other, hang out, and move with each other.

In Simone's more nuanced understanding of what a city is, urban processes "always refer to multiple scales and contain a simultaneity of social practices and subjects…" (Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 4). Territory in that sense, is not understood in terms of state practices of border making and mapping alone, but it is also understood through practices of sociality. The socio-territorial relations interact with questions of power to produce not a contained whole, but an urban experience that is "hard to pin down and [easily] broken." Dreams move as people are constantly moving, coming together, and dispersing. The coming together that occurred in people's everyday constituted a fueling of the imagination.

People circulate stories of a 'somewhere else': a friend who left, another who moved out of their parents' house, another who got through a parent finding out, a father turning them out. Circulating ideas of a 'somewhere else', shape dream-making processes. It is at

times the act of a collective imagination, set by the tones of stories and imaginings that underlie people's movements. The somewhere else in that instance is hard to pin down, as pictures are exchanged, stories circulated, people come together, create new relationships, fall in love, break up, move closer, and move away from one another.

Moving away from a physical understanding of infrastructure queers the 'here' and 'there' in processes of dream-making and lends us a rich ground for exploring "the sheer diversity of ways to conceive of and analyze infrastructure" (Larkin, 2013, p. 339). It presents a different way of seeing how people live amongst the ruins of the imagination. As the concoction of spatio-temporal and social intertwine in practices of living and movement.

Zones of Encounter

In *Queer Beirut*, Sofian Merabet (2015) talks of the zones of encounter through a Lefebvrian understanding of space and the urban. He challenges spatio-temporal fixities of 'public' and 'private' for a more nuanced understanding of spatiality. In approaching "lived space" through encounters and embodiments, he was primarily concerned with the social production of space (Merabet, 2015). Merabet (2015) considers encounters to be an intimate moment, an instant where conjunction and disjunction unfold.

"In remaking the city, man has remade himself" (Robert Park as cited in Harvey, 2003, p. 1), and in reimagining it, one reimagines themselves. To move away from the conceptualization of cities as homogeneous containers, I conceive of cities in this thesis, the way Simone (2004) and Merabet (2015) conceived of them, as "places and occasions for experimentation, for seeing what happens when bodies, materials, and affect intersect, and the various ways of living that can proceed from that intersection" (Simone, 2010, p. xiv). What Simone (2010) calls "Cityness" allows for an indeterminate understanding of the urban, one that does not put on the lens of the modern, one that does not wash over the interstices

and the happenings within the city, nor adopt categories such as developed and underdeveloped, East and West, modern and primitive. Instead cityness reorients the process of seeing, dilutes binaries and traces the "enactments" that occur in the everyday (2010).

For queer bodies, the various nodes of cityness they come by leave a lot of space for experimentation, as they "step in and out of various shells of operations" (Simone, n.d.). The spatial in that instance becomes, "a place of play", where people are constantly remaking urban life and inherently remaking themselves (Simone, 2010, p. 33). Time and time again, the word "anywhere" came up in the conversations I had with my interlocutors. They migrate in search for a better life. This migration reflects the precarious relationship queer bodies have with the here and there, so that "every arrangement is temporary" (Simone, 2010, p. 8). The imagination becomes a site of potential experimentation with their various selves (Simone, n.d.).

Karim, whose story I narrated in Chapter 2, had the following to say:

> "I got back to hanging out at the *qahwa*, running into friends. We would start talking and I would feel like I didn't want to leave this behind. I don't want to leave all these stories of people and their experiences. Listening to them, I think... No, I don't want to leave this. No, I don't *have* to leave all this now… I calmed down, and when I did, I started feeling that it was possible for me to stay in Egypt for some time, even if I will leave at one point. That's it, so that's why I am here."

When Karim was thrown into the intense precarious situation, his mobility was stifled under the heavy objects of the state, and the stunting fear of securitization and arrest. He sought refuge in the idea of leaving, in the construction of the somewhere else. But movement happens even in waiting. The city is a scape for these dreams and desires to

reterritorialize themselves. Encounters happen and refurbish a space and time for the body to become.

My interlocutors come together in these zones of encounters, hang out at *qahwas*, meet at gatherings, farewells, parties, cyberspace. They create spaces of commonality, that allow for zones of encounter to flourish, to reterritorialize their scapes of possibility. Interlocutors tell me of their coming together with other queer bodies in and through the nodes of cityness. They have meet up spots, a safe space at a friend's house, or occasionally run into each other in the assemblages of their spatio-temporal scapes.

In some instances, these encounters occur on Twitter, Facebook and social network applications. Cyberspace witnesses the blurring between the real and fiction, the here and there and decrees a sense of "otherworldliness." These virtual sites promise a suspension of labyrinthine objects and the remapping of spatio-temporal scapes. For cyberspace bears a complex geography that intersects with experimentations of anywheres and maybes. The conversations surrounding the affective coming together of people and dream scapes in cyberspaces is a conversation for another time, and can easily be another thesis on its own.

In the coming sections, I look at how the coming together of people, in friendships, romantic relationships, or run-ins leaves traces of movement on the imagination and the body.

Encounters and Dreamscapes

Farah moved to Cairo in early 2018 to live with her girlfriend. She tells me about the early phases of their relationship and about the entanglements with a tense socio-religious sphere that spewed a lot of impossibilities into her relationship. She tells me about her struggle to reconcile her faith with her sexuality and having to navigate the anxieties of her situation. Her beliefs in *dunya* (life) and *'akhra* (afterlife) speak to the conceptions of the 'here' and 'there' that I discussed earlier in chapters 1 and 2.

"I feel like things have gone through different stages. When I first got into a relationship, my experience with religion made me filter the relationship I was in from a particular stand point, so that the first phase of my relationship, I couldn't imagine a place for my girlfriend and I in *dunya*. But I could imagine it in '*akhra*… Because even though, I had issues accepting that this could become a reality I was convinced that God was just and would award us by allowing us to be together in '*akhra*… I thought, definitely there is a place for us that doesn't have the same judgment, problems, intolerance of families or any of that. And then as things progressed in the relationship, my ideas started to change. I also feel like a definite turning point was this workshop I went to and that day I met Ragab. I was in this workshop, surrounded by queer people, mostly men and all of them were speaking in Arabic. Even though I knew this existed in theory, it was still kind of a shock for me and for most of the workshop I was kind of gapping… When I saw Ragab there, a brother of a friend of mine from school… someone from the same [social] circles it was surprising. He was surprised as well. I think that was a turning point for me. There were lots of other people there, but this was my first encounter. Later on, I met other [queer] girls, and that stopped being a novelty… Those interactions became normalized. They stopped being the token gay people in my life or the people who were shiny and bright that I had only heard of and they just became [friends]. I remember telling my girlfriend then that I really want to meet another gay person in real life, not someone I knew over the internet, not someone I saw in movies, because we both sort of discovered our sexuality through one another, so the only people we knew technically were each other. I am very glad that happened and I am glad I didn't have to go through that alone. But it was also a very isolating experience for both of us. Meeting other people made it feel like we weren't the only people in the world, we weren't the only people in the world who were struggling. There are other people. There are other people who are at peace with themselves. There are other Muslims [who are queer]. That was very important to me…

When I met other people, it would get me out of that feeling that things were falling apart and it's only the two of us and stuff like that. So that had a definite impact on me, on us, on our relationship. And now I imagine that there is a place for us in Dunya."

The instance of 'opening' up that Farah experienced was akin to a stretching of the scapes of the imagination. Farah's encounters with other people and their dreams have mapped onto her imagination new possibilities of being. Falling in love entails an intimate enmeshment of the scapes of possibility. The ideas of 'here' and 'there' intertwine to form a stretched-out labyrinth, a multitude of spider webs that are assembled together in a collective act of rewriting. As Farah went to the workshop, and met Ragab, she also encountered a collision, the impossibilities and the possibilities hung together. And the distance that stretched between impossibilities and possibilities, shrunk. Her *dunya* or if I can say her lifeworld reterritorialized itself. The religio-social sphere that constructed a moving beyond, a venturing into other potentialities of being, remapped itself. The dream wasn't only situatied in the '*akhra*, or the afterworld but the attachments she harbored have spread themselves into the spatio-temporal sphere of the *dunya*.

The Faculty of Wonder

In a novel by Jostein Gaarder (2007), titled *Sophie's World*, our protagonist, a little girl of 14, receives a series of letters from a mysterious sender. The sender who she suspects might be her dad, introduces her through the letters to Western philosophy and the wonders of the universe. In the first letter Sophie receives, her mysterious sender tells her about the importance of the faculty of wonder, the wow-effect that a little kid feels at encountering something new (Gaarder, 2007). The faculty of wonder is essential in the journey of exploring and understanding the world. Seeing everything as if we are seeing it for the first time. He writes:

"For various reasons, most people get so caught up in everyday affairs that their astonishment at the world gets pushed into the background. (They crawl deep into the rabbit's fur, snuggle down comfortably, and stay there for the rest of their lives.) To children, the world and everything in it is new, something that gives rise to astonishment" (Gaarder, 2007, p. 10)

Wonder wakes up our senses, so that the newness of the encounters seeps into our bodies. This newness has come to be pushed to the fringes of social studies. First encounters shape our affective relatedness to the world in a diversity of ways. Scholars have often desensitized the affective movement that is triggered by these moments of wonder. We neglected in our understanding of movement, the politics of that first encounter.

In my field, I have witnessed the wow-effect of those first encounters. Often times my interlocutors have told me about unexpected, unprecedented moments that inspires a movement in the imagination, an act of weaving; the first person they met who was queer, the first time they fell in love, the first friend to tell. These encounters provoked a movement, an opening up of a possibility. It is also important to mention that in talking about the faculty of wonder, or the wow-effect, I am not neglecting the complex dimensionalities, the impossibilities and possibilities latent in the encounter. A first encounter doesn't necessarily provoke a stretching of possibility but it could also provoke a stretching of impossibilities. Karim's story of his first encounters reflects the stretching of possibilities within the imagination. He tells me:

"I was on Twitter, and the movie *Asmaa* had just come out. Someone wrote a tweet praising the movie and mentioned Amr Salama (a renowned Egyptian director) requesting that he produce something for the LGBT community. Some guy or public figure I can't remember wrote a very horrible reply to that. So he wrote back and

posted 4 angry tweets humiliating the guy and everyone retweeted it, so I went on his profile and followed his account and he followed mine. We DMed and started talking, and that was the first person I talked to who was openly gay. It was as if I hit the jackpot. We started talking and I had no idea what I was saying, I didn't accept myself then and didn't understand what was going on, but that guy, he sent me a video that he had made and uploaded on YouTube, where he was talking about that (being gay). So I thought… *Yanhar 'eswed* (Arabic for "oh my!") The video didn't have a lot of reviews but we are in 2011 and that was the first person I talk to and he makes videos about LGBT rights on YouTube. After that... we decided to meet at Mohamed Mahmoud (a street in Downtown Cairo where people protested in 2011) because we both were from circles who participated in the revolution. I participated in the protests, he participated in the protests, and so we met the day of Mohamed Mahmoud clashes[6] and we started talking. I had just finished my studies at the institute and was just about to start school. And we discovered that we go to the same school. He opened up things for me. And he was openly gay on twitter, and so most of the people who talked to him and replied to him on twitter were gay. I started meeting other people online. […] that was at the end of 2011, beginning of 2012.

[…]

In 2012 I started falling for one of my friends. It was my first time being a teenager in love. And my first time to figure out what love was […]. It was that sweet teenage love, and even though it eventually ended […], that was how my friends found out that I was gay. Everyone could really tell that I was so in love with that person and he

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[6] A series of clashes between protestors and security forces that took place in Mohamed Mahmoud Street in Downtown Cairo, just off of Tahrir square. The clashes were part of the January 2011 Revolution and took place between the 19th of February to the 25th.

was really young too and didn't understand much about his sexuality […]. I was in love with him for a year, and didn't tell anyone, until stuff happened, and I started to cry, and a friend of mine came and told me, "That's the person [you are in love with]. You have to tell him. It really shows and we all noticed it." […] They were like, Karim, he is gay and he is in love and he hasn't told anyone about it, not even himself and he doesn't want to confront it and he is crying on his own and the guy he loves doesn't know. So my friends were like enough is enough. You need to accept this and go tell him" (Karim).

The coming together of people and movements, the enmeshment of bodies in a spider web of enactments and entanglements burrow new routes. The coming into initial contact with something is akin to the wow moment we experience in our first introductions to the world as little kids. Karim's taking in of that newness has provoked a movement of the self. The projections that occurred with encountering a stranger on Twitter, or falling in love for the first time was a venturing into an unfamiliarity. The coming together with people, and their affective scapes, was also a coming into contact with new possibilities for the self, a wandering into uncharted territory.

In talking of the coming together, Lazzarato's pluralist ontology explores the multiplicity of ways that people become one. He critiques the language that tends to trump singularity over totality in the production of collectives that brushes over difference for a seemingly unified front (Lazzarato, 2010). Fixing or enframing a group of people in a singular body in terms of a we and us, in the "all-form," leaves something out, and does not account for the sensitive social assemblages that come about (Lazzarato, 2010). He proposes however looking at the everyday and at the universe in the each-form, which he suggests leaves space for the multitude and diverse ways of being together to come about (Lazzarato, 2010). He is interested in looking at the many ways of coming together, the intersections of

assemblages and the links and connections that account for the multiple ways of being 'one'(Lazzarato, 2010). This reflects strongly Simone's (2004) notion of people as infrastructure where the diverse ways of being in the world is reflected in each individual's sociocultural background, history, affective dimensionalities and political as well as economic positionalities. The connections that are created reflect the arbitrary heterogeneous nature of bodies, the networks, the boundedness and unboundedness of socialities.

Imagining Survival

From an early age, Nada's social networks of friends and coworkers proved to be a strong infrastructure for her dreams and desires to recreate and a vibrant scape for her to move and wander. Friendships served as a strong dimension of the dream scapes of my interlocutors. Not necessarily only as a sight of possibility but also as a sight of impossibility. At the time I met Nada, her relationship with her girlfriend had just ended. They had been together for a few years. Her breakup was challenging, as she had to reorient her lifeworld to the absence of a person she had relied on for the past 5 years. The breaking up and the making of relationships causes for the enmeshments and entanglements to stretch close to and away from each other. The precarity of those relationships echoed onto her dreams as she had to remake the infrastructure of her labyrinth as she encounters others and loses them.

"I had enough support so that when I came to realize my identity, my life wasn't hard, I was already moving out of my parent's house and I was surrounded by a lot of people who shared the same identity, so it didn't feel strange, no 'Am I the only person who is like this?' moments. And I know that I had it easy then. Even if I wasn't very aware what was going on […]. And for the last 5 years, I had the support that a relationship provided, I had the support of a lot of friends. And because this is a transitional phase, that meant I lost a relationship and it also meant that a lot of the

people who were part of my life aren't there anymore. It was the first time I realized the full extent of the struggle, being a lesbian woman who was alone. My relationship provided me with a lot of things. And everything is harder… breakups aren't that easy when you are a lesbian woman… moving from one home to the other isn't that easy… because what are you going to tell your parents? And the lack of friendships in your life will have you—for the first time—doubt things you never thought you would. The way you see yourself and actually imagining yourself survive becomes harder. It was the first time for me to feel that it is not that easy and I only recently started to realize this, because I had so many things that provided me support, but the second these things were gone, I lost my footing."

In the heightened precarity of lost relationships, imagining survival becomes a challenge. Survival here implies a possibility of venturing beyond the precarity of the moment. For even though Nada says she had it easy with the infrastructure of people and other infrastructures of support, whether material or otherwise, she still suffered from the anxiety that her position brought her. Having the breathing scapes to imagine something else was possible with the infrastructure that relationships brought to her life. Losing those relationships, meant that movement becomes harder, which left space for the heavy objects of impossibility to trump movement. Breaking up this living space of friendships and a long-term relationship, challenged the imagination's capacity to recreate and reproduce movement. Nada was struck by the precarity of losing a relationship she had depended on for a long time. Queerness in that instant intensified the precarity of the breakup, as the strong social network of hands that had held space for her and by extension for her living space was broken. The exposure and dependency that holding space for each other entailed, came hand in hand with a precariousness of being. Precarity in that sense is not intermittent in the

heaviness of control and management apparatuses, but also the control that these dependencies have on the affective scapes of the body.

My interlocutors considered a lot of the dreams they shared with me to be "impossible." However, these "impossible" dreams, while not actualized, indicate an engagement with life, a becoming. The lines are continuously shifting and changing. Yesterday's impossibilities are today's possibilities. The continuous movement between what was impossible and became possible marks an affective movement that is not necessarily kinetic. That is why as Bloch (1995) contended, in daydreams, we never go into the "mere vacuum of an In-Front-of-Us;" we never look exclusively at the future, but instead we move across an assemblage, a concatenation. As a productive process, these dream-making projects are not "confined within the finalities of any particular project" (Ingold, 2011), but they move endlessly "without beginning or end" (Ingold, 2011). In that sense, dream-making fuels the processes of endless becoming, one that engages with heavy objects and cruel attachments.

The collective weaving of dreams that my interlocutors engaged in is another way of thinking of the constant acts of reterritorialization and the rewriting of the self that has come up time and time again in my field. The coming together of people—whether in a diligently planned workshop, a hangout at an *qahwa* (local coffee shop), or in virtual spaces—creates room for stories to be exchanged and movements realized. In these encounters, a pooling of resources occurs, as bodies work through the assemblages of anecdotes, desires, and maybes in a collective redrafting of movement. In a sense, my interlocutors had their own fieldwork, their own sampling of spatio-temporal scapes, their own interlocutors, as they stretched out their spider webs to explore, rewrite, and rework the world around them.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As I went about my fieldwork, I was visited by intense bouts of doubt and anxiety. I was afraid of the fixity the process might entail, of framing my interlocutor's movement, their projects, and their maneuverings into neatly construed narratives. I was afraid of sweeping over the details, the hesitations, the intricacies, of the blurry lines between interlocutor and friend, dream and reality. I was haunted time and time again by the question: "What am I doing here?" I felt defeated, stuck and had a hard time imagining a way out. But then, I would come across something, someone, a maybe, that would flash up in a moment, unanticipated. Sometimes it was an image, a word, a conversation, a body movement, a movie, a thought, a memory, visible or invisible. These flashes happened with and because of my interlocutors, whether those I sought purposefully or not. That's what kept me on it, venturing beyond the 'no way out'. As I witnessed the ebb and flow of their movements, the routes they carved out for themselves, different possibilities propelled me towards something else, and I followed the trail of bread crumbs that led me here.

In this thesis, I looked at how queer bodies mapped their dreams as they constantly wander the sites of possibility and despair. Movement in this thesis blurs the lines between reality and fiction, as people imagine other lifeworlds, a somewhere else that they desire, other attachments, other selves, and other time-spaces. The dream-making projects that my interlocutors engage in are evidence of an attempt to establish a sense of relationality and homeliness within a geography that persistently kicks them around.

Even though all my interlocutors expressed a desire to leave their immediate time-space, they rarely provided an exact time or location for their 'better lives.' The 'there' was rarely pinned on a map, or marked on a calendar except as an example, a maybe, always imagining that they are 'almost' in that somewhere else. The second the 'other' place is pinned down, it moves again, with a pause, a stutter, a rethinking, a reimagining: "well maybe not (x), but maybe (y)."

These dreamscapes pull at our bodies, push against our skin: an intimacy, a friendship, a home of one's own, a feeling of safety. Some dreams are pursued and written onto the body, while others are left and forgotten, are shoved to the background. Almost always, they change and shift with the constellations of attachments and heavy objects that people come by.

As I listened to people's stories and engaged with them, I remember struggling with their messiness, with wanting to make sense of the patterns. Everyone desired differently, dreamt differently. Every time I thought I found some sort of pattern, it slipped away again. It was those moments of loss and confusion, of "what am I doing here?" that made me think of the fragmented ways we desire, of the constant loss of attachments, of the anxieties that haunt bodies.

I started off my research with a set of questions; some I engaged, some have died out, and all have changed. As a body living in this moment, it is really hard for me to think of myself without thinking of the apparatuses of control that bind us: the state, its regulations and its identity cards; the regimes of signs and language; the structures hidden under the guise of civilization and modernity, that have been scrambling to weigh, measure, and frame our bodies. The heavy objects of the state that have come to be so normalised that it has created an outsidedness and insidedness to our sense of existence.

It seemed at times as I went about my research that I had to pick between structures or their fragmentation. Between thinking of the body as bound, outside of its own control and between thinking of it as unbound, belonging to itself. Between the complete presence of frames and their complete absence. Between possibility being enframed in neatly postered better lives, and a possibility that was crafted by our own whims and desires. Between imagination being a site of hope and it being a site of hopelessness. I chose to be okay with that, to be okay with the presence and suspension of structures.

Maybe that's how we write ourselves into this world. We structure and suspend our bodies in

our imagination. We shift from writing a self that is completely trumped by the heavy objects and writing a self that is mobile. This has made me interested in a language that leaves space for the fragmentation and presence of structures, our complete boundedness to heavy objects and their moments of suspension. Instead of talking about an outside and an inside, I explored projects of possibility and impossibility. What attachments, heavy objects and prisons bind our body, and how can those very frames be a site of reterritorialization, a site of re-scaping our desire. And as I delved deeper into exploring dream-making projects, the clearly defined separations I assumed between the language of 'I want' and 'I am' blurred. As people rethink their I want through their I am at times, and imagine themselves in relation to narratives they move with and away from.

My questions in this thesis were also my way of creating a space for my body, blurring the lines that have been carved around me to create new ones. I started my introduction contending that I am not after a "truth," a complete reflection of how things are, but I still suffer the loss of what I left out, purposefully or not. I still suffer from the tendency towards a neatness that is everything my fieldwork was not. So, instead of a concluding remark, I decided to end with a story that I came by at the end of my fieldwork and that opened up more questions for me instead of offering me conclusions for the ones I posed.

"Me: You told me before that imagination for you was some sort of an obstacle. Could you elaborate on that?

Farah: When I went to group therapy… one of the coping strategies that we were given was to imagine ourselves in other places and I remember being very angry that day because I am trying to overcome that habit. I spent most of my life imagining myself doing things I couldn't do in real life. If I had a crush, I imagined going up to that person, talking to them, telling them that I liked them, or kissing them or whatever. The fact that I believed that to be religiously unacceptable at the time, was also another layer to it. Because I loved reading, I imagined myself as a hero, rescuing people, riding dragons and all that. Because I was very

shy, I'd imagine myself as a very confident and outgoing person. Basically, I would imagine anything I couldn't do. Because I didn't know how to speak up for myself, I'd imagine myself as this person who was funny, a person who saves the day, a person who is kind and nice and all that. Someone I wasn't basically. This applied to everything I wasn't able to do, so when I fell in love, it took me such a long time to get to that point where I could imagine stuff happening between us. I think I told myself that I was in love with her, a year before I actually told her.

[…]

I think the first time I told her, and she said she felt the same way about me, I remember feeling this almost, like, gap in my brain. It was like something had been inside my head for a long time and now it was playing out in front of me […]. Not all the things I imagined were necessarily good. Sometimes I would imagine really painful or sad things, or like, dramatic sort of scenarios. The stuff of movies and books and all that. Some of it would be someone finding out, things like that. And when these things started happening in real life, it came as a shock to me, because I had so much stuff inside my head and I had almost a separate life inside, and the fact that things were playing out in front of me, it sort of caught me off guard. I have been working on this in therapy for the past few years, to push myself to act or experience something rather than imagine it. That for me, was a foreign idea, because I had sought refuge in my imagination. Even the sad and disturbing things or scenarios I thought of as safe, didn't have real life consequences, or they did in the fact that they could upset me or so, but I still was living them out in my head. But, when it came to real life nothing was really happening. I don't want to say that that's what set in motion my experiencing of things rather than imagining them, but I did feel like this was a definite departure, because my girlfriend wasn't like me much. She would spend less time thinking about something and more compulsively acting on it […] she is the one for example who initiated our first kiss,

but I had imagined it a thousand times before, and sometimes she would be surprised that I

knew things and talk about stuff as if I experienced it, but it was also because my imagination

was so freaking vivid."

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