Being-in-Between-Worlds: Illness (*Marad*), Embodiment, and Social Suffering in Cairo's City of the Dead

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Anthropology and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Being-in-Between-Worlds: Illness (*Marad*), Embodiment, and Social Suffering in Cairo's City of the Dead

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Date Approved: 28 July 2017

Dedication

In memory of my dear uncle, Amu Ahmed (February 4, 1941-February 8, 2014)

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّـا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعونَ

"To Allah we belong, and to Allah we shall return"
(Quran 2:156)

Your absence is deeply felt.

May your grave be a window onto paradise and may your sacrifices be given lasting meaning through the firmness of our family bonds.

Ameen.

Abstract

This dissertation is a phenomenological study of sickness and social suffering among cemetery squatters living and dying with clusters of incurable affliction (*marad*) including hypertension (*al-daght*), Type 2 diabetes mellitus (*al-sukkar*), and cardiovascular disease (*al-'alb*) in Cairo, Egypt. The research is an outcome of ethnographic fieldwork carried out over 8 months between the years of 2007-2013 in the 'Arafa (Southern Cemetery) of the "City of the Dead" and is based on participant-observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and in-depth narratives of *marad*.

The "City of the Dead" includes five cemeteries that stretch for miles along the foot of the Muqqattam Hills, first constructed around 642 AD. Its name draws on the layout of privately owned gated tomb structures arranged into conjoined streets that resemble urban enclaves. Tombs center on open courtyards (*hwash*) with attached rooms. Beneath the courtyards are burial chambers containing the remains of deceased relatives of tomb owners. Today, these cemeteries offer refuge to growing numbers of rural and urban destitute squatters who have been forced out of the formal sector and into the vacant *hwash* by forces ranging from twentieth century wars and conflicts to economic liberalization and its associated impacts on subsidies for the poor.

This ethnographic study of squatters' communities revealed three interrelated processes. First, individuals emphasized the role of affective states, specifically fear, stress, and sadness, on the blood and vital organs of the body. These were traced to the breakdown or betrayal of family and social bonds under the weight of economic decline and political terror. Second, squatters regarded *marad* as a form of death-in-life and were especially preoccupied with producing good

endings for themselves and their loved ones. Third, corpses and death narratives, which are accessible to this community through funereal work and cemetery habitation, aid this process by opening up spaces for the formation of new moralities about what it means to live and die well among the tombs.

This study is significant in its interrogation of the theoretical vocabulary of embodiment and the normative binaries of life and death it upholds. The dissertation diverges from its familiar rendering as subjective "being-in-the-world" (Csordas 2002), to rather become "being-in-between-worlds," more suitable to an existence in the cemeteries and other contexts where everyday life converges with death.

Acknowledgements

I am most indebted to my adviser and mentor, Dr. John M. Janzen. Thank you for your support, encouragement, tutelage, and patience with me over the last eleven years that I have been your student. Under your guidance I have witnessed myself transform into a critical medical anthropologist, and have learned to see, feel, and know the world in innovative and analytical ways. That is a gift I will always cherish. Your wisdom and ongoing dedication to your students and to the field inspire me to live up to a high standard that centers on bearing witness to human suffering and seeking sustainable ways to alleviate the ailments from which societies suffer. I hope my work honors and reflects the rich lessons you have taught me all along the way. Thank you.

Katie Rhine, my professor, mentor, and friend. I owe you my deepest gratitude. Thank you for dedicating your time and energy to helping me grow both academically and professionally. Thank you also for letting me come to you with anything at any time and for always responding with the encouragement and support I needed. You have helped me navigate the world of graduate school and academia, opened up learning opportunities that I could not have accessed without you, and taught me–in the classroom and by example–what it means to be a rock star scholar in our field. Thank you.

Akiko Takeyama, thank you for always being supportive, patient, and kind. Working with you has enabled me to witness the manuscript publication process firsthand. Thank you also for your thoughtful comments and lessons on the importance of reflexivity and gender in the field and in academic writing. I appreciate all you have done for me throughout our time together. Thank you.

Ebenezer Obadare, thank you for all you have done to help me reach this point. You

know what it has taken. I am grateful to your for lending me your wisdom and your ear. Knowing you and working with you pushed me through the ups and downs of graduate school and for that I will always be grateful. I will always remember entering your office full of books and feeling inspired to know more about the world every time I left. Thank you.

Jessica Gerschultz, words cannot express how thankful I am to you for joining my committee. It has been a pleasure working with you. Your advice on women and healing in North Africa has been especially useful to me as I think about future publications. I appreciate your patience throughout the process and am in your debt for your time and effort. Thank you.

To my parents, Dr. Hamed Ghazali and Engineer Fatma Mohammed, words are just not enough. I could not have done this without you. You provided emotional and material support every step of the way. You gave me the strength to believe in myself and in the relevance of my work. Baba, thank you for all the insightful conversations. These exchanges were essential to helping me think critically through my data. I will never forget how you stood with me up until the very last moment. Mama, thank you for coming to Egypt twice, once during a time when it was unstable, so that you could help me complete my fieldwork. It was a difficult time and you pushed me out the door every single day. Thank you for supporting me and making me food every week while I worked on completing my dissertation. You both inspired me to love a country and to want to understand it even before I saw it. I love you. Thank you.

To my sisters, Safa and Amira, you are my sweetest gifts. Thank you so much for standing by me while I worked towards this moment. Thank you for being there for me day and night. Thank you for the beautiful kids you have filled our lives with and who make me smile no matter what. Thank you for always understanding me and for pushing me when I needed it. I love you both.

To my brothers, Ahmed and Kareem, thank you for supporting me while I continued by education. I couldn't have done it without your encouragement and emotional and material help. I love you both.

To my wonderful graduate school comrades and friends–Dr. Brittany Lockard, Dr. James Herynk, Dr. Madeline Rislow, Dr. Tera Lee Hedrick, Ryan Singer, Dr. Elizabeth Benjamin, and Sean Barker–I am grateful to each one of you for your friendship. Thank you for the cards, conversations, commiseration, visits, boat rides in the sunset, and endless words of encouragement. Thank you for always being reachable, for answering my questions and concerns about my research, school, and everything else with the best advice, and for reminding me through your own examples that there is life after the PhD.

Le-Thu Erazmus, without whom graduate students would be lost, thank you for keeping me on track and for everything you have done to facilitate this process. I would also like to thank the department of anthropology for its support and for the tools and opportunities it has equipped me with as I enter the professional field as a Doctor of Philosophy.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to express my gratitude to the people who opened their tombhomes and lives to a stranger. Thank you for sharing your most intimate experiences with me, and for the lessons you've taught me about life, strife, and sacrifice. I hope I have done your stories justice and I hope it may bring positive change to your lives. I will always remember you and the kindness of your spirits.

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Chapter 1: Being-in-Between-Worlds

Introduction

In Egypt non-communicable diseases account for 85 per cent of overall mortality among the lower-middle income bracket. Cardiovascular diseases make up 46 per cent of this total, claiming the highest number of lives each year. These include ischemic heart disease, stroke, hypertensive heart disease, cardiomyopathy, and myocarditis, among others. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the primary risk factors for cardiovascular disease and other noncommunicable conditions in Egypt–such as stroke, cancers, diabetes, acute respiratory infections, and nutritional deficiencies–are tobacco usage, obesity, and high blood pressure. (World Health Organization - *Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD) Country Profiles*, 2014.; WHO Burden of Disease, January 2015, (htp:/who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/en/).

This dissertation is a phenomenological study of sickness (*marad*) and social suffering among cemetery squatters living and dying with clusters of incurable affliction including hypertension (*al-daght*), Type 2 diabetes mellitus (*al-sukkar*), and cardiovascular disease (*al-'alb*) in Cairo, Egypt. Contrary to biomedical or even anthropological approaches that seek to untangle illness experiences in order to understand and treat them, discussions with cemetery residents revealed that they subsumed *daght*, *sukkar*, and *al-'alb*, along with other conditions like asthma, infertility, and kidney disease, under the broader rubric of *marad* (sickness/affliction). Their focus was not on individual ailments, but on the suffering of the body-self as a whole. This discovery necessitated that I focus on the holistic experience of being afflicted (*mareed*), rather than examining these illnesses in isolation. What follows from this integrated approach is an account of what it means to live and die well in contemporary Cairo.

The research is an outcome of ethnographic fieldwork carried out over 8 months between the years of 2007-2013 in the ‘Arafa (Southern Cemetery) of the “City of the Dead” and is based on participant-observation, structured and unstructured interviews with cemetery residents, tomb undertakers (*turaby*), grave workers, landlords, biomedical professionals, traditional healers, economic advisers and government officials, and in-depth illness narratives of *marad* from cemetery residents (*sukaan*).

The City of the Dead

For almost as long as its fourteen hundred year history, which dates back to the Arab Muslim conquest of Egypt in 642 AD, the ‘Arafa has served as home to corpses of the deceased and communities of the living. The City of the Dead is made up of five major cemeteries that comprise a 5.5 square mile stretch of publicly and privately owned cemetery tombs and mausoleums that run along the foot of the Muqqattam Hills in Old Historic Cairo (El Kadi 2013). The name draws on the layout of privately owned and gated tomb structures arranged into conjoined streets that resemble urban enclaves (see Figure 1). Tomb structures center on open courtyards (*hwasch, pl.; hawsch, sing.*) and branch off into one or more rooms (see Figure 2). Beneath the courtyards are burial chambers that contain the remains of deceased relatives of tomb owners (see Figure 3). Their corpses are segregated by gender, wrapped in white funereal shrouds, and laid side-by-side facing the direction of the Mecca. Some tombs include a bone room where putrefied remains are stored to make way for incoming bodies. In the tombs of less affluent families remains are simply placed in a corner of the burial room(s).

Figure 1: Cemetery street scenes. Cairo, 2008, Ghazali

Figure 2: Inside and outside the hawsch. Cairo, 2013. Ghazali

Figure 3: Stone and concrete seal off entrances to burial chambers. Cairo, 2008, Ghazali

While the title, "City of the Dead," is a general reference used mostly by the tourism industry, media, and scholars to describe the practice of cemetery squatting across the city, the name is unfamiliar to locals. Instead, they refer to the cemeteries as *al-'Arafa*; a name that

originates from Yemeni tribes who settled the area centuries prior and whose tombs became filled with bodies during the plague. Others know the necropolis simply as *al-turab* (the tombs).

The earliest inhabitants of the cemetery tombs consisted of custodians of the graves as well as scholarly and spiritual circles (Ohtoshi, Watson 1992). Shifting national and global economic policies and political agendas throughout the twentieth century, however, have contributed to changing cemetery demographics. Today the ‘Arafa offers refuge to growing numbers of rural and urban poor. They have been pushed out of the formal sector and into the vacant *hwash* by forces that range from wars and conflicts to economic liberalization and its associated impacts on displacement and subsidies for the poor.

During the early through mid-twentieth century, Egyptians experienced the stagnation of residential construction as funds were redirected towards war efforts, including two World Wars, and later the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956, as well as the Arab Israeli wars of 1967-1973. Along with the proliferation of informality in the capital city, these events resulted in tomb squatting by both rural-to-urban migrants and urban-displaced. Aggressive agrarian reform that began as early as the final century of Ottoman rule (Di Marco 2011) and continued through President Anwar Sadat’s neoliberal shift known as the “The Opening” (*Infitah*) and Hosni Mubarak’s “crony capitalism” (Hamuda and Diwan 2014) produced a growing stream of rural farmers into the tombs of the ‘Arafa.

Under Hosni Mubarak’s thirty year long system of Emergency Law (1981-2011), Egyptians also witnessed an escalation of harsh approaches to economic liberalization and housing informality through the passing of a series of policies in the 1990s that cut president Gamal Abdel Nasser’s subsidies on rent and basic food items. Under the guidance of modernization projects aimed at converting Cairo into a global megacity through land

confiscation, foreign investment, and wide scale relocation projects, the cemeteries began to fill with urban-to-urban migrants. These were primarily low-income families facing the harsh realities of a privatizing housing sector, unemployment, and a skyrocketing real estate market in the capital city (Bayat 1997; Fahmi and Sutton 2008). Many cemetery inhabitants I spoke with traced their migration, or their parents' migration, back to one of these events.

Marad and Social Suffering

Marad is a prominent mode of social suffering in the cemeteries. One of its most salient features is its association with harmful emotional states—like fear, stress, and sadness—and their negative impact on the body-self. Residents attributed many of these affective states to the occupation of cemetery tombs, which they believed placed their bodies at a dual vulnerability for developing incurable and unmanageable afflictions. Subjects raised political etiologies of marad that implicated cemetery squatting for their exposure to unhealthy living environments that make their bodies sick. They also implicated their experiences of social invisibility, marginality, discord, and estrangement (*al-ghurbah*) from the formal life of the city that goes along with cemetery squatting. Furthermore, subjects related their marad to the stresses associated with attempting to carry on with seemingly mundane events like grocery shopping, feeding, educating, and maintaining families–activities associated with living and life–from and within a space of death, dying, and the dead.

For the informal squatters of the cemeteries, prolonged exposure to these conditions are detrimental to health and wellbeing. These linkages between the body and its affective states are not merely metaphorical or symbolic. Rather, according to Talal Asad, "mental states—themselves closely connected to social circumstances—are central in the experience of physical pain. Pain is not merely experienced in the mind, but generated by it" (Asad 2003:83).

Furthermore, Asad argues, "distressing emotions are experienced as being located in particular organs of the body (liver, belly, heart, and so forth)" (Asad 2003:84).

In varying articulations cemetery residents described marad as the experience of death-in-life. Individuals with combinations of incurable afflictions frequently spoke of their lives and livelihoods through references to death, dying, and the dead. "We are living just like the dead," one woman told me on the first day of my fieldwork. "We are living-dead," another mentioned. "Everyday I die a little," a woman suffering with marad explained. "The *'irsh* (Egyptian piaster; smallest monetary unity) of the dead is dead," one man told me, referring to the inability to sustain life on funereal work and cemetery handouts. "We are forgotten, just like the corpses beneath our floors," a young cemetery native asserted. Given the high prevalence of marad in the cemeteries and Egypt more broadly, these statements are not just idioms, analogies, or metaphors. The morbid irony is that many people in the cemeteries are living, or rather dying, with incurable afflictions.

The more people spoke about their experiences with marad, the more I found myself asking: In what ways are the direct and structural forms of violence that surround the practice of cemetery migration and habitation brought to bear on notions of the body in states of health and illness? What do people's phenomenological experiences with *marad* reveal about social suffering in cemeteries? What modes of existence and novel moralities emerge in these spaces, where residents' daily lives and embodied conditions are intertwined with relentless flows of corpses and ongoing processes of decay?

Drawing on phenomenology and structural violence approaches, which both emphasize the place of subjectivity and the embodied experience in different ways, the research connects individuals' articulations of suffering, agency, and meaning-making—derived from case studies

and in-depth illness narratives—to national and global forces. This process is important because it situates local experiences of marad within the broader scope of Cairo's uneven distribution of housing, resources, risks, opportunities, sickness, and social suffering, while also attending to how occupying a cemetery space informs and shapes these experiences. To better understand the convergence of living and dying, which has become a growing experience across Egypt and the region, I offer a contextual reading of personal accounts from this cemetery community. Their stories offer insight into what it means to occupy and experience these rapidly expanding spaces in-between-worlds.

This ethnographic study of squatters' communities revealed three interrelated processes. First, individuals emphasized the role of affective states, specifically fear, stress, and sadness, on the blood and vital organs of the body. These were traced to the breakdown or betrayal of family and social bonds under the weight of economic decline and political terror. Second, squatters regarded *marad* as a form of death-in-life and were especially preoccupied with producing good endings for themselves and their loved ones. Third, corpses and death narratives, which are accessible to this community through funereal work and cemetery habitation, aid this process by opening up spaces for the formation of new moralities about what it means to live and die well among the tombs.

Contrasting Approaches to the Study of Embodiment and Social Suffering

Surveys conducted by the Egyptian Society for Hypertension often frame the meanings of incurable noncommunicable illnesses using "standardized biomedical methods and variables" (Tabishat 2000:206). A key part of this standardization is establishing the boundary between life and death in order to effectively triage care based on where people fall along the spectrum. Although in the biomedical setting there are variations on what specifically constitutes the

moment of death, one commonality is the tendency to define death in contrast to life. In biomedical terms, death is the moment when the body and its vital organs indefinitely discontinue functioning independently of life-supportive technologies. Death is therefore marked as the end of the corporeal, physiological processes that are necessary to sustain life. Death is the "Other" of life. Based on this binary view, life and death constitute two poles on opposite ends of a chronological spectrum, and are cast as mutually exclusive domains. Chronic illnesses are therefore framed as the inevitable breakdown of the body, usually across the biological lifespan, and treatment often aims at palliating the aging body rather than finding a cure.

The antagonistic relationship between aging and "good health" has dominated biomedical discourses and interventions. Furthermore, it has contributed to the normalization of medical dichotomies like "acute" and "chronic," "infectious" and "non-communicable," and the different ways resources are allocated based on these categorizations. One problem with this approach is that it misses the large area of overlap between these illness episodes, and how "acute" infections can become "chronic," leading to, or complicating, secondary and tertiary conditions. On the other hand, it also misses how chronic afflictions, when left untreated or when they are inadequately managed, compromise the functions of the body, resulting in severe, or, "acute" illness episodes. More importantly, this naturalistic approach overlooks the structural and symbolic forces that impact the uneven distributions of illnesses and their trajectories. Lastly, it overlooks how local communities understand bodily affliction holistically as human suffering, regardless of its "acute" or "chronic" manifestations.

Even when biomedical and public health explanations attempt to account for non-medical contributing factors, they are often limited to individual, environmental, and technical issues associated with overpopulation, poor lifestyle choices, and pollution. Social, economic, and

political constraints are taken for granted or footnoted as contributing factors in passing. In one study that examines the link between diabetes and nutritional deficiency anemia, the authors note, "diabetic patients who, through neglect or ignorance, do not follow the appropriate dietary regimes, are at risk for developing nutritional deficiency anemia, especially iron and folate deficiency" (Salah et al. 2005:960). While recognizing the increased risk for anemia among diabetics who do not adhere to the standards of a healthy diet, the authors gloss over the factors that make such diets unrealistic and inaccessible to the poor. Instead, the failure to acquire such standards is related to neglect and ignorance, thereby placing the brunt of blame on isolated individual behaviors.

Explanatory models taken up by biomedical practitioners, and also by the state, tend to emphasize particular variables in relation to noncommunicable disease that attach them to moral meanings. These include "the costs of development, industrialization, urbanization, and 'good living'" (Manderson and Smith-Morris 2010:7). Morality in this context is derived from the notion of choice, which is assumed to shape individual behaviors and lifestyles that increase the risk of becoming sick. The pathologization of individual bodies serves to disconnect them from the structural and institutional forces that produce and reproduce sicknesses and suffering across time and space.

In Egypt, naturalistic explanations carry over into state and public discourses about Egypt's dysfunction. Throughout the country's long history overpopulation has been considered a primary impediment to development and modernization. This perspective, what Timothy Mitchell has called the "'natural limits' of geography and demography" (Mitchell 2002:222), has placed the image of the squatter, often conflated with the image of the rural peasant, squarely at the center of Cairo's thick and convoluted "geography of blame" (Farmer 2006).

During an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram Weekly*, for example, governor of Cairo Abdel-Rahim Shehata described it as a "city of problems" (December 2-8, 1999:6). The congested streets, inequalities, corruption, and pollution are the result of informality and the lack of adherence to government authority. For the governor and other officials, Cairo's problems are the outcome of "either recently arrived migrants or in transit" (Ibid), that degrade Cairo's cityscape and the city's future potential. This attitude rests, according to Ghannam, on a vision of the city that "continues to be largely linked to rational planning, technological progress," and "a sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life" (Ghannam 2002:168). Based on Shehata's reading of the problem, he notes, "if people can change their behavior, then we will be one of the most beautiful capitals in the world" he adds (as quoted in Ghannam 2002:168). In other words, the solution to fixing Cairo's problems is to change the pathological attitudes and behaviors of Cairo's low-income migrant and displaced populations.

Ali (2002) links the fixation on population size with European, and particularly British, imperialism. He argues that, while "methods of counting population were generally used for the purposes of taxation and army recruitment before the nineteenth century" it was not until British rule in Egypt that population statistics emerged as a way "to regulate population and create the notion of 'normal'" (Ali 2002:9). For Ali (2002), Asad (1994), and others, statistical language regarding population statistics is part of a larger body of "discursive interventions by means of which the modes of life of non-European peoples have come to be radically changed by Western power" (Asad 1994:78). The aim and end of these interventions, according to Ali (2002), is the production of rationalized, responsibilized, disciplined, individualized actors.

In many works on the cemeteries, and during conversations with Egyptians outside the

‘Arafa, colleagues in Egypt, and abroad, cemetery squatting is often related to poverty, a lack of proper family planning, overpopulation, and the geographical limitations of Egypt’s habitable land. The ease with which fingers are pointed at members of the lower socioeconomic strata for the problem of overpopulation is facilitated by the fact that many members of the poor seem to have spilled over the boundaries of the formal housing sector, into the marginal informal developments on the fringes of Egyptian society.

The line where formal housing ends and informal housing begins therefore marks the point at which an otherwise “balanced” population size transitions into “excess”. In fact, the Arabic term for “informal” or “slum” areas in Egypt is ‘*Ashwa’iyat*, which literally translates to “haphazard settlements.” The assumption is that because of haphazard family planning on the part of the poor, *‘ashwa’iyat* continue to grow. In this sense, the poor living in informal housing embody this “excess” and the problems of overpopulation and underdevelopment. As a result, many efforts to alleviate poverty, push Egypt into modernity, and integrate the national economy with the global market, are rooted in family planning and population regulation strategies that seek to alter the ways of life and living of the poor and marginalized. Subsequently, researchers have placed a great deal of effort in attempting to understand the ramifications of these reproductive discourses (see for example Ali 2002; Ali 2001; Inhorn 2004, 2006; Baron 2008; Storey and Kaggwa 2009; Harbour 2011; Kotb et al. 2011, for example).

Through these naturalistic explanations authorities are able to justify often frightening interference in the daily lives of citizens under the banner of “public health campaigns, poor laws, sanitary reports, and scientific studies of social evils like prostitution” (Ali 2002:10). Following from these imperial antecedents, Ali argues that “the educated and the elite Egyptians who represent the Egyptian state today possess the particular subjectivity for them to play the

roles of protector, educator, and the champion of justice for others and consequently to act as gate keeper for modernity" (Ali 2002:12). These geographies of blame (Farmer) and the spatial formations and power relations to which they give rise persist even as Mitchell demonstrates, the problems of Egypt are not a matter of land shortage or overpopulation, but of specific social, political, and economic forces determined to usher a neoliberal shift thereby remaking the nation into a modern, progressive, global mega-city.

In contrast to naturalistic approaches, phenomenology privileges subjectivity, or, the "felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power" (Das and Kleinman 2000) in studies of health, illness, and social suffering. What these anthropologists hope to understand through in-depth ethnographic encounters, and what they struggle to re-present in their scholastic works, is the experience of "being-in-the-world" (Janzen 2002). In other words, in order to understand social suffering and subjectivity, anthropologists must grasp at how the world is experienced and articulated through the words, silences, and bodies of others. Before moving on to a discussion of this combined approach, however, it is worth mentioning that the concepts elevated here are more recent elaborations of the long-term effort by anthropologists and other social scientists to identify the independent existence of the social, and its role in individual identity, feeling, and action, as well as to assert and analytically claim the impact of power, society, and others upon the individual.

To access subjectivity, an immaterial experience, anthropologists rely on qualitative research methods that include in-depth fieldwork and "thick description" (Geertz). Illness narratives are one of two primary discursive texts upon which anthropologists rely to inform their investigations of social suffering and subjectivity (Kleinman 1988). Illness narratives are more than stories and their articulation and collection involves more than giving attention to

what is being said. Narratives involve a reflexive process where meanings shape and are shaped by and through contestation and dialogue. At the same time, tending to their meanings involves more than reading back over what was said. Anthropologists must examine discrepancies within and between illness narratives, while also addressing what remains unspoken and explaining why this is the case in the broader context of the research settings.

The second discursive text that constitutes an important site for informing studies of being-in-the-world is the body-self. I argue that this embodiment approach is motivated by three interrelated factors. First, the body is the most intimate part of the self and carries the experiential history of that same self through its embodied condition(s). Second, and veering away from static notions of the individualized body as a passive recipient of the external world, embodiment treats the body as "the subject of culture," or, "as the existential ground of culture" (Csordas 1990:5). In other words, the body is an ideal place to locate and examine intersections between individual and social forces because it is an active and reciprocal point of transference between self, "other," and environment. The embodied history it communicates deals in part with the story of these how these forces have and continue to intersect with the body to produce sickness. Third, coupled with the intimacy and sociality of the body, its materiality offers researchers a discursive text that enables them to retrace and connect experiences of suffering to their proximal and distal causes.

Structural violence assumes, therefore, that subjectivity is given rise and takes new forms through experiences of subjugation (Das 2007). This approach allows medical anthropologists to look beyond individual pathologies of the body to examine its intersections with the historical mapping of power relations and how these social systems of domination are reproduced across time and space. To this end, the work of Pierre Bourdieu is especially relevant to better grasp

these often invisible and subtle forms of violence that operate in processes of social reproduction.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, an important part of the reproduction of structural violence across space and time is what he calls "symbolic violence." For Bourdieu, discourses that promote individual choice, responsibility, and accountability mask the silent development of symbolic processes that underlie the controlled production of structurally violent systems. Given this long-term and largely invisible process which produces a *habitus* recognizable to people as "the norm", Bourdieu's symbolic violence becomes a useful lens through which to gaze not only upon the creation of violable subjects, but also on the very processes which have facilitated the rise and scope of the violent modernity which takes shape through globalization and processes of capitalization.

One of Bourdieu's major contributions to the study of social systems is his examination of the construction and reproduction of what he termed "habitus". For Bourdieu, habitus can be understood as the compilation of conscious and unconscious preferences, tastes, behaviors, attitudes, actions, and beliefs. Unlike structuralist perspectives, which regard culture and human behavior as resulting from the unidirectional mapping of fixed systems onto passive individuals, habitus looks for the dynamic interplay between individual agency and social structure. Habitus is thus an ongoing production; the individual dispositions that are shaped by our social worlds in turn shape processes of socialization.

Habitus attempts to account for the physical manifestation of a set of embodied dispositions that guide one's behaviors and choices in a specific social, historical, cultural, political, and economic context. In other words, habitus can be understood as "a social law converted into an embodied law" (Bourdieu 2004:341). More specifically, habitus allows us to

recognize that even our most intimate beliefs or tastes are framed, in part, by the worlds in which we live and our individual experiences within these worlds. While being shaped by past experiences and structures, habitus also guides one's physical and mental decision-making processes and therefore reproduces itself 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence… without any conscious concentration' (Bourdieu 1984: 170).

Following from this, habitus engenders the development of various forms of capital that go beyond the material realm. More specifically, Bourdieu (1986) argues for the recognition of social, cultural, and symbolic powers, which find their respective influences through the dispositions conditioned by our very habitus. In various contexts, individuals slowly become sensitized to respond to particular tastes and dispositions, or to accept some forms of power and reject others, through their seemingly familiar nature; made "natural" through its relation to our particular habitus. More pervasive than conventional understandings of material capital then, these various dimensions are powerful because of the fact that they draw upon embodied notions, the ones that seem most natural to us, thereby rendering our obedience or acceptance.

Hence, as Bourdieu argues, "if you try to think of domination in terms of the academic alternative of freedom and determinism, choice and constraint, you get nowhere" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2004:272). Bourdieu's gaze falls instead upon these various dimensions of capital, and the ways they evoke a response of deference or defiance from us. Yet this very choice between deference and defiance is not a "conscious, free, deliberate act of an isolated 'subject'" but rather "is itself the effect of a power durably embedded in the bodies of the dominated in the form of schemes of perceptions and dispositions…which sensitize them to certain symbolic manifestations of power" (Bourdieu 2004:341). Interestingly then, Bourdieu turns the notion of "free agency" on its head, revealing that compliance or acquiescence does not necessarily

constitute freedom from domination.

Instead, he argues for the recognition of "symbolic violence" which he defines as "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2004:272). The production of symbolic violence requires an "immense preliminary labour that is needed to bring about a durable transformation of bodies and to produce the permanent dispositions that it triggers and awakens" (Bourdieu 2004:341). Once conditioned in such a fashion, it is then "for the most part exerted invisibly and insidiously through insensible familiarization with a symbolically structured physical world and early prolonged experience of interactions informed by the structures of domination" (Bourdieu 2004:341). For Bourdieu, among the most "violent" forms of domination is that which draws upon these unconsciously formed, yet socially informed, dispositions so intertwined with the natural order of things that it "imposes itself as self-evident, universal" (Bourdieu 2004:273). Important to note, however, is that symbolic violence is not the fixed result of the interaction between coercion and consent, or external imposition and internal impulse. It is a phenomenon which interpolates at times antagonistic, and at other times complementary mechanisms that emerge from both within and without the individual; through individual and social perceptions of "normal" and "abnormal", "acceptable" and "unacceptable"; conceptions which are themselves fashioned by, and in turn fashion, social relations and phenomena.

For Bourdieu, the question of what is "most natural" draws our attention to the body itself, and the ways that "symbolic force is…exerted on bodies, directly and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but this magic works only on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body" (Bourdieu 2004:340). Though difficult to discern in itself, the effects of such symbolic violence can be observable in the subtle forms

"of *bodily emotions*—shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt—or *passions* and *sentiments*—love, admiration, respect. These emotions are all the more powerful when they are betrayed in visible manifestations such as blushing, stuttering, clumsiness, trembling, anger, or impotent rage" (Bourdieu 2004:341). These affective responses allude to the embodied social system of morality and ethics in which the dominated play an important part.

Bringing the various forms of capital back into view, Bourdieu demonstrates how habitus is influenced by those members of society who hold the symbolic power to effect its reproduction. Similar to Marx & Engel's notion of "false consciousness", Bourdieu notes that "the dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural. This can lead to a kind of systematic self-depreciation, even self-denigration" (Bourdieu 2004: 339). Drawing on his own fieldwork among the Kabyle of Algeria to demonstrate this process of naturalization through the heavily biologized gendered difference, we must note an important departure from Marx. Rejecting the notion that an emergence of consciousness is, in itself, enough to break cycles of oppression, Bourdieu writes that, "to expect the liberation of women to come through the immediate effect of the 'raising of consciousness'" for example, necessitates "forgetting—for lack of a dispositional theory of practices—the opacity and inertia that stem from the embedding of social structures in bodies" (Bourdieu 2004:342).

Though Bourdieu's take on habitus and symbolic violence may seem to resonate with Oscar Lewis' heavily criticized concept of the "culture of poverty" there is an important difference between Lewis and Bourdieu in relation to the origins of feelings of inferiority. For Lewis structures of poverty are reproduced through the passing on of cultural traits by the poor to their offspring over the span of generations. Bourdieu, on the other hand, understands that such

feelings originate, not through an inherent pathological self-image among the oppressed, but rather, through the engagement between oppressed and oppressor, and the mutually constituted cognitive and material world they share. This important difference, again, calls for a more rigorous solution to the problem of structures of oppression than a "simple conversion of consciousness and wills" (Bourdieu 2004:342). Bourdieu elaborates:

> Because the foundation of symbolic violence lies not in mystified consciousness…but in dispositions attuned to the structure of domination of which they are the product, the relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves (Bourdieu 2004:342).

Opening up the body to new readings in this way allows anthropologists and other analysts to locate and critique the power structures in and through which the distribution of illnesses unfolds. (Nguyen and Peschard 2003; Farmer 2004; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Kleinman, Das and Lock 2003; Smith-Morris 2010).

In their afflicted states, and especially in contexts characterized by fear and repression, bodies bear witness; they "embody" structural and symbolic forces of violence that unevenly shape the contours of life and death, even when words cannot or will not give them voice (Das 2007; Farmer 2004). Particularly pressing in this vein of anthropology is the desire to understand how violence is communicated through the body. The intersection between the body and these various levels has been referred to as the individual body, the social body, and the body politic. Schepher-Hughes and Lock (1987) did much to enhance our understanding of the interactions between these levels of embodied experience in relation to power and authority, and the way they often come to be inscribed in the individual body, which bears witness to their effects (Scheper-Hughes 1993; Janzen 2002).

By attending to these marginal voices and their embodied conditions we can locate important local cosmologies that underlie illness etiologies and implicate the specific structural and systemic forces that give them rise, shape, and scope (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987; Green 1998; Hamdy 2012). This holistic approach lends medical anthropology its uniqueness, and drives its epistemologies of the body-self across fluid states of health and illness.

The association between structural violence and chronic illness is central to the work of Manderson and Smith-Morris (2010). The researchers assert that lifetime illnesses "neither develop nor continue in a vacuum, but are profoundly shaped by persistent injustice, inequality, poverty, and physical expressions of structural violence." As "modern life imprints on the body," social understandings of biological processes are transformed (Manderson and Smith-Morris 2010:4). But what does this "modern life" entail? The answers to this complex question differ markedly from one actor to the next.

Wiedman's (2010) study of diabetes and associated metabolic syndromes (MetS) and chronic conditions in the context of modernization offers one response to this question. The author shows how contemporary global epidemics of diabetes are tied to the historical shift away from the active, seasonal lifestyles of hunters, gatherers, and agriculturalists, which promoted metabolic and cardiovascular fitness, to the sedentary, less active lifestyles produced through the time and labor saving technologies of industry and capitalism and the diets they gave rise to. Weidman therefore concludes that these aforementioned conditions embody "the physical body's response, not to natural limits of the human body, but to the 'chronicities of modernity'" (Wiedman 2010:39).

Bagwell's (2013) examination of rising rates of type II diabetes in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) offers another example. The author argues that type II diabetes has come to

constitute a "public health crisis" in one of the richest countries of the Middle East. Through an exploration of Emirati gift exchanges and their modern consumption patterns, Bagwell shows how shifts in urbanization and industrialization are coupled with gift exchange practices to produce a context in which obesity and diabetes thrive.

Based on this analysis, I argue, marad can only be understood by attending to socio-economic, political, environmental, and material conditions that place relationships and bodies under pressure, and which lead to the production and reproduction of individual and social pain. In other words, phenomenological and structural violence approaches are necessary for any analysis of marad and its associated illnesses like daght, sukkar, and al-alb, and for forming better understandings of the social and structural patterning and distribution of life and death in urban Cairo.

The Anthropology of Marad in Egypt

In Egypt, medical anthropologists have worked to trouble underlying assumptions about the relationships between poverty, informality, and affliction. Facing stereotypes of informal squatters as lazy, ignorant, uneducated, indifferent, fatalistic and passive, anthropologists problematize the individualization of affliction and demonstrate how bodies intersect with broader forces to produce embodied experiences that carry social meanings. The study of daght is especially significant to this process and demonstrates these intersections in important ways. The Arabic word *daght* translates to “pressure” or “stress.” *Daght al-damm* is specifically “pressure of the blood.” Most commonly the name of the affliction is shortened to *al-daght* or *daght*, which demonstrates how the different pressures of the world (*dughoot al-dunya*) interact in the body to produce high or low blood pressure.

To disrupt biomedical etiologies and explore how individuals and communities perform

and negotiate the meanings of their conditions in Egypt, the works of Mohammed Tabishat (2000) and Sherine Hamdy (2008; 2012) are especially useful. Their insights offer relevant frameworks for understanding incurable or life-limiting amraad in Egypt.

One of very few anthropological studies of *daght* in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) is Mohammed Tabishat's cross-class examination of daght among Cairene residents. Drawing on similarities and differences between Tabishat's findings and my own, I argue that many of the characteristics of *al-daght* may be applied to other incurable afflictions included in this study.

Tabishat argues that al-daght, while linked to hypertension, is not confined to the biomedical parameters associated with high blood pressure. Instead, he argues:

> "The present concept of *al-daght* is only partly based on the concept of high blood pressure. More significant aspects are produced by processes of negotiating its meanings and embodying those, most crucially after attaching them to local social and physical circumstances which are assumed to engender the illness incidence and its endemic spread."

In other words, according to Tabishat, daght transcends measurable irregularities in blood pressure to become "cultural critique" (Tabishat 2014) of the larger social and physical forces attributed to the production of illness. The meanings of daght are therefore discursively produced as local etiologies meet biomedical categories.

Tabishat's research revealed that *al-daght* is an "endemic sickness" (Tabishat 2000:203). Throughout the 1990s, Tabishat notes a common experience which he describes as, "a complex sense of distress and unhappiness summoning a whole range of disvalued emotions and feelings expressed by one single term called 'izza'al" (Tabishat 2014:2). *Za'al*, which Tabishat (2014) later identifies as "izza'al," results from "multiple frustrations and disappointments in life, economic instability, combined with heightened irritation resulting from spatial pressure (*di'ah*),

bad or polluted food (*akli lkimaawiyyat*), noise (*dawsha*), pollution (*talawwus*) of the city." Elaborating on the social and physical circumstances that engender daght, Tabishat's subjects attributed the exacerbation of their symptoms to their experiences in the city. Daght was linked to "crowdedness and spatial pressure." These were further associated with emotional states like "anger (*za'al*), tension (*tawattur*), nervousness ('*sabiyya*) and hard thinking (*tafkir*)" (Tabishat 2000:206). *Za'al* is a reference to all of these experiences and triggers the onset or exacerbation of illnesses and associated symptoms (Tabishat 2014:2).

Medical doctors interviewed during my fieldwork identified and treated daght as hypertension or high blood pressure. Complementary to the findings of Tabishat (2000), however, I discovered that *daght* is associated with hypertension while diverging from it in important ways for cemetery residents. Hypertension, sometimes referred to as the "silent killer," is considered largely asymptomatic. Daght, on the other hand, is highly symptomatic. My subjects could "feel" they suffered from *daght* regardless of their biomedical status. Some had never been to a doctor for either diagnosis or treatment. Some had been informed by their doctors that they did not have *daght* and yet continued to trace the source of their suffering to it nonetheless.

Based on my cemetery subjects, I classify *daght* as an illness experience that results from exposure to stress-inducing living conditions and particularly sad or frightening life experiences. Over time, but also during sudden particularly stressful life events, the body's ability to properly manage and regulate the circulatory system is compromised. This dysfunction is manifested through high (*daght 'alee*) or low (*daght waatee*) blood pressure. Low daght was often associated with *huboot*—a sudden drop in energy (*taaqah*)—accompanied by light-headedness, severe headaches, dizziness, fainting, and low energy. Low daght was often associated with

shock and sadness, while high daght was connected to anger and sadness. As this demonstrates, symptomology often overlaps and therefore these categories are fluid.

The origins of *daght* are often social, political, or economic in nature. While Tabishat limits *za'al* to anger, frustration, and disappointment, I noted that my subjects expanded it to include sadness (also expressed as *huzn*), particularly in relation to unresolved disputes, injustices, or violations. In the cemeteries *za'al* is a prevalent trigger for daght and other aforementioned illnesses like al-'alb, which affects the heart; an organ often connected to relationships and emotion in the popular imaginary. Tabishat also noted that bodily pains were often expressed "in terms of family relations and their contribution to the persistence or alleviation of those states of distress or discomfort" (Tabishat 2000:204-205). The combined weight of these various forces "irritates" the soul (*nafs*) and according to Tabishat, "ultimately engenders poor health" (Tabishat 2000:214).

Cemetery residents' etiologies also diverge from Tabishat's categories in the reading of 'sabiyya, which he defines as nervousness. Cemetery residents made a distinction between nervousness as a disposition that grows out of being in a state of constant frustration on the one hand, and *'ala'*—nervousness associated with worry, concern, or preoccupation that results from too much "hard thinking" (*tafkir*)—on the other.

Tafkir often revolves around the state of relationships, everyday struggles, the precarity of political and economic life, and the future of Egyptian society. Similar to Tabishat, I found that the degradation of important relationships, their tendency to produce feelings of *za'al* and *'ala'*, was almost always associated with the onset or exacerbation of daght, as well as sukkar, al-kila, and al-'alb. Stressful, failed, or failing relationships, more than personal failures of the

body, family history, or even cemetery conditions, were considered important triggers for the onset of these illness episodes.

For my subjects, *daght* was often a byproduct of the stress of these relationship dynamics, turning metabolic disorders and chronic conditions symptoms into indicators of more serious social ills. However, because the social sphere unfolds within certain cultural, economic, and political contexts, they speak to these broader domains. Therefore by collapsing *daght* into biomedical notions of hypertension we risk missing structural sources of violence and suffering that descend to affect everyday life for millions of poor and marginalized.

Along with Tabishat's examination and analysis of al-daght, Sherine Hamdy's (2008, 2012) research on end-stage renal patients in an Egyptian dialysis ward offers two important contributions to this study. First, Hamdy's work raises the notion of "political etiologies," rather than "medical etiologies" to explain how her subjects traced illnesses to the pesticides in food, poor diets in light of limited economic circumstances, unclean water that has led to the proliferation of waterborne illnesses and their associated diseases, and to the very polluted air people breathe daily (Hamdy 2012:288n14).

Second, Hamdy's findings challenge the alleged religious fatalism and passivity relating to the realities of incurable affliction among the poor. Hamdy has noted, "in modern Egyptian nationalist discourse…state officials singled out passive fatalism as a dangerous disposition among the populace, particularly the rural peasantry. Fatalism continues to be posited by the Egyptian state as a significant obstacle to progress" (Hamdy 2009:176). But Hamdy's research among terminally-ill kidney failure patients without access to proper or regular treatment demonstrates how awareness of death is measured against the dwindling prospects of living through complex and active processes of "ethical reasoning." Studying this reasoning, she

argues, has the power to reveal how "religious logics intersect with their assessment of social and medical risks and benefits as they face life-and-death decisions about their medical care" (Hamdy 2009:176-177).

Facing limited options for recovery, Hamdy argues, "they actively work upon their selves to cultivate dispositions of acceptance of God's will" (Hamdy 2009:176-177). While seeking biomedical treatment, therefore, they consider their broader place in webs of power relations and given these prospects, actively work to cultivate Islamic virtues like *sabr* (forbearance) and *tawakkul* (reliance on God). Furthermore, according to Hamdy, the tendency to cultivate such a disposition "is necessarily contingent upon how much control patients feel they have in the face of illness and other trials, and on whether they have any options that would really provide an appropriate 'solution' that could be lived with medically, socially, and spiritually" (Hamdy 2009:174). Blaming "the environment for high levels of toxicity when one feels ultimately helpless against it, for example, fosters frustration and anger, rather than the proper sensibility of steadfastness, fortitude, and ultimate gratefulness toward God" (Hamdy 2009:189).

Hamdy's findings are especially relevant to the cemetery context where I found a lack of political participation/engagement during and after the uprisings, and where Asad (2015) and Bayat (2016) note a general lack of participation among the poor in the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring. In addition, the emphasis on dying well among cemetery squatters might lead one to assume a fatalism or passivity among afflicted cemetery squatters, rather than to understand this process as an exercise in agency in the face of incurable affliction.

Political Etiologies of Marad in the Cemeteries

The study of *marad* in the City of the Dead calls for a nuanced approach that attends to the intersections between place and the embodied self. Understanding suffering and the

experience of *marad* in the cemetery requires their contextualization in time and space. Philosopher Edward Casey asserts that "place is integral to the everyday life-world" (Casey 2009:xxi). "Where we are" has great bearing on distributions of sickness and affliction, or, what I call "geographies of suffering." Place also plays a role in shaping how these conditions are experienced and articulated by subjects, as subjects simultaneously reshape it in turn. Furthermore, given the reality that "most episodic memories require a scene of enactment" (Casey 2009:xxi), memory, and, subsequently notions of self and society are intrinsically connected to place.

The interaction between body and place, as summarized by Setha M. Low, is "the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form" (Low 2003:10). "The space occupied by the body, and the perception and experience of that space," Low argues, "contracts and expands in relationship to a person's emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural dispositions" (Low 2003:10). From this perspective, spaces and places are more than the backdrop against which life is played out. They are "eventmental," and experiential, constituting scenes of "personal and historical happening" (Casey 2009:xxv). A phenomenological approach to the body must therefore consider the role of place in embodied formations.

Discussions with cemetery residents revealed that in Egypt, housing policy is health policy. Afflicted individuals involved in this research drew on "political etiologies" (Hamdy 2012) that emphasized the link between their embodied conditions and the cemetery space in which they lived. Sickness in the body was therefore often mobilized by my subjects to speak to the decay or degradation of broader social, economic, and political structures and institutions that had left them few options outside of cemetery squatting and exposed their bodies to various

health risk factors.

Poor health was often linked to the inadequate environmental, material, spatial, and economic conditions of cemeteries and other *'ashwa'iyat* (informal areas). These, in turn, were connected to the failures of city officials, and the corruption and inequality that shaped the contours of everyday life. Good health, on the other hand, was tied up with the provision of good housing, and subsequently, improved living conditions tied to the formal city life in the social imaginary of cemetery residents. As a result, the notion of wellbeing went beyond proper biomedical care to incorporate physical and symbolic act of getting out of the cemeteries and the broader socioeconomic climb out of poverty.

I discovered that my subjects want to live, and to have homes, no doubt. But they also wanted to stop being afraid to lay claim to the right to housing and quality healthcare. Their desire for formality was, more broadly, about the desire for good health, and also, about the right to be structurally visible without becoming even more structurally vulnerable. Over time and experience, the people of the 'Arafa have associated changes initiated by the state and its officials, as well as speaking out against these interventions or injustices, with worse outcomes.

Much of their fears about speaking out center on becoming "unplaced." Edward Casey defines "place-panic" as the anxiety that follows "the imminent possibility of there being no place to be or to go" and further refines this definition by making a distinction between being displaced and being "without place" (Casey 2009:ix-x). He goes on to show that place-panic is not an anxiety exclusively associated with those persons who lack a physical place to call home. Drawing on the German term *Unheimlichkeit*, "the uncanny anxiety of not feeling at home" (Casey 2009:x), he shows how "we can feel out of place even *in* the home" (Casey 2009:x). In other words, the political etiologies of marad in the cemeteries implicate economic and political

orders while connecting these conditions to the growing experience of instability and fear among many Egyptians. The following three case studies demonstrate how these political etiologies operate in narrative encounters.

Zeinab is a sixty-five-year-old woman who has been living in the cemeteries most of her life. She moved to the cemeteries with her parents as a child after her hometown of Port Said was evacuated during the Canal Crisis in the late 1950s. Eventually she married a local man who worked as an undertaker (*turaby*) in the cemetery. Zeinab moved to his family's tombhome where she has managed to outlive his relatives and raise her five children. Her children and grandchildren continue to crowd the small rectangular room regularly as they return home for visits. Like so many others, she suffers with *daght* and *al-'alb*. During our conversations Zeinab often traced her illnesses to the "pressures of the world" (*dughoot al-dunya*). I asked her to elaborate on these pressures and she replied:

> How could we not have daght? It's very common. Every household deals with this. Expenses…he needs this and he wants this and she needs that. My family needs 30LE spending money for the day. I give Ahmed 5LE when he leaves to college. And I give my daughter 2LE. I buy breakfast for 5LE. And I get whatever other groceries. That's it, that's the thirty a day. There's no fancy meals or food or anything. And every day is just like the last. Where to even get 30LE for a whole family to live on has become even more stressful than usual these days. We used to manage to make ends meet from the work we did around here to help with burials and caring for the deceased and the tombs they are buried in. But a lot of it came from donations and handouts people would give us out of the goodness of their hearts. Now, after the revolution, we don't have access to this anymore. People don't come here like they used to. People are too scared.

In other words, these stressors of the world are linked to the precarities of procuring life sustaining necessities such as groceries, financial stability, rather than to internal biological stressors. Along with these local pressures, Zeinab also considers larger events and how they shape the realities of others on whom she depends for handouts.

Soheir discussed the origin of her acute asthma and daght with me. She is 70 years old

and has been living in the cemeteries since she moved with her parents from the Sinai during the Arab-Israeli war. She recalls her first major asthma attack shortly after becoming a grandmother:

> At that time my son was going through a divorce and he had a small son. He was just a baby. His wife wanted to live a bad lifestyle and do things he couldn't accept. He met her on the public transportation (muwaslaat) and you know those kinds of girls. He wouldn't take no for an answer. Anyway, she knew people with money and I was so scared night and day that she would be able to take him from my son and from us. And she did. She was able to. This little child had to go between two homes and two families. He would see what they have and what we have. I worried he wouldn't come back to us. But he still does, even until now. But back then I didn't know. One night I woke up and I found myself gasping for air. It felt like someone was sitting on top of my chest. My son took me to the emergency room. The doctor did tests and gave me oxygen treatments. He asked me questions about my family. He told me I have daght and asthma. I knew about these because my older sister had died from lack of oxygen and my parents both died from strokes….He wanted me to keep coming for asthma treatments and to buy medication for my daght…I kept arguing with him. I told him, "no, this is happening because of a family problem." He told me that family problems don't cause these conditions.

Despite what biomedical professionals have to say, when Soheir places her afflictions in the broader context of her life, she insists that the breakdown of her family and the role of sadness are primary sources of and triggers for marad.

Take the recollection of Somaya, a forty-year-old mother of three and grandmother to one young grandson, regarding the acute onset of al-'alb and daght:

> One day I made liver (*kibdah*) for my family. We all ate and then I decided to sit and rest for a while because I was feeling kind of tired. But then I started to feel sharp pain pulling me down, pulling me to the ground. I called for my daughter and she found me on the floor in that room over there. She screamed and ran to get her father and my son. They carried me to the street and put me on a bus to Al-Khalifah Hospital (Mustashfa Al-Khalifah). The doctors there told me I had heart disease and told me I needed an operation because two of my arteries were all blocked. At that time I started to feel sad. I felt sad because I had a disease and what it meant for my family and for myself. That sadness turned into daght.

Rola is 47 years old. She is married with three children and has been living in the cemeteries since her husband moved their family from the farming village of Minya over thirty

years ago. Her eldest daughter is married and lives in the formal sector. Her son is a second year engineering student and is her pride and joy. He spends most of his time studying on campus to avoid transportation costs. Her youngest daughter is still in junior high and spends most of her day at school. Her husband works at the vegetable market where he sells produce from sun up to sun down. Rola spoke to me about her experience with marad:

> The biggest cause of my *marad* is fear. I'm always afraid. Especially after my daughter got married and the rest went off to school, I ended up alone here. I get scared. And this fear causes more problems. It left me with a head full of white hair. Fear is what caused my heart problems and my daght.

In the cemeteries, fears are layered. Here Rola refers to the fear that has grown out a lack of security and widespread violence, especially against women in the cemeteries. But many people also spoke about their fears of being evicted from the cemeteries by tomb undertakers (turaby), tomb owners (ashaab al-makaan), or a modernizing authoritarian state. Many people also feared their own diagnoses and what they would mean for their families and expenses. Fear has become a prominent feature of life in the 'Arafa.

According to Rola, fear leaves its mark on the body in manifest and hidden ways: through changes in hair color, and more importantly, through damage to the circulatory system and the heart. The narratives therefore also reveal that one of the most salient features of *marad* etiologies is the impact of harmful emotional states—like fear, stress, and sadness—on the body-self.

Fear, stress, and sadness were therefore frequently connected to the breakdown or betrayal of relationships necessary to sustain life in the absence of a representative or functional state and in the context of rampant inequality, corruption, and moral vice. For the informal squatters of the cemeteries, prolonged exposure to and experiences of these conditions are detrimental to health and wellbeing. An important point to make here is that, for cemetery

residents living with different combinations of marad, these linkages are not merely metaphorical or symbolic. Rather, according to Talal Asad, "mental states—themselves closely connected to social circumstances—are central in the experience of physical pain. Pain is not merely experienced in the mind, but generated by it" (Asad 2003:83). Furthermore, as the illness narratives in this research demonstrate, "distressing emotions are experienced as being located in particular organs of the body (liver, belly, heart, and so forth)" (Asad 2003:84).

The lack of trust in others and the sense of insecurity that followed the uprisings have only enhanced these preexisting realities, leaving many more worried, sad, or fearful about their safety and the safety of their loved ones. According to my subjects, this context has led to an accelerated breakdown of health and life because it directly impacts the function of the blood, heart, and vital organs of the body. For those living with life-limiting illnesses, their symptoms are enhanced and their conditions become acute during such strenuous life experiences.

Understanding the associations between individual bodies and the larger forces that breed and reproduce these harmful affective states in the cemeteries has come to constitute a major focus of my research. To better grasp experiences of marad and social suffering in the cemeteries, I retrace the production of stress, fear, and sadness in my research community through narratives of marad. Along the way I connect their words and experiences to transforming and transformative social, political, and economic contexts at national and global levels. What emerges is a story about human suffering in the aftermath of colonial and imperial legacies and the unstable and violent processes of nation-building that have followed independence in Egypt.

Given the insights gathered through these innovative studies and my own fieldwork among cemetery squatters living with marad, I argue, contrary to labels like "chronic illnesses,"

"diseases of civilization" or "lifestyle diseases", marad is largely the outcome of structural and symbolic violence (see Figure 4). I use this terminology to refer to the ways the potentials of certain individuals and communities to live long, healthy lives are limited by social, political, and economic constraints that are reinforced explicitly and subversively by the institutions and instruments of the modernizing military state. More specifically, I argue, the production and distribution of life-limiting illnesses is couched in the violence of the state's historical and contemporary efforts to "remake the nation" (Mitchell 2002) into a modern, global megacity at any cost (Tarbush 2015; Sims 2010). These efforts have exploited the structurally vulnerable who occupy the tombs of the 'Arafa in myriad ways.

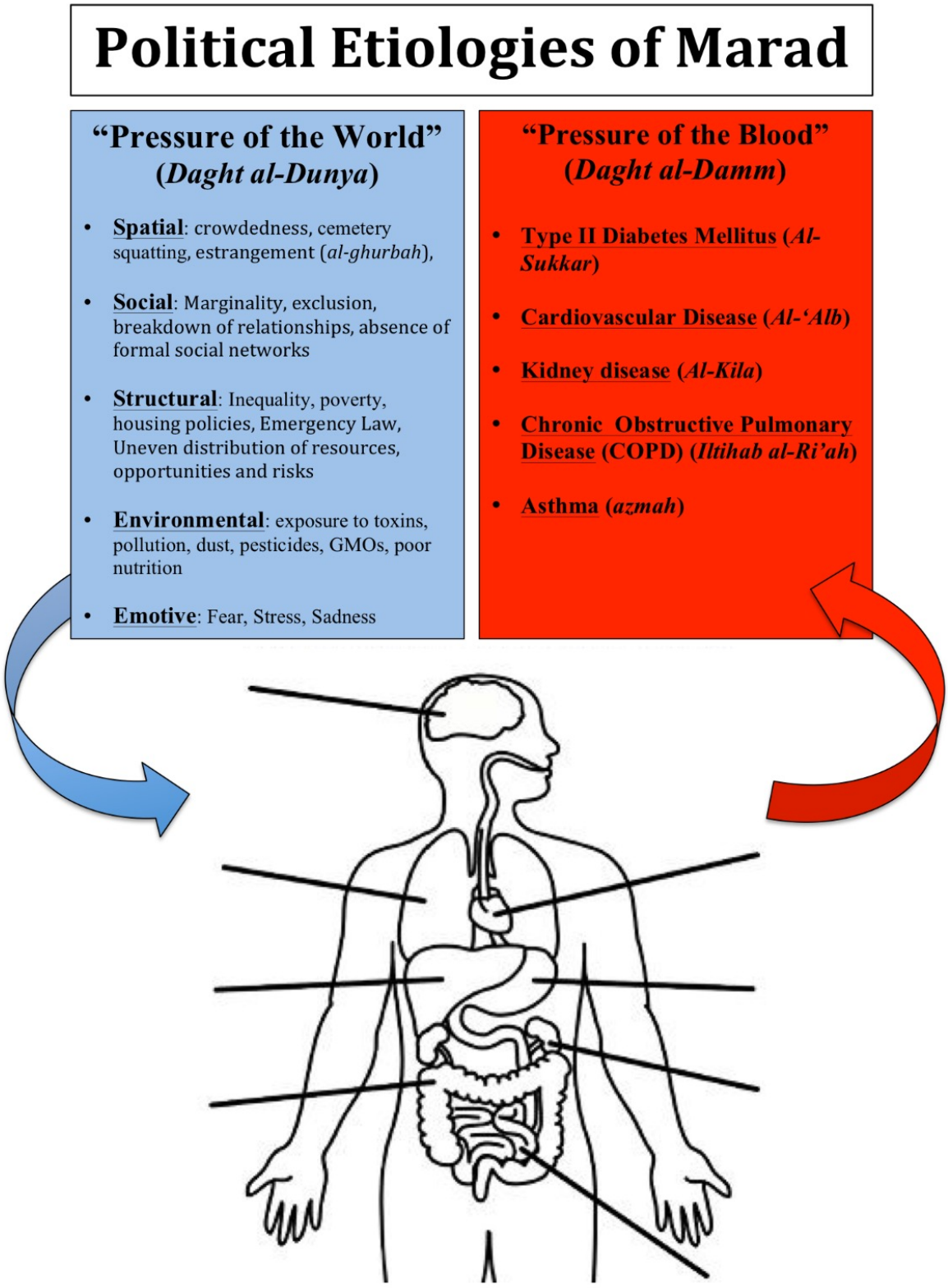

Figure 4: Political Etiologies of Marad. 2017, Ghazali

Being-in-Between-Worlds: Breaking Down Binaries of Life and Death

A central feature of the work of critical medical anthropologists is to challenge the normative categories and assumptions about the body in states of health and sickness that are upheld by the limiting language of biomedicine. To this end, Carolyn Smith-Morris (2010) urges anthropologists to "turn away from the seductive and hegemonic fragmenting idioms of biomedicine" in academic and theoretical language (Smith-Morris 2010: 35). According to Manderson and Smith-Morris (2010) the reproduction of such language "reinforces a dependency on first world health knowledge and perspectives" (2010:3).

In order to do so, anthropologists must adapt theories to suit particular contexts thereby tying narratives and experiences together with grounded theory. Medical anthropology privileges combining “continuity of illness and health together in lived experience" (Smith-Morris 2010:35). The role of the medical anthropologist is, therefore, to foreground "the contexts of lifelong health status, thus emphasizing chronicity in relation to context" (Smith-Morris and Manderson 2010:3). Through this critical approach "the 'disrupted' portions of life appear to us...so we draw attention to these 'liminal elements of illness" (Smith-Morris 2010:34). Part of this work involves addressing and interrogating normative assumptions about linearity in the categorization of illnesses and their trajectories. The language of chronic illness must be problematized because it is mired in "imprecision, elisions, and slippages that occur in reference to chronic disease.” These include presumptions about “consistency in patterns of disease, and…the capacity for its management and control" (Manderson and Smith-Morris 2010:3).

Disrupting chronological etiologies of life-limiting affliction is central to Gay Becker’s work on Diabetes among ethnic minorities in the United States. The research demonstrates how biomedical notions of chronicity overshadow relevant and important structural forces that

distribute the risk for incurable "chronic" illnesses unevenly across the global north and south. By unraveling these binaries medical anthropologists are better able to understand how, "globalization—as a force, a process, and a set of relations—patterns the distribution and trajectories of disease and poor health" (Manderson and Smith-Morris 2010).

Responding to these calls and building on their efforts, I argue, examinations of incurable afflictions among cemetery squatters cast death as a fluid state with a wide and contested array of manifestations. In the context of a cemetery, when one considers placement and embodiment in the formation of subjectivity, one may recognize that being-in-the-world is not the only mode of embodiment to be found.

In the theoretical vocabulary of embodiment, therefore, the dissertation diverges from its familiar rendering as subjective "being-in-the-world" (Csordas 2002), which I argue takes for granted normative binaries of life and death, to rather, "being-in-between-worlds," more suitable to an existence in the cemeteries and other contexts where everyday life is "inflected by death" (Mittermaier 2015).

For cemetery residents, being-in-between-worlds shapes priorities, frames preparations for the future, and guides choices in day-to-day living. It plays a central role in the struggle to convert violence and subjugation into meaningful sacrifice, and to produce good endings for themselves and their loved ones. Consequently, being-in-between-worlds figures prominently in the specific ways agentive capacities unfold, and the formation and articulation of local moralities in this community of living-dead.

To support my argument for the plausibility of marad as a mode of being-in-between-worlds I retrace transforming perceptions of the relationship between life and death over the course of twentieth century Egypt. I challenge the binary views established through imperial

legacies and the Islamic Revival Movement. I show how these binaries are challenged by the practice of cemetery squatting and the central place of death in everyday life, especially since the resurrection of the military state and the restoration of Emergency Law in 2013.

The cemeteries have long challenged familiar binaries of life and death upheld by biomedical approaches because they are a place where life and death have almost always converged, as Di Marco (2011) explains:

> The City of the Dead, as an intermediate space between the sacred and the profane, with its multiple sacred valences, was inhabited by citizens without any distinctions from dwellers of other metropolitan suburbs…The cohabitation between the living and the dead—consisting mainly in the lack of a clear-cut division between the burial ground and the living space as an exclusive modality with which Egyptians perceive the necropolis and in particular the symbolic relationship with death, the dead and the afterworld—represents the peculiar identity of this place and its community (Di Marco 2011:40)

Yet over the last three centuries Egyptians have witnessed shifting attitudes regarding the relationship between life and death. When the Ottomans began their modernization programs through a dismantling of the Mamluk's and their religious endowments (*awqaaf*) for cemeteries and mosques, cemetery expansions and its upkeep were brought to a halt.

The aversion to the integration of life and death can further be traced to the brief stint of French occupation, during which the removal of cemeteries and their human remains were moved from the walled city and relocated to the Mosque of Bones (Abu-Lughod 1971). The narrative of a binary of life and death continued through the secular tendencies of Ottoman and British colonial rule.

Being-in-between-worlds was central to the process of ethical formation practiced by Islamic revivalists throughout the 1980s. Life, along with its pleasures and pressures, had distracted Muslims from the temporality of life and the struggle for eternal salvation. For

members of the Islamic Revival, death was something that constantly had to be "remembered against the world" (Hirschkind 2006).

The absence of death in the daily life of the city enabled Islamic revivalists to frame cultivating awareness of death as a moral virtue and a "condition of moral agency" (Hirschkind 2006:176). Charles Hirschkind notes the emergence of a vast array of Islamic discourses—eschatological, ethical, and homiletic—wherein the "overwhelming reality of death and the hereafter continuously imprints itself on mundane existence and where the next world, in its enormity, encompasses the earthly one and subjects it to its tenebrous order" (Hirsckind 2006:174). Among his Islamic Revival subjects, Hirschkind noted the emergence of a "particular sensibility" surrounding matters of death and the afterlife. He argues, "for those who wish to cultivate this sensibility, death is recognized—and must be continually remembered—as the fundamental condition of human life" (Hirschkind 2006:175).

This sensibility can only be cultivated, however, through an awareness that gets beyond rational conceptions. Hirschkind draws on the terminology of Muslim theologians to describe this post-rational awareness—in the sense that it is not primitive with regards to rationalism, but rather, transcends it to embrace an outlook that challenges the monopoly of rational epistemologies over spheres of knowledge and ways of knowing—as *dhawq*, or, "tasting". According to Hirschkind, *dhawq* indicates "a kind of knowledge gained through personal experience rather than rational intellection." Furthermore, this knowledge is filtered in, and through, the body-self, and "embodied as a permanent disposition of the heart (*al-qalb*), the limbs (*al-jawarih*), and the tongue (*al-lisan*)" (Hirsckind 2006:175). This treatment lends death priority over life and living in the material world. Following from this, Islamic revivalists actively exhausted their efforts to cultivate the sense of being-in-the-worlds.

In Egypt, however, Tabishat (2014) argues, "it is not possible to access the body either conceptually or practically, apart from various aspects of *al-nafs* [the soul]" (Tabishat 2014:13). According to Sunni Islamic eschatologists who reread the early works of Ibn Taymiyya and other early Muslim scholars, the soul exists in two distinct forms in two exclusive domains. The living body is the physical manifestation of the soul (*nafs)* and belongs exclusively to the realm of earthly life (*al-Dunya*). The death of the biological body initiates the transition of the soul to the second realm, the afterlife (*al-'aakhirah*). This domain of afterlife can be divided into two phases. The first are the trials and tribulations of the grave (al-Barzakh). The second is associated with the ultimate fate of the soul and its transition to Heaven (*al-Jannah*) and/or Hell (*al-Jaheem*; *Juhannam*). Farha Ghannam identifies the phase of the Barzakh as "a transition, a limen between this world and the afterworld" (Ghannam 2015:635).

Following the death of the body, and after burial rights have been undertaken, therefore, the *nafs* awaits in the grave in either peace or agony–a sort of sneak peek into its' final place in the hereafter–until the Day of Judgment (Yawm al-Hisaab). According to this perspective, death constitutes an impermeable boundary that makes the Barzakh experientially unavailable to the body. While Islamic eschatological discourses recognize the *barzakh* as a zone of in-betweenness, therefore, this realm is limited to the *nufoos* (pl.) whose earthly lives have ended. Their perspective brings death to the center of live while making it simultaneously out of reach to the living.

Since the uprisings, but especially since the events of the July 2013 coup, the relationship between life and death seems to once again have transformed for many people outside the cemetery. Spectacles of violence and repression have emerged as familiar realities. Death and the process of dying are political and moral acts. This is especially the case when deaths are believed

to result from injustice, corruption, and immorality. Now, death was everywhere; no longer bound by its usual chronologies, spaces, forms, or demographics. Beyond the crowded and macabre spaces of hospitals, hospice centers, morgues, and cemeteries, death descends prematurely upon the ordinary, filling spaces of life, living, and livelihood—the public streets and squares of Egypt's cities and governorates, and the private homes of its citizens—challenging the very notion of a right to bare life, and altering experiences of living and dying for millions.

Prisons and police stations are referred to as "graveyards of the living," where young men and women enter alive, and exit in body bags. Their tortured remains end up among those that line the streets of Zeinhom and other morgues, filling the surrounding neighborhoods with the sights, smells, and sounds of death. In the face of ubiquitous violence and piling corpses, many Egyptians are beginning to speak of themselves—like the revolution that inspired them—as neither fully alive, nor fully dead, but rather, somewhere *bayn hadayn* "between two limits (poles?)."

The proliferation of death in everyday life has led to a radical existential shift. Today, in the face of ubiquitous violence and piles of corpses, many Egyptians, like the previous assertions of cemetery squatters, are beginning to speak of themselves—like the revolution that inspired them—as neither fully alive, nor fully dead. The struggle to be found in this unfamiliar convergence of life and death entails remembering the world against cascades of death. As a result, anthropologists have begun to examine the meaning and place of death in the Arab Spring uprisings (Mittermaier et al 2015). Amira Mittermaier notes that the popular slogan, "We are all Khaled Said'," which was widely circulated during the Egyptian uprisings, also implies "we are all already dead, have been killed by the state, over and over again. Or, alternatively: We are not

afraid of death; we are willing to die if it will make a difference" (Mittermaier 2015:).

Amira Mittermaier challenges perspectives that insist on neat and inflexible boundaries that "divorce the political from the imaginary, the visible from the invisible," and "the dead from the living" (Mittermaier 2011:52). Instead, her work on dream visions demonstrates how local communities resist the exclusivity of these boundaries. Based on dream visions collected from her Egyptian interlocutors, she identifies the boundary between life and the *Barzakh* as a porous one through which the living have access to the deceased. To understand how this is possible, Mittermaier adopts a new reading of "vision" that is "decentered and widened. It is still all about seeing but no longer about seeing the visible. A different kind of gaze is implied, which perceives presences that withdraw from the eyes: shadows, the imaginary, the (in)visible, the *barzakh*" (Mittermaier 2011:109). Along with Mittermaier's insights on the permeability of the borders between life and the Barzakh as a space where the living and dead converge, I also draw on this decentered, widened gaze as a way to understand the experience of living-death in the cemetery.

In the case of the cemeteries, I argue, the convergence of life and death can be found spatially, through the habitation of tombs and funereal work, but also in embodied ways. Marad is characterized as a form of death-in-life, a perspective that grows out of three important and interconnected processes. First, the spatial and socioeconomic circumstances that surround cemetery habitation not only enhances the reality of death in the minds and daily lives of squatters, but also places treatable afflictions beyond their reach, and therefore, marad and its composite afflictions come to constitute major causes of death among the poor. Second, these amraad have become transgenerational causes of death as little has changed between the socioeconomic, political, and spatial circumstances of the parent and child generation. People

living with marad in the cemeteries therefore see their own inevitable deaths through the passing of parents, family, and community members. Third, living in a context where death and dying are pervasive lends to a sense of subjectivity that is located between worlds, rather than within them.

It is not simply that my subjects find themselves "betwixt and between" (Turner 1969) social identities or even social classes. Rather, they are located in the space between life and death itself. Being-in-between-worlds applies to their living conditions in the cemeteries where their daily lives unfold in burial tombs. It also describes how their livelihoods, whether through funereal work or handouts from visitors, are intertwined with processes of death and decay. But they are also between-worlds when it comes to their place between the formal and informal sector. Marad is produced and takes hold through the material and affective consequences that result from these various forms of being-in-between-worlds.

Based on these conditions, I argue, to live with marad and to do so in a cemetery where top-down change is often slow and counterproductive is to “live on the edge of life; to anticipate death, to cross its threshold repeatedly, and in different ways” (Gready 2003:99). Marad thus constitutes a form of death-in-life (see Figure 5).

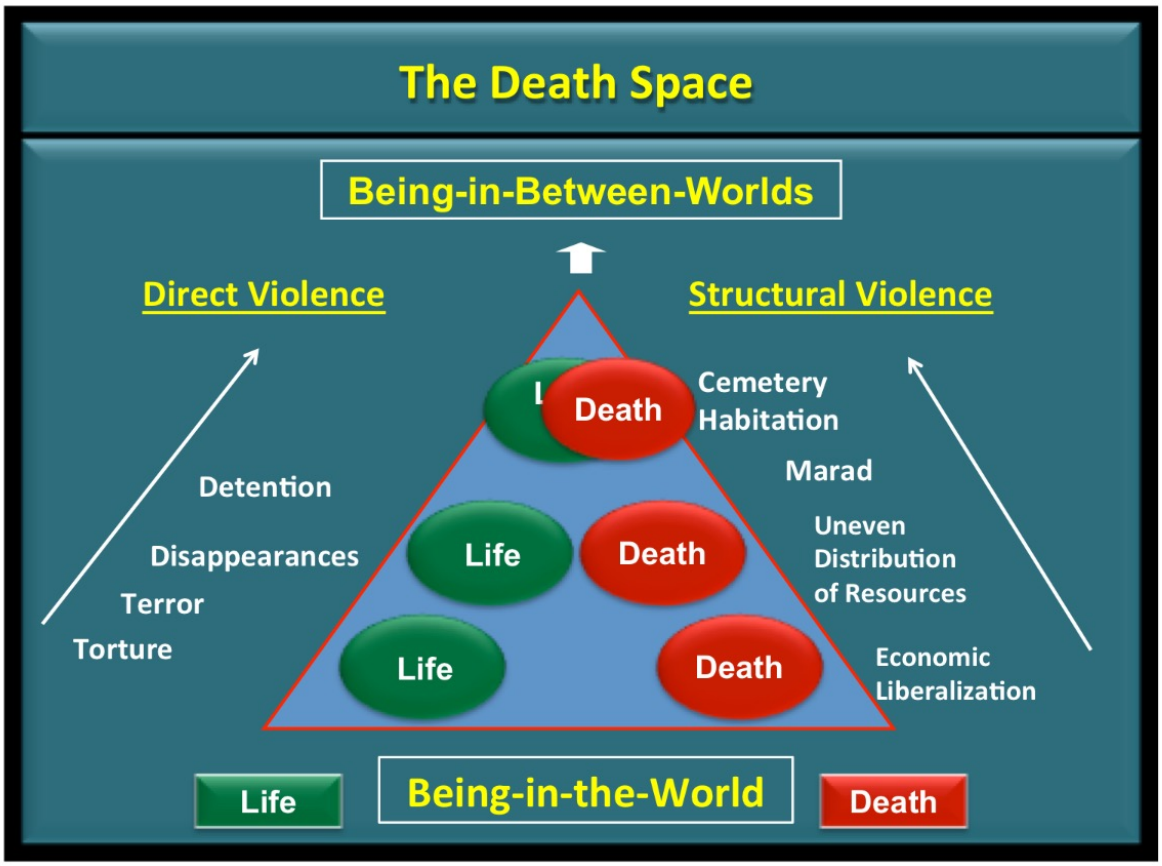

Figure 5: Embodiment and the Death Space. 2017, Ghazali.

Conclusion and Overview of Chapters

In this first introductory chapter I have problematized biomedical and bio-centric approaches to marad, which are pervasive in the Egyptian public health context. I argued these normative and normalizing standards are inadequate to deal with the social suffering these illness conditions embody. In contrast, I presented an argument for an alternate framework that draws on a combination of phenomenology and structural violence to examine and understand political etiologies and experiences of marad in the cemeteries. I have argued that uneven attempts to nationalize and modernize Egypt have taken a toll on low-income families of the ‘Arafa,

especially through cuts on the rent and food subsidies that sustain them. Along with the dwindling socioeconomic situation, however, are the impacts of Emergency Law and its ability to justify withholding civil liberties, enforcing military court systems to try civil offenses, and police brutality against civilians. Given my findings, I have argued for a shift in the theoretical language and conceptualization of embodiment as subjective being-in-the-world to rather subjective and intersubjective being-in-between-worlds as living and dying become more difficult for the community of afflicted cemetery squatters to discern.

Chapter Two grounds the narratives in the theoretical literature on terror, agency, and the historical production of fear in the cemeteries and other informal communities. The chapter situates the latter part of my fieldwork in the context of the 2013 military coup and the widespread violence that has since unfolded. To understand the ‘Arafa as a “death space” where life and death converge spatially and in the body, I draw on Michael Taussig's work on torture and terror in the Putumayo. While most often works on the death space retrace its emergence through terror narratives from political detainees, prisoners, and others who have experiences spectacular forms of violence, I explore its elaboration through the more subtle forces of terror and subjugation that have paved the way for larger episodes of political protest and the spectacular ways the state draws on violence to quell dissenting voices in Egypt.

I argue the ‘Arafa constitutes a death space for two reasons. First, processes of cemetery habitation and affliction are closely associated with the elaboration of political terror. The people of the ‘Arafa and other informal areas are targets of geographies of blame and state projects that center on eviction and relocation. They also witness state violence in the form of the detention, torture, disappearances, and deaths of young, low-income men, and now women, by state security forces under the pretense that they are *baltagiyya* (thugs) and therefore present a threat

to the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation (Ghannam 2013). At the same time, they bear witness to the structural violence that produces marad, a form of death-in-life. Second, it is a space where individuals witness and experience the convergence or even violent collapse of familiar boundaries, dualities, and binaries in the way their everyday lives unfold in spaces of death and decay. The convergence is also produced through the dominance of hegemonic state narratives that contradict lived realities and experiences. The result is the the construction of a mythico-reality, a death space, where the differences between what is actually happening and what could potentially happened are rendered obsolete.

Chapter Three retraces the methods of the research journey and provides the reader with a deeper description of the research site. It contextualizes the latter fieldwork stage within the context of the military coup of 2013 and offers a description of the unique challenges associated with conducting "fieldwork under fire" (Nordstrom and Robben 1995). It also provides the reader with a description of the cross-sectional thematic analysis of the narratives under study and sets the stage for the presentation of the narrative chapters that follow. This chapter acts as an introduction to the narratives which appear in the next three chapters.

Chapters Four and Five offer rich and in-depth narratives of marad from two cemetery squatter women and their families. Chapter Four centers on the narrative of Salwa, who has occupied the tombs for 16 years. She suffers with daght, al-kila, asthma, and recurring respiratory infections. Salwa moved to the cemeteries at the age of 16 as a new bride based on a marriage arranged by her father, a poor farmer, and aunt who lives in the tombs of the 'Arafa. Salwa's marad narrative extends beyond the cemetery to find its origins in a betrayal of family bonds back in her natal village of Fayyum. Salwa's story reveals how the pressures placed on rural families, discussed earlier in this introduction, have led to marriage patterns that are based

on maintaining property and wealth within the family. But more importantly it demonstrates how these trends have become increasingly centered on circumventing many of the costs associated with marriage, even at the expense of prospective brides. Her story illustrates how forces and coping mechanisms pit individual family members and households against one another, causing discord that often plays out in and on the bodies of women. These contestations unfold on Salwa's body through physical violence and in embodied ways. Her narrative casts the cemetery as a problem at times and as a solution at others. Along with exposing her to new sources of fear, stress, and sadness, the cemeteries provide Salwa with alternative avenues for social mobility and moral formations.

Chapter five deals with the story of Layla, who suffers with daght and asthma. Layla, like Salwa, moved in to the tombs shortly after her marriage. She and her husband are an infertile couple, with Layla having suffered several miscarriages. However, Layla, unlike Salwa, is an urban-urban squatter who occupies her own family's tomb. Layla is educated and married her husband for love, in spite of his lower *mustawa* (class status) and against the wishes of her brothers. The chapter explores the tensions that emerged after the death of her father and retraces her journey of becoming *mareedah* and displaced. Similar to Salwa, Layla's body becomes the terrain on which family tensions play out as she challenges local discourses surrounding marriage, gender, and class. Her story exemplifies the particular struggles faced by urban-urban migrants who find their way to the tombs. She is one of many who have been affected by the outcomes of capitalization and modernization including decreased public expenditure on subsidies for rent and basic food items, rising rates of inflation and costs of living in both the formal and informal sectors, and dwindling employment prospects, especially for poor and low-middle income families. The narrative also frames the experience of cemetery as a problematic

solution because, on the one hand, it offers a space for women to negotiate the meanings of their lives and bodily conditions and to do so in ways that circumvent stigmatizing afflictions like infertility. On the other hand, Layla's narrative shows how the lack of safety, mobility, and social networks in the cemeteries complicate the potential to live a healthy life.

Chapter Six takes up death narratives to show how cemetery residents living and dying with marad orient themselves towards moral ways of living in the absence of life-saving alternatives. Drawing on Ghannam's work on "technologies of immortality and good endings," I show how shared experiences of social suffering and marad form the basis of intersubjectivities that play important roles in the formation of local moralities and in the individual and communal struggle to produce good endings. Relying on death narratives, the chapter explores the ways cemetery residents locate and interpret signs of a "good" or "bad" death on the corpses of the deceased. I use the term "moral constellations" to refer to signposts that surround the life of the deceased, the instance of death, and the condition of the material corpse soon after death and after the passing of time. These signs, when placed in broader contexts, offer survivors ways of both understanding and engaging in the production of "good endings" for their loved ones (Ghannam 2015). At the same time, moral constellations are reflexive. Through the basis of intersubjectivity between the living and the dead, the constellations corpses offer help orient individuals towards ways of living well in order to die well by comparison. Rather than passively accepting their inevitable deaths in the face of largely unmanageable afflictions they actively work to transform their *amraad* (pl. afflictions) into morally meaningful sacrifices. But moral constellations and the death narratives that tell about them do not go uncontested. Because these accounts often tell stories of sacrifice in the face of widespread instability and corruption, they hold the capacity to implicate the persons, entities, and forces that are to blame for Egypt's ailing

condition. Not surprisingly, therefore, they are becoming increasingly relevant to the state. In the wake of rising body counts and allegations of rampant human rights violations, the question of whether or not the state has changed—whether it has reconstituted itself as ethical—abounds. Drawing on examples from my fieldwork in Rab'a al-'Adawiyya during the summer of 2013, and examining the discourses surrounding these deaths and the death of a popular protestor in Egypt's press and on Twitter, I show how the Egyptian state attempts to remake itself as ethical by labeling the bodies of those it kills as immoral; as the bodies of dissidents, terrorists, and outsiders who pose a threat to the well-being of the nation-state. The result is the growing sense of fear, silence, and sadness—all of which are cited by my research community as primary causes of marad and bodily decay–which I explore in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven presents my conclusions about living and dying with marad in the cemeteries, and offers a few points of consideration for future research and work on affliction and violence in contemporary Egypt.

Chapter 2: Terror and the Death Space: Manufacturing Marad through Fear

Introduction

"Did you hear about the girl who murdered her parents in their sleep recently?" So'ad asked me one day as we chatted about life since the 25 January uprisings in her hawsch. "No, I hadn't heard about that," I responded curiously. "Well, they say she did it so she could steal her mom's gold. It was just a few weeks ago not far from here near the tombs further south," she continued. "Don't go there…it's dangerous. Baltagiyya have taken over the tombs. They have drugs and guns," So'ad warned me.

On another occasion, I chatted with Omar, a young man who grew up in the 'Arafa. He discussed an odd burial he had recently witnessed:

> There were some bodies left out on the street after some clashes with the police. You know, it was the uprisings and things were crazy…the government took the bodies to the morgue and was searching for their relatives to come claim them. But no one ever came. So one day late at night they brought them here and buried them in the dark.

These two seemingly disconnected ethnographic encounters operate as social commentaries on the betrayal of relationships in the face of shifting political landscapes, and the prominent place of harmful affective states like fear, stress, and sadness in everyday life, especially since the events of the 25th of January uprisings ("Thawrat 25 Yanayir"). They reveal how these affective experiences are becoming part of everyday life. In post-Mubarak Egypt, stories of individuals murdering family members for money and contested abandoned corpses left on the streets abound in the cemeteries and beyond. These discourses draw on associations between the forces that produce desperation, greed, and crime while devaluing family relationships and enhancing the experience of these emotions on individual and social bodies.

Fear was everywhere. In fact, after venturing out on my own a few times, and as the city

grew more fraught with political tensions, I realized that I was also becoming preoccupied with fear. After the ouster of Morsi I grew more and more concerned over the safety and wellbeing of my subjects in the cemeteries and my extended family that would not be flying out of the country once my fieldwork was completed. Like so many others I encountered, I worried about the possibilities of what could potentially happen and how I would respond. As violence escalated and martial law went into effect, the distinction between reality and the hypothetical seemed to matter less than the possibilities that lay ahead. In truth, the hypothetical could be real at any moment.

Worry, concern, sadness, and fear–for oneself and for others had become magnified since the Arab uprisings. According to my subjects living with different combinations of marad, these states are detrimental to the body-self. It was this tension, the constant struggle to keep the hypothetical at bay while simultaneously living with the possibility of its realization on the bodies and in the frightful fates of others, that figured centrally in illness narratives and in the experience of being-in-between-worlds. In an unintended demonstration of reflexivity, I was able to experience at least some of the fears through my own encounters in the city.

The Death Space: Regimes of Terror and Cultures of Fear

A large portion of this research centers on the transformation and emergence of subjectivities produced in and through the "space of death" (Taussig 1984, 1987; Mittermaier 2014; Bandak 2014); one made possible by spectacular acts of violence, and more importantly, through long-term exposure to terror in the form of "everyday peacetime crimes," (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2003). It is here in the space of death where I locate the production of the experience of being-in-between-worlds. Through their occupation of this physical and symbolic

space my cemetery subjects learn to inhabit their bodies and worlds in various gestures, dispositions, and cascades of death.

To explore the relationship between regimes of terror, experiences of fear, and the embodied sense of being-in-between-worlds further, I take up the works of Michel Foucault, Michael Taussig, Paul Gready, Talal Asad, and others who have examined the production of this form of control through narratives of torture survivors, inmates, and political detainees. I extend the scope of these works by examining the cultural elaboration of subversive forms of terror that operate in the production of a simultaneously manifest and experiential death space. Furthermore, while the space of death has often been treated as a threshold, I argue alongside Taussig and others, for its broader reading as "a wide space whose breadth offers positions of advance as well as extinction…through the experience of death, life; through fear, loss of self and conformity to a new reality; or through evil, good" (Taussig 1984:467-468). In other words, occupying the death space is a transformative experience through which the convergence of life and death, truth and fiction, subjugation and suffering, become central to the creation of meaning and consciousness and to articulations of agency (Asad 2015). This is especially relevant among structurally vulnerable populations whose agentive capacities are often missed in studies of the politically repressed and poor.

Contrary to beliefs about the absence of fear as a hallmark achievement of the modern, functional state, Talal Asad (2015) argues that liberal democracies actually operate through terror, and the circulation of fear. For the state, this fear is almost always grounded in the potential of violation or transgression–of one's person, property, and rights. This potential is the foundation on which the legitimacy of the state, as securer, guarantor, and protector of rights rests. At the same time that the state generates fear, it draws people to itself because it presents

the state as ahistorical and outside the events in question. The state, through its military and intelligence capacities, remains the only entity that seems capable of defending against these ambiguous hypothetical fears. Ironically, terror and silence depend upon creating the paradoxical belief that violence is necessary to sustain social and political life, while simultaneously snuffing out these domains in the process (Foucault). This scenario posits that for some to live, "others" must die. The outcome is a terrifying and confusing situation in which what is *plausible* becomes more powerful in motivating action than what is *actual* and real.

The capacity to produce such strategic conflations between fiction and reality is a crucial feature of disciplinary mechanisms utilized by regimes of terror more broadly. By attending to the spatial layout of the panopticon, and the hierarchies that permeate it, Michel Foucault (1984) has demonstrated how power comes to be internalized, and discipline self-regulated. In the panopticon the inmate is "the object of information, never a subject in communication." He is always seen, but never sees. The aim and end of this process is the perfection of power, which according to Foucault, rests on rendering the actual exercise of power "unnecessary." The goal is to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" without the necessary physical or visual presence of authorities to guarantee its implementation. According to Foucault, the intentional spatial design of the panopticon ascertains that surveillance has a permanent or lasting effect on inmates, even if in reality, "it is discontinuous in action." Key to this disciplinary mechanism, therefore, is the blurring of the line between what is actually happening and, through invisible yet coercive forces, what could hypothetically or potentially happen. Terror, therefore, is the internalization of the conflation between reality and fiction, which is produced through the fear of constant surveillance and punishment.

Taussig identifies an important relationship between terror and submission. He defines terror as "a physiological state…a social fact and a cultural construction" that figures prominently in elaborating a cultural economy capable of producing "obedience, and submission" (Taussig 1984:468). Because terror evokes fear, it plays an important mediating role in shaping hegemony; the very way people think, know, experience, and respond to the worlds. Terror is therefore connected to the formation of subjectivities in important ways.

Terror shapes subjectivities in a way so that it operates as a self-reinforcing. By living in and through the insecurity and instability of everyday life under regimes of terror people learn to be afraid all the time. Fear often evokes silence rather than resistance. In his work on the Putumayo, for example, Taussig shows how "the terrible reality of the death squads, disappearances, and torture" (Taussig 1984:494) crippled people's ability to resist. Through subtle and open acts of intimidation and violence, people grow silent. It was not only what the state can do them, but also, what it could take away that induced such fear.

While the lack of resistance enables the state to continue its use of violence as it remains unchallenged, silence contributes to the historical erasure of its crimes because the direct, structural, and symbolic forms of violence that shape the contours of life and death are carefully hidden from view. But silence is not simply the absence of words, it is a mode of communication between the state and its subjects, as Timothy Mitchell (2002) notes:

> Violence directed against people within a small community often relies on the power to impose silence...the original act of violence is easily lost...yet the silence imposed by local forms of violence is seldom total. The death, the disappearances, the physical abuse or act of violence must remain present in people's memory. To acquire its usefulness in the play of domination, violence must be whispered about, recalled by its victims, and hinted at in future threats. The disappearance or the hidden act of terror gains its force as an absence that is continually made present (Mitchell 2002:153).

The unequivocal ability of the state to manufacture "absences"—of people, places, resources, representation, health, wellbeing, and even speech—and to conjure their memory without reference to the original acts of violence—plays a prominent role in the production and reproduction of regimes of terror. Through invisible signs and unspoken references and gestures, these absences become a force of terror capable of manufacturing and reproducing subjugation, through secrecy and obedience. Thus "it is not only violence experienced on one's body in these cases but also the sense that one's access to context is lost that constitutes a sense of being violated" (Das 2007:9). Veena Das refers to this as the "betrayal of the everyday" (Ibid).

Bandak (2015), for example, shows how occupying a death space operates through a reinforcing mechanism among Syrian Christian minorities who face the material salience of death and dying in everyday life. "The fear of literal extinction that death and dying evoke in the minority," he writes, "prevents them from embracing oppositional politics and is instead used by the regime to propagate the fact that it alone will be able to ensure a future for all of the country's citizens" (Bandak 2015:672). In the face of these shrouded threats and tactics of terror and intimidation, secrecy and silence are produced and become essential to the exercise of power, as well as to the preservation of regimes of terror across time and space.

In the cases of the Putamayo, Syria, and in post-coup Egypt, the disappearance of people, presumably at the hands of the state, has become a terrifying part of everyday life. The involvement of the state in torture, disappearances, renditions, and extralegal executions creates a distortion of reality and fiction. The potential for these instruments of violence to be turned against oneself is a plausible and terrifying scenario that produces obedience and maintains a dysfunctional and violent order. Through instruments of terror, such as detention, torture, and disappearances, fear and death descend violently and prematurely upon life.

By merging these perspectives, what becomes apparent is that the manufacturing of fear, and therefore also silence, operates through the possibility of constant surveillance and the fears generated through the potential of transgression and punishment. "Step by step," writes Taussig, "terror and torture become the form of life…an organized culture with its own systematized rules, imagery, procedures, and meanings" (Taussig 1984:495). What is potential becomes what is actual.

Taussig argues that the outcome of these experiences is the emergence of the "space of death." According to Taussig, this space emerges when awareness of death, through proximity or closeness to it, becomes an integral feature of life and living. The outcome is an experiential convergence between them such that they seem almost indistinguishable from one another; not only among those who undergo such horrors directly, but also for those who silently bear witness. Taussig describes the outcome as a "nightmarish reality in which the interplay of truth and illusion becomes a social force of horrendous and phantasmic dimensions" (Taussig 1984:492).

The death space is therefore one in which knowledge about the body and its surroundings bring the possibility of death so near that the experience of dying is magnified. Dying is the connection that blurs life and death and merges what is real with what is hypothetical. In this case the hypothetical is not simply an imagined scenario, but knowledge, gained in, on, and through the body, about what is to come. The plausibility of death at any moment becomes part of one's habitus.

Elaborating on Taussig's work through torture narratives collected from former detainees, Paul Gready discovered that during moments of beatings and torture, his subjects entered and reentered the space of death. Based on his findings Gready argues that to occupy this

space is to "not know if one is alive or dead, to feel oneself actually dying, to be prepared to die, to imagine death, and to think oneself actually dead" (Gready 2003:99). Thus what is at stake in the problem of "reality-and-illusion, certainty-and-doubt," is more than the answer to a philosophical question. The power of conflation is itself an instrument of terror; "a high-powered tool for domination and a principal medium of political practice" (Taussig 1984:492).

In Egypt, these forms of discipline and control are salient. Informal communities have faced myriad forms of terror. The state's ability to manufacture official narratives that contradict lived realities and eyewitness accounts blurs reality and fiction in terrifying ways. "Where the official voice can so strikingly contradict with reality" (Taussig 2000:171), this contradiction constitutes a source of fear and is therefore an instrument of power and subjugation.

Writing Silence

If anthropologists aim to understand suffering then they must attend to the issue of silence in their works. But how does one know what is absent or what is unspoken? Timothy Mitchell has noted, "any attempt to write about the everyday use of violence against the powerless faces the problem of evidence," (Mitchell 2002:153). Scholarly accounts aimed at capturing the political economy of manufacturing terror and submission therefore face serious challenges. Studies of political violence often face the obstacle of these inevitable absences. Efforts to articulate a political economy that manufactures terror and submission are met with the silences they occasion, thereby reinforcing them. The data that is needed to inform analyses is based on a history that has been erased by the very forces researchers are trying capture in their works. Thus there is an important facet in anthropologies of terrorized communities: the recovery of that which is silenced.

Relying on narratives collected from survivors of torture, Taussig raises concerns about the mediation of such processes of terror through narrative, and the problems ethnographers confront in "writing effectively against terror" (Taussig 1992:135). But these quandaries, Taussig concludes, are themselves a product of the aims and goals of terror—to interrupt the individual and communal capacities, as well as those of observers, to narrate experiences of terror and to continue to resist it. In other words, terror has the power to disrupt the continuity of life and narrative. This disruption allows for the reproduction of terror because the evidence has been written out of official historical accounts, and a silence enforced upon the population.

Through broad and terrifying generalizations of the exotic "other," the historical particularism of given populations and situations is erased and replaced with singular, "official" narratives that exclude alternative voices. In the space produced through their absence, "the social imagination populates its "metamorphosing images of evil" (Taussig 1984:468), spreading geographies of blame across neighborhoods, cities, and regions. This distortion implies the impossibility of challenging the status quo because the mimesis presents "an optic which perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday." (Taussig 1984:497). The use of terror is therefore de-sensationalized, and according to Ghannam, the links between people, place, and identity naturalized (Ghannam 1999).

A cycle is born where fear produces silences and public secrecy (Taussig 1999), which in turn reinforce terror. The result is the production of a culture of fear in which "meaning itself is made possible by what is missing" (Mitchell 2002:153). Such a culture depends upon the "ever-present reference to what has disappeared, upon deaths remembered and violations recalled" (Mitchell 2002:153-154). Thus attending to these forms of suffering requires giving attention to absences and silences in the collection and analysis of narrative performances.

Agency: Getting Beyond Resistance Frameworks

Agency is a complex concept, especially where there is widespread political unrest, repression, and increasingly uneven power relations. To understand agency among the cemetery squatters, it is useful to give attention to Talal Asad's reading of the body and it's relationships to power, suffering, and agency. Approaching the body as a social process helps us understand the ways by which the exertion of power through violence impacts the construction not only of illness and wellness, but also of subjectivities and social representations, thus forging an important link between suffering and social experiences.

I draw on Asad's articulation of agency to understand experiences of living-death and its associated modes of silence, especially during a time of frightening political upheaval. My decision to do so rests on two points: first, Asad's framing of agency overcomes the circumscribing tendencies of embodiment paradigms which limit expressions of the body-self, especially during times of sickness and upheaval, to discourses of subjugation and resistance. The intention is not to write off such articulations when they are present and relevant altogether, but rather, to open up these approaches to alternative and emergent languages of subject formation and political subjectivities. Secondly, most of my subjects did not participate in the demonstrations and protests of either January 25th or 30 June. In fact, the uprisings in Egypt, according to Asad, were the outcome of middle-class movements, which, he argues, may have stalled or even halted the brewing revolution of the poor (Asad 2015). In my population, therefore, resistance does not adequately capture the way individuals and communities engage with the oppressive forces—structural, symbolic, political, economic, or social—present within their everyday life worlds. In situations of unfolding political turmoil and transition, binaries of resistance and subjugation, which are mirrored in the political context as a stance for or against

the state, are inadequate to deal with the different perceptions of risks and consequences among different social formations and classes.

Asad critiques anthropologists for their "lack of adequate attention to the limits of the human body as a site of agency—and in particular by an inadequate sensitivity to the different ways that an agent engages with pain and suffering" (Asad 2003:68). He also implicates anthropologists in perpetuating the binary of agency, wherein the outcome of all human action is limited to the production of "two mutually exclusive options, either an agent (representing and asserting himself or herself) or a victim (the passive object of change or cruelty)" (Asad 2003:79).

Asad takes issue, not with the focus on agency itself, but with the adoption of a standard form of agency that has remained untroubled within the discipline. Thus, even within the diverse frameworks and approaches offered up by anthropologists for the study of human suffering and its articulation through the body-self, and which seek to give special attention to diverse constitutions and formations of subjectivity and personhood, the body has nevertheless fallen into a paradigmatic rut. This standard agency casts embodiment and action as revolutionary modes of dissent and resistance. From this perspective, agency is defined as a response to experiences of oppression and subjugation. According to Asad, these languages not only take various formations of agency for granted, but remove the unconscious and mundane elements of human behavior—like the passions, drives, and instincts—from the equation. The result of this mind/body hierarchy, especially in the sick body, is that the gestures and dispositions of the body are perceived as being always directed towards challenging the political order of everyday life. Asad explains:

> The sick body is often represented no differently from the healthy body in that for both resistance to power is the form that agency typically takes. I find such views

> troubling because they attribute individual agency to the sick body by translating all its states and movements directly into 'dissent.' For when anthropologists talk of getting at the subject's experience of illness, they often refer not only to a patient's words but to his or her behavior as though it were a form of discourse. Rendering subjective reactions legible in this way seems to me unsatisfactory when we remain unclear as to how the behavioral 'text' is to be decoded, when 'dissent' or 'resistance' is taken to be self-evident (Asad 2003:69-70).

The problem with these resistance-centric approaches, according to Asad, is not the assumption that humans are entangled in webs of power relations, nor that bodily actions in these contexts seem to be directed at resisting multiple forms of sensational and mundane every day acts of violence. Rather, he takes issue with the categories of "dissent" and "resistance" themselves, which, he argues, are often left unexamined. In fact, according to Asad, in spite of the anthropological fascination with modes of resistance, anthropological approaches to their study often underestimate "the strength and diversity of power structures" (Asad 2003:70).

For Asad, the romanticization of resistance within the discipline is tied in important ways to the larger idea of agency, which is one response to an even larger metaphysical question. "Given the essential freedom, or the natural sovereignty, of the human subject, and given, too, it's own desires and interests," he asks, "What should human beings do to realize their freedom, empower themselves, and choose pleasure?" (Asad 2003:71). When we engage with the constitution of these analytical categories more closely, a series of assumptions come into view that must be worked out.

The issue with leaving these ideas unexamined is that they are lodged in the specific historical and political orientations of liberal democracy, which assume "that power—and so too pain—is external to and repressive of the agent, that it 'subjects' him or her, and that nevertheless the agent as 'active subject' has both the desire to oppose power and the responsibility to become more powerful so that disempowerment—suffering—can be overcome"

(Asad 2003:71). From this reading, the unproblematized analytical category of agency preferences certain readings of human action and embodiment that are made possible only through the conscious or unconscious privileging of certain historical trajectories and projects over others.

Anthropological notions of the body as a bounded entity emphasize the subject's ability to act with the intention of always resisting the traditions and regimes of power "that are imbricated in cultural logics and experiences" (Asad 2003:72) so as to advance itself as an autonomous agent. Specifically, the notion of agency assumes a preferential condition of individual sovereignty above all else (Asad 2003:71). Confronting power, in this sense, can be accomplished only by examining the displays, performances, expressions, conditions, and dispositions of the body-self. Conversely, and most importantly, failure to cultivate or manifest these bodily forms and modes of resistance is paramount to the self's failure to actualize and constitute itself as a modern, autonomous subject, critically engaged with its social, political, and material worlds.

These "obsessive attempts to define the freedom of the subject as its ability to create itself" Asad argues, produce a serious paradox that takes for granted "the limits of the human body as a site of agency" (Asad 2003:68). The paradox rests on the liberation of the subjugated self from external controlling forces by relying on that same self as a liberating force, somehow "already and always free, aware, and in control of its own desires"(Asad 2003:73).

What is problematic in this conception is the assumption that the body is at once shaped by culture and politics, and yet somehow maintains autonomy so that it remains unaffected by processes and projects of normalization. The self thus regards these efforts, not as fundamental ways by which the individual body is tied to a larger social or political world, but as intrusions

into its own sovereignty. The individual is simultaneously the object at which cultural and political projects of normalization are directed and on which they are written, and the subject acting decisively to free itself from this same oppression. It is within this dual and contradictory role that the possibility of Asad's paradox is realized.

In response, Asad writes:

> Because the human body has a changing life largely inaccessible to itself, because behavior depends on unconscious routine and habit, because emotions render the ownership of actions a matter of conflicting descriptions, because body and mind decay with age and chronic illness, we should not assume that every act is the act of a competent agent with a clear intention. Nor should we assume that a proper understanding of agency requires us to place it within the framework of a secular history of freedom from all coercive control, the history in which everything can be made, and pleasure always innocently enjoyed—a framework that allegedly enables us to see ordinary life as distorted or incomplete (Asad 2003:72-73).

In his own rendering of agency, Asad suggests that we look at how the term has been used in different historical contexts, in order to reveal that agency is not only "not a natural category, but that the successive uses of this concept…have opened up or closed very different possibilities for acting and being" (Asad 2003:73).

His study of religion offers a view of how passivity can itself be a form of agency. Using the example of Christian notions of agency, which posits a dependent passivity to accept the will of God as an expression of deep faith and conviction, he points to a self that becomes active by giving up its struggle for self-autonomy (Asad 2003:78). The struggle as he sees it, is not the search for the authority among individuals and communities to speak and act, but rather, "remembering that the authority didn't belong to them" (Asad 2003:78).

This time examining the Islamic discursive tradition and the relationship between agency and suffering, which is relevant to my research population, Asad argues, "forms of suffering are intrinsic to the kind of agent a devout Muslim aspires to be. The most important of these are

dying and death" (Asad 2003:90). This time describing the Islamic discursive tradition, he goes on:

> When 'the time comes' the devout Muslim is required *to let go*. The suffering among survivors generated by the loss of those they love is shared through prescribed practices of burial and bereavement…the devout Muslim seeks to cultivate virtue and repudiate vice by a constant awareness of his or her own earthly finitude (Asad 2003:91).

In other words, what is interpreted as a passive act of succumbing to death and to a higher authority is the outcome of active labor. The agency lies in not resisting the status quo, but broadening its scope beyond normative boundaries, to account for how human actions and inaction are tied to the afterlife, thereby disrupting hegemonic binaries of life and death.

Becoming Terrorized

In Cairo, the very concept of change, which has often come at the expense of low-income informal communities, is associated with fears of being publicly humiliated, demonized, evicted, displaced, criminalized, and indefinitely erased from the city's present and future. Associating visibility and change with the experience of fear, rather than with positive emotions like hope or excitement, is an important instrument in the exercise and maintenance of power.

When fear is a constant part of everyday life, it translates into how people learn to read, interpret, and navigate their worlds. Though it is only one force among many that shape people's lived experiences, fear often plays a leading role in determining when, where, and why individuals and communities remain silent or speak out, are visible or invisible, insist on staying in the cemeteries or aspire towards formal alternatives.

Through terror, living increasingly centers on keeping frightening possibilities and scenarios at bay by directing energies and resources towards maintaining the familiar status quo. In the cemetery, this was the case even when my subjects acknowledged that the status quo is

disadvantageous. The outcome is the production of a system in which the exercise of power operates vicariously through self-policing individuals who prefer the way things are to the frightening alternatives of what could be. In the cemeteries, change is often met with an increase in the presentation of symptoms associated with daght and al-'alb. These moments are considered disruptions with the potential to bring their fears to life.

The fears faced by the cemetery residents are similar to those of millions of Egypt's rural and urban poor. In their lifetimes, they have witnessed a violent struggle over whom, or what entities, have the right to define the country—its strengths and weaknesses, problems and priorities, and ultimately its future trajectory (Cook 2015). Since the 1960s, efforts to turn Cairo into a modernized global mega city have aimed to elevate or "restore" Cairo to the status of a "Paris on the Nile." These initiatives have been driven by the glamorization of western models of the modern-secular and its associated processes of capitalization (see for example, Ghannam 2012, 1990; Mitchell 2002; Shami 1990; Hassan 1985).

The state's plan to renew and rejuvenate the city have operated through spatial and symbolic geographies of blame that demonize the poor, thus setting the stage for their subsequent eviction and relocation out of the city (Kipper and Fischer 2009; Tarbush 2012). These processes have led to the proliferation of inequality, poverty, and displacement to open up spaces for investment and for-profit development. They have also contributed to a concomitant shift in patterns of cemetery habitation. Rather than the mostly voluntary occupation of tombs for reasons of funereal employment, mourning practices, and spiritual and scholarly activities, the community is now composed primarily of the structurally invisible and vulnerable who have few viable alternatives.

Following independence in 1952, the Egyptian state under Gamal Abdel Nasser initiated a series of reforms to redistribute land and wealth to end the feudal conditions that had dominated the Egyptian countryside, and driven so many Egyptian farmers and families into poverty. Nasser followed a path akin to other postcolonial African states: nationalization and socialism under a strong military style of governance. In Egypt, this led to a system of clientelism where the powerful military state provided and the people expressed gratitude through obedience.

Nasser passed a series of land redistribution laws that broke up large private estates into smaller plots for poor farmers and for public use. He also improved rent laws for low-income families, making it more difficult for landlords to evict tenants. The provision of subsidies on basic food items, goods, services, and housing enabled the state to extend its reach into the everyday lives of citizens who readily offered their loyalty and gratitude in exchange. It was a new kind of Egypt, one for the people rather than for corrupt monarchs or imperial powers. Egyptian music and film during this time captured the joy and excitement of families over their new plots of land. One song, "Fadadeen," (Hectares) speaks to the renewed enthusiasm and hope in agriculture, and the symbolic realignment of state-citizen relations that these redistributions represented. One woman recalled this historic moment, singing the words of the song to me: "*fadadeen khamsah, khamas fadadeen*," a references to the 5 hectare plots of land given to peasant farmers by the state. The song goes on to describe what farmers and their families planned to grow on their prospective plots.

During his presidency, Nasser also sought to nationalize Egyptian assets and wrestle them from imperial control. After Britain's failure to adhere to the provisions of the Sidky-Bevin draft agreement of 1946 guaranteeing the evacuation of British troops from the Canal Zone,

Nasser undertook the seizure and nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956, sparking the Suez Crisis. Since the nineteenth century, this valuable man-made water channel between Europe, Africa, and Asia had been "under the ownership and control of France and Great Britain (Cooper 1978:4).

Nasser's move to nationalize the Suez Canal prompted these allies, along with Israel, to action shortly after. By October of that year, Israel had invaded the Sinai. According to Chester L. Cooper, the London liaison between the British intelligence communities and the American during the Crisis and former Deputy Director of Intelligence for the CIA, this event allowed the British and French to intervene, "ostensibly to insulate the Suez Canal from fighting. But their unstated goal was to retrieve the Canal from Egyptian control" (Cooper 1978:4). This entered Egypt into a costly war with the combined forces of Israel, Britain, and France. Exploiting Cold War tensions, Nasser's forces received support from the Soviets who supplied the Egyptian army with weapons. Eisenhower's threat of economic sanctions against the three powers, and his censure of Russia, eventually led to the exit of the three countries by 1957. The impacts of these events were grave. Britain and France waned as world powers, while Russia and America emerged as prominent actors in Middle Eastern affairs; a collision that would have catastrophic consequences in the era of the "War on Terror" on countries of the post "Arab Spring."

But these events had more proximal effects on the inhabitants of the Sinai and Canal Zone. As a result of various costly wars, the cemetery community of the cemeteries grew to include families fleeing the cities of the Canal Zone, the Sinai, and other danger areas. My own parents and their families were multiply displaced due to the Crisis, and the later Arab Israeli war of 1967-73. While some returned to their native cities after the crisis, many remained in the cemeteries. Thus while Nasser's efforts offered relief for the poor and ushered renewed hope for

change, they also came at high fiscal and human cost. By the time of his death, Egypt was coming out of its third war in two decades and spiraling into economic collapse.

Anwar Sadat, Nasser's vice president and successor, reversed many of his predecessor's socialist reforms and subsidies in an effort to stimulate the economy through lofty new development goals. He initiated a process known as the *Infitah*, or "the Opening." Through a series of neoliberal reforms and capitalist development ventures, Sadat, along with international financial institutions, sought to elevate Egypt to the status of a modern global megacity. The Infitah signaled the opening up of Egypt, its public and private spaces, as well as its resources, to foreign investment and management. He began a reversal of Nasser's agrarian reform and oversaw the withdrawal of subsidies that millions of poor depended on.

The liberalization programs, and the loans that funded them, placed strict regulations on the import and export of certain staple products such as wheat and cotton. Furthermore, heavy fees were placed on harvesting certain crops during certain seasons. The reforms have worked against poor rural families and small and medium farms that depend on the gains from their harvest.

Not surprisingly, these reforms were met with an influx of rural-urban migrants to the capital city. Skirting formal and costly routes to housing has become one logical way of coping with the corruption that permeates agriculture, real estate, and formal development in the city (Sims et al.). Since the late 1960s, "Cairo's urban development has been characterized by the rapid expansion of densely populated informal settlements" (Tarbush 2012:171). Known as *'Ashwa'iyyat* ("haphazard" or "unplanned" areas; informal settlements), these settlements now comprise over half of the city's spatial layout, and over sixty percent of housing in the Greater Cairo Region. They are characterized by the extra legal means through which land, construction,

and renovations are undertaken (Tarbush 2012; see other source on ashwa'iyaat from my prospectus).

The rise of informal settlements in the capital city, though an outcome of economic restructuring, factored greatly into Sadat's, and later Hosni Mubarak's, plans to transform Cairo into a global mega city. To remake itself as modern the state had to free up space in the city. At the heart of these neoliberal reforms was the assumption that Egypt's problems had resulted from the natural limits of geography and demography (Mitchell 2002), and the immoral and unplanned lifestyles of the poor. The argument for overpopulation as the crux of Egypt's sorrows seemed apparent enough in the "extra" population that spilled over the formal city limits, beyond the plans and capacities established by officials, into the informal settlements that dominated the city's social and architectural landscape.

Drawing on these arguments about the backwards culture of the poor, and the negative impact of population pressures on the country's economic, social, political, and moral wellbeing (Ali 2002; Mitchell 2002; Ghannam 2012), Sadat initiated one of Egypt's most costly development efforts known as the "New Town Program." This project invested millions of Egyptian pounds into the construction of satellite cities in the desert (Tarbush 2012). The development scheme proposed the relocation of around 12 million families from informal settlements located in key areas of the city to these new satellite, or, "desert" towns. Following eviction and demolition, these built up areas would be opened up for foreign and private investment (Elyachar 2010; Ghannam 2012). This would lead to the realization of key "elements of modernity like business parks, luxury hotels, tourism centers, office towers, recreational parks and wide boulevards" (Tarbush 2012:172). But numbers demonstrate the failure of these costly efforts to attract projected totals. Estimates place the current population of these towns at

800,000 due in part to the incomplete infrastructure, absence of basic utilities like water and electricity, lack of employment opportunities, and the high costs of commuting to the city (Tarbush 2012).

Shifting state discourses about squatter settlements lend support to, and justification for, these efforts. While the term "slum" is associated with undesirable, make-shift, self-constructed forms of housing that are in some way detrimental to health and well-being (UN-Habitat 2003: 12), today they are referred to as "planned," or "unplanned" areas in relation to their legality. In 2008, president Hosni Mubarak's issued a decree establishing the Informal Settlement Development Facility (ISDF), which began relabeling "slums" as "informal settlements" and "*'Ashwa'iyat*" (haphazard; disorderly), to "planned" and "unplanned" areas (Khalifa 2011:40). As a result, the condition of slums and the suffering of their inhabitants are marginalized from public, national, and international attention through the strategic redefining and restructuring of these spaces from "slums in the sense of poor living conditions" to "settlements which infringe planning law i.e. are informal" (Khalifa 2011:43).

Casting these settlements in terms of legality/illegality rather than suffering/well-being allows the government to individualize a much larger set of social, economic, and political problems in two ways. First, this framing blames squatters for their own informal conditions, which allows the state to disappear its role in the rise of informality. Second, it criminalizes the behavior of inhabitants, even when labels are ambiguous like in the case of the cemeteries. The result has been the ability of the state to systematically, through the legal system it has created, evict squatters from the places they call home.

That same year, the Egyptian government began promoting "Cairo 2050," a $3.5 million development plan commissioned by Mubarak and inspired by other global megacity master plans

like Tokyo 2050 and Paris 2020. According to Tarbush (2012), "the goal of Cairo's strategic plan is to replicate these models of modernity" (Tarbush 2012:172). This vision of modernity "would redistribute residents of informal areas to satellite towns in the desert in order to 'even out' the population of the city and make space for elements of modernity like business parks, luxury hotels, tourism centers, office towers, recreational parks and wide boulevards" (Tarbush 2012:172). In other words, the plan calls for "the widespread privatization of spaces and services, especially in real estate and tourism" (Tarbush 2012:176).

The tombs constitute a large span of land and hold important real estate and development potential. Based on ratios of people to green space in modern global megacities, the architects of Cairo 2050 identified the cemeteries as an ideal location for the construction of a fifteen-thousand-acre public park (Tarbush 2012:180). Corpses would be relocated to the large stretch of highway between Cairo and Suez While historic mausoleums would be rejuvenated and open for tourists. However, because of laws placed on the excavation of corpses, they cannot be moved until ten years after burial. The plans to build a park in place of the tombs will take time. But these realities are never far from cemetery residents' thoughts, who have seldom factored into official plans for the betterment of the city. For those who live in-between-worlds, the potential of eviction and displacement is a real fear with which they live. For example, in a recent report on the Eastern Cemetery the authors state: "The Eastern Necropolis is part of the World Heritage property of Historic Cairo in the URHC 2010-2012. It underlies a diversity of forces that lead to urban informality and ruins the sky line of Old Historic Cairo" (El-Barmelgy et al. 2016:164). The priority is the urban landscape rather than the inhabitants who are forced to squat informally in cemetery tombs.

Farha Ghannam (2012) has discussed the implications of eviction and relocation programs among Cairo's poor and informal communities. According to modernization paradigms that drove the New Town programs, the individual, the nuclear family, and the privacy of the domestic sphere symbolized a modern way of life. The aim of architects working on the design and construction of these "new" desert cities was to manifest these characteristics in the design of the housing units. Unlike the open and social nature of informal settlements, the apartments were divided into private rooms and families and neighbors were dispersed across the towns. But Ghannam's work among these resettled communities demonstrates how they worked together to reject these goals through the renovation of their apartments. By removing walls, and building additions onto existing units, they were able to recreate the spatial layout of their previous neighborhoods, thereby recreating the openness and sense of communal living that accompanied informal life.

By the 1990s, the state discourse about these informal and low-income neighborhoods shifted to legality, or rather their illegality, and by default, the criminality of their occupants. But criminality was also extended to the moral nature of low-income populations. Dubbing these areas as hotbeds for extremism and criminality, the state was enabled to act violently in and the state engaged in a battle with "terrorists" and thugs (*baltagiyya*) living or seeking refuge in unplanned areas, state officials dubbed these informal, low-income neighborhoods as the breeding grounds for extremism (Ghannam 2002; Sims 2002; Dorman 2011; Singerman 2011). This has given practitioners of the state, mostly in the form of the police force (*shurta*) almost unbridled authority to intervene in these neighborhoods as they see fit. In fact, police-civilian interactions were a major contributing factor to the January 25th revolution, which was strategically staged on National Officer's Day.

When I began my work in Cairo in 2007 and 2008 the cemeteries, and Egypt, were rife with tensions over shortages on basic necessities and goods, and the soaring costs of living. Protests and brawls exploded in bread lines and across the city over the rising prices of staple food items like wheat. Young men and women were beginning to outwardly challenge the status quo of corruption and police brutality. On January 25, 2011 millions of Egyptians took to the streets demanding "bread, freedom, and justice." Egypt was swept into the growing wave of rebellion known as the "Arab Spring," a series of popular uprisings spanning the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). On February 14 of that year, Egyptians successfully and nonviolently toppled the thirty-year regime of Hosni Mubarak, sending shockwaves across the world.

But, according to Amira Mittermaier, Egyptians have witnessed a violent reclamation of death by the state in the aftermath of the uprisings. Mittermaier notes that martyrdom became a central feature of conversation and daily life. This makes it "all the more important to redirect our attention to the multiple, contested meanings of the dead of the uprisings" (Mittermaier 2014:286). Expanding on this point she writes:

> Death was continuously, creatively, and literally reinserted into spaces of protest. Symbolic coffins were a regular feature at Tahrir Square; relatives of martyrs held up pictures of their loved ones; and the walls were filled with murals of martyrs, punctuated by empty frames filled with question marks, imposing the question of who would be next: you, me, us, or someone else…Naming the dead and establishing their martyrdom was critical for enabling martyrs' families to receive recognition for their loss (and, in material terms, to collect often meagre dues from the state), but the martyrs also carried weight as embodied evidence of state violence, as tools for holding the state accountable, as mobilizers of continuous protests, and as a source of inspiration. The martyrs were also omnipresent in everyday conversations – praised by activists for having sacrificed everything for a new Egypt, and dismissed by others who claimed that most of the so-called martyrs were really thugs who had been shot while looting during the disarray following the protests. The dead were a site of celebration and contestation Martyrdom was becoming something one could imagine, desire, and invite – rhetorically, performatively, and sometimes literally. Unlike Mohammed

> Bouazizi's suicide and Khaled Said's death at the hands of the police, later deaths of the uprisings were both expected and unexpected. Many young Egyptians described the willingness to sacrifice their lives as inseparable from the transformative experience of no longer feeling afraid (Mittermaier 2015:585)

In other words, new or alternative political subjectivities grow out of the space of death, which, as argued earlier in this chapter, is also a space of transformation. But these transformations are not endpoints; they continue to unfold as new situations merge with existing contexts.

My return to Cairo in 2013 to resume my fieldwork on living with chronic illnesses in a cemetery squatter community coincided with the rapid "popularly" backed military ouster of Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi. A former member of the Muslim Brotherhood and leader of the group's Freedom and Justice Party who had been a political prisoner until the 2011 uprisings. Morsi's public appeal was fleeting. After encountering a deadlocked constitutional court, he announced an extension of his executive powers to what many critics called "pharaonic" proportions. His affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, intervention in the Gaza crisis, and his open door policy towards Syrian refugees led many to question his priorities as well as his loyalties to the Egyptian people.

Within weeks of my arrival, the city was divided. Prominent public squares like Tahrir were once again filled with the chants of protestors demanding the resignation of their president. At others, like Rab'a al-'Adaweya, people stood in solidarity with Morsi. Some stood by to defend and protect the sanctity of democratic elections, in spite of their feelings about Morsi. "I voted for Morsi but my daughter didn't. Even so, we're both here together," one mother told me as we chatted on the outskirts of the large pro-Morsi camp. "I don't like Morsi and I hate the Brotherhood even more," her daughter chimed in. "But this chaos has to stop. People need to learn patience. Ok, so you don't like him? He's going to be gone in three years. Just wait and vote for the person you want," she added.

In the cemeteries, opinions of Morsi were less supportive. He was considered an outsider because of his relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood; a group made of individuals who had spent had spent their lives in exile or in Egypt's vast prisons due to their political affiliation. They questioned his loyalties to Egyptians, and to the people of the 'Arafa. Many made statements supporting his ouster by a different kind of leader that sounded eerily familiar to the military regime they had become accustomed to, as the following narrative excerpt reveals:

> The first and most important thing we want is one who fears God in his treatment of the Egyptian population. Fear god. When god says "I am leaving the earth and its fruits to my faithful servants" this means that a good leader is one who does good in the country, not evil. He is the person who cares about other people and pays attention to their feelings. The person who, when someone lifts a finger against another, delivers justice to the people. Not someone who punishes one and lets the other go. But when I go and kill this person and I don't even punish the other, there will be corruption (*fasaad*). But when I punish regularly, fairly, and uniformly, and I hit the iron when it's hot, people will be afraid to do anything bad. Anyone who was going to lift a finger against someone and sees his brother being punished for the same crime, and he sees his brother in prison, he will think twice about doing evil. He'll think instead, I don't want to go to prison I will walk the straight path. But now when he sees someone killing someone else and not being punished and justice isn't served then he will go and kill because he thinks, "there is no government". You know, don't be upset with me, but during the days of Mubarak, the law was the law. At least there was never an Ikhwaani standing there like this. He had them in prisons underground. He knew them. He knew their games. In the end, what is an Ikhwaani? What is at the root of an Ikhwaani? An Ikhwaani is a terrorist. He is a terrorist.

Democracy has little to do with Salwa's political aspirations or her notions of justice and the ideal political leader. Furthermore, her fears and suspicions do not surround the restitution of a familiar heavy-handed military state, but rather, the unfamiliar sectarian violence that has taken hold of Egypt. In the face of shifting forms of fear and violence, Salwa makes her case for the enemy she has known over the enemy she does not know. In her discussion of an ideal political leader, Salwa cites the fear of Allah as a desirable characteristic. In the case of the president, fear would act, as it does on society, as a disciplinary mechanism that restricts the expression of

human power.

Salwa's experiences with fear and its capacity to produce disciplined and controlled bodies inform her aspirations for political leadership. This perspective originates from the visceral knowledge she has acquired from her place in the death space. But it is also worth mentioning that twice during my visits with Salwa in 2013, people claiming to be military officials showed up distributing fliers titled: "I Agree" (Muwafiq). These fliers stated, on behalf of cemetery residents, that they stood in support of the military and the people of Tahrir against the corrupt regime of Mohammed Morsi (see Figure 6). The irony is that many of the elders in the cemeteries who are heads of households are illiterate. The presentation of paperwork is thus an intimidating experience for cemetery residents.

Soon general Abdelfattah el-Sisi, who was appointed by Morsi as commander of Egypt's complex military apparatus known as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) a few months prior, delivered a televised address to the president. He gave Morsi forty-eight hours to resolve the people's wishes or face military action. In other words, the choice before Morsi was whether to resign from his post, call for early elections, and potentially face arbitrary detention by a vengeful military-state, or be militarily deposed. As I watched his televised response with my extended family, tension and silence filled the room. Morsi declined the military's offer and urged citizens to allow the democratic process, still in its infancy, to unfold. We all remained silent, unsure of how to describe our fears about Egypt and the future.

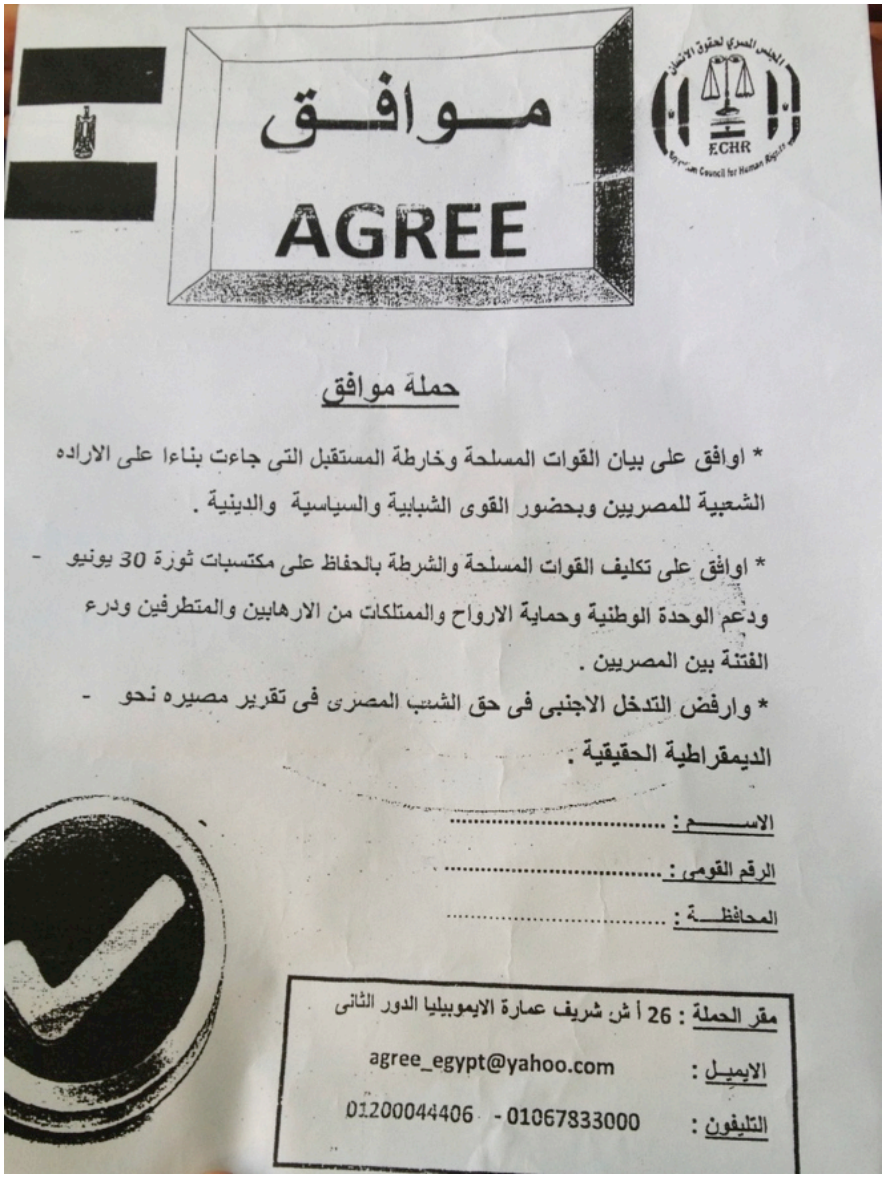

Figure 6: Flyer supporting military intervention. Cairo, 2013, Ghazali

On July 3, 2013, military forces ousted the government of the Freedom and Justice Party, arrested president Morsi, and initiated a violent crackdown on political opposition, religious leaders, university students, doctors, journalists, photographers, and social scientists, among others. As I boarded a flight out of Egypt on August 14, military and state security forces were engaged in a violent crackdown on pro-Morsi/anti-coup demonstrations across the city. By the

time I landed in Washington, D.C., news outlets reported conflicting death tolls that ranged from hundreds to thousands. Within days Egyptian prisons and morgues began facing problems of overcrowding (Mittermaier 2015:587). By May 2014, Abdelfattah el-Sisi, resigned from his military post to assume his new role as president of Egypt.

Soon after, ordinary behaviors like walking down the street without proper identification or after a certain time, and gathering in groups of 7 or more, for example, were criminalized and punished. Personal attire offered rationale for stop, frisk, and arrest policies by police and military personnel. Careers in (photo) journalism, television and media, the social sciences, and humanitarian aid, among others, became life threatening. Surnames and social relationships served as the basis for arrests, interrogations, and detentions. Specific neighborhoods and entire areas of the country have been demarcated and targeted as terrorist hotbeds and risk zones, including cemetery tombs which are sometimes used as weapons storage or hiding spaces for what the state refers to as "terrorists".

Political participation, specifically through voting, is enforced through steep fiscal penalties. Deaths are contested and politicized, forcing deeply intimate experiences like private and public commemoration and mourning to take on new forms. In an atmosphere such as this, where the mundane becomes the site on which the political is enacted, actions, words, and silences take on new and hidden meanings. To unravel these, they must be situated in broader social, political, and economic contexts

Conclusion

Historically and experientially for the people of the 'Arafa and other low-come occupants of Cairo's various shadow cities, intervention and speaking out are not synonymous with enhanced quality of life. Rather, more often than not, official interventions have led to an erosion

of wellbeing through serious disruptions to people's spatial, social, and economic ways of life. This is tied to the reality that most development initiatives place value in land and real estate potential. These initiatives therefore often require a mass uprooting of the poor and informal from their familiar homes, communities, and lives with little consideration as to where and how these unplaced communities might re root themselves.

The aftermath of the uprisings have enhanced these feelings of fear and stress in everyday life in various ways. Through disappearances and the laments that follow; through the sounds of screams, and the smells and sights of tortured, dead, and decomposing bodies; through the murals of martyrs and detainees that fill the walls of the city; through the blood stains and bullet holes that penetrate them; through the stories and rumors of how others met their violent fates; by bearing witness to erroneous detentions and mass death sentences; by watching what follows state sponsored eviction and relocation; by learning that the singularity of the state narrative constitutes reality no matter what, people begin to see the frightening possibilities of their own dark futures.

Given these circumstances, cemetery squatters are afraid of being swept up in the violence and ensnared in the dangerous and complicated web of truth and lies, afraid to land on the wrong side of the story. Even when they are innocent, they are afraid of being labeled as outsiders and traitors because they have learned that being innocent has little to do with suffering and death under regimes of terror. These fears restrict and even paralyze their abilities to act at the sight of suffering, and to intervene on behalf of others. Instead they engender bloated silences and public secrets that maintain the dysfunctional national order.

In Egypt, therefore, silences play an especially significant role because of the uneven patron-client relationship between citizen and state, and the suspension of civil liberties under

Emergency Law over a period of three decades. Fears associated with speaking out center on the potential harm to oneself, and one's family or community, as well as the potential of being evicted from their tombhomes, only to find themselves "unplaced" altogether (Casey 2009). Silence protects individuals and communities from violent reprisals by a vengeful state. It also allows for the development of parallel structures and institutions that offer alternative solutions for the poor (Havel). These informal economies are disrupted through violent political change, thereby enhancing experiences of fear, stress, and sadness.

Silences are also found at the social level. They allow families and social counterparts to secure and maintain a sense of emplacement despite their marginality and poverty, and in the face of morally ambiguous conditions and terms. Silences allow spouses and families to go on operating as cohesive units in spite of their failure to meet certain social gendered expectations. The conundrum is that silence also allows for the reproduction and maintenance of these very same oppressive systems of social, political, and economic organization. It maintains the status quo and leaves little in the way of hopes and expectations for official interventions. Again, here, the hypothetical is seen to operate as silences offer the illusory feeling of some security and order.

Thus silence contributes to their living arrangement while simultaneously reproducing the conditions attributed by cemetery residents to marad. Without a viable solution, cemetery squatters are left with the troubling reality that these diagnoses often translate to death sentences because they cannot afford the lifestyles, costs of treatments, and interventions necessary to live *in spite* of sickness. Consequently, their deaths are produced through the corruption and violence of the state, and the failure of society to act in the best interests of all of its citizens, and therefore, constitute moral sacrifices for the good of others.

Chapter 3: Fieldwork and a Coup

Introduction

Beads of sweat roll off the tip of my nose and down the middle of my back. Summer in Egypt is proving more difficult than expected. The heat of the Cairo sun is unbearable, especially during the early to late afternoon hours when most Egyptian Muslims are napping during the nearly 16-hour daily Ramadan fast. My mother and I catch a cab from our small apartment in the low-income neighborhood of al-Na'am near the popular district of 'Ain Shams, to Saida 'Aisha square, and from there, to meet with an acquaintance in the vast Southern Cemetery of the Al-Khalifah district.

I look over at my mother whose arms are neatly crossed over her purse. She is always careful to guard herself and her belongings in public. Nearly a lifetime in Egypt, but especially the political climate that captured the country in the summer months of 2013, have alerted her to the harsh realities of life. She arrived to help me move around the city after discovering how challenging it was to conduct research in a cemetery during a time of political upheaval, especially as a single American Egyptian woman.

As the car makes its way past Gisr el-Suez, I note the streets are lined with cars for miles down the road. Traffic is at a standstill as drivers wait long hours in line desperate for the chance to fill their vehicles with gas—a precious commodity at the time. The increasing frequency of countrywide gas and bread shortages, and rolling electrical blackouts contribute to an already tense socio-politico-economic environment. Rumors float around about the true causes and motivations behind these shortages. Those who oppose Morsi inform me that such shortages demonstrate his political ineptitude, thereby providing justification for military intervention. On the other hand, those who stand with Morsi, or who oppose military intervention in the

democratic process, speak about the economic prowess of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and their control over many of Egypt's economic resources. By mobilizing the economic power of SCAF, they argue, the military attempts to reclaim political power by pushing the *Sha'b* ("the people") to call for Morsi's resignation. Regardless of which side they took, the failure to secure the provision of basic and essential public services was a topic many Egyptians held an opinion about.

Cars, buses, and other forms of transportation remain at a standstill for hours after word spreads about an event offering free healthcare to the public. The situation is complicated by the seemingly endless line of drivers waiting nervously for the chance to fill their cars with gas before the attendant makes the fateful gesture to turn around or move on because the pump is empty. As we wait, some cars break down while others run out of gas. These are pushed aside by surrounding drivers excited at the prospect of moving up in line.

Unlike many aspects of life in Cairo, traffic is one place where class wields little influence. Under the suffocating heat of the Cairo sun, rich and poor are forced to wait, side by side in their respective modes of transportation, confronting the glaring inequalities that shape the contours of everyday city life. In privately owned cars, men and women sit comfortably with the windows rolled up, no doubt enjoying the convenience of their air conditioner. The popular classes, on the other hand, crammed into and pouring out of public transportation seek reprieve from the heat using paper fans and newspapers. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the event is cancelled at the last minute. Listening to the announcement on the radio, I watch people around me shout the news across the buses to one another. Slowly they pour out of their buses, and carrying the poor and elderly on their shoulders, make their way back home.

Looking around I notice a small mosque surrounded by men and women waving banners

and signs of Mohammed Morsi, the president who was to be ousted a few weeks later. Anti-Morsi activists walk through stalled traffic, dropping informational flyers through the open windows of cabs, cars, and busses, hoping to spread the word about the upcoming 30 June demonstrations at Tahrir Square to call for his resignation.

We finally begin to move. I can see a military checkpoint approaching in the distance. My heart begins to race as I search frantically through my bag for my passport. Detours and road closures lined with military tanks and manned with armed soldiers are familiar realities of navigating the city, but especially since the political uprisings of 2011. Suddenly our car comes to a stop. The driver apologizes that he cannot take us beyond the checkpoint and asks us to exit. He does not charge us for the ride.

We wait for a passing bus, cab, or microbus headed in our direction, but they are rare to come by as gas shortages also impact the availability of public transportation on which many of the "popular" classes depend. Finally, an occupied taxi pulls over. I warn him we are traveling a long distance and ask if he has enough gas to take us to our destination. The driver nods. We squeeze in the back seat next to a young woman. Continuing our journey across the vast highways of Cairo, we are surrounded by scenes of beautiful tomb structures that stretch beyond our line of sight. To my right I see the Citadel and the tall minarets of surrounding mosques standing majestically on hills.

As we approach Saida Aisha square, a large group of pro-Morsi demonstrators march across the main street. In their hands they hold Egyptian flags and images of their fallen president, Mohammed Morsi. Several men carry neatly folded white cloths. These are their *kafans*, the customary funeral shrouds in which they are to be buried should they die at the hands of security forces on the street (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Demonstrator holds funeral shroud during a pro-Morsi rally near cemeteries. Cairo, 2013, Ghazali.

Our cab approaches the complex intersection at Saida ‘Aisha square. The driver pulls over and we jump out, dashing through oncoming traffic under the massive Salah Salem Bridge. Finally across the street, we cram into overflowing microbuses whose drivers shout the various locations of their routes to potential passengers and passersby. We jump in the bus to the “pharmacy,” which will take us directly to the street parallel to our destination.

My throat is dry and my head is light. I manage to wedge the window open to circulate some air. The grinding of the old tires against the unpaved side streets makes for a bumpy ride. The passengers pass me their fares, which I hand to the driver. He returns a handful of change, from which I collect my portion and pass the rest along to the gentleman seated behind me to distribute throughout the bus.

Gazing out the window at the local shops, I see our destination approaching. Clinging to the conveniently placed leather strip stapled to the back of the driver's seat I brace myself for an abrupt stop and swift exit. We jump out of the microbus in front of the pharmacy. Compared to the rest of the area, it is relatively new and "modern," but also seemingly out of place. It is not unusual to come across this contrast between old places and new ones in Cairo; a testament to the violent collision and simultaneously incongruent coexistence of past and present. For me, the pharmacy is a pit stop on my way to and from my research site. The air-conditioned waiting area is a literal breath of fresh air in an otherwise long and stuffy daily routine. While the pharmacist is skilled at chasing away locals who crowd the store for a chance to enjoy the AC, he is amicable towards my mother and me. Unlike the people that visit his pharmacy regularly, he considers me to be a "colleague" who is also interested in doing "good work" in the neighborhood. We chat briefly before heading on our way.

Continuing down the sandy street, we draw our scarves over our noses to avoid breathing in the dust, dirt, and fumes stirred up by the heavy bustle of passing traffic. Careful to avoid the constant and disorganized flow of large city buses, microbuses, motorcycles, takatik (three-wheeled motorized carriages), cyclists, and donkey-drawn carts, we walk along the edge of the road, nodding greetings to familiar faces as we pass by. Drink vendors line the roadside with their goods: soda bottles, mixed juices, *sobya* (a coconut milk drink served in summertime and during Ramadan) *'irq soos* (a licorice based drink). Further down the road the fruit vendors neatly display their products to pedestrians: watermelons, oranges, grapes, prickly pears, and mango paint the dull, yellow streets with their vibrant colors and smells. But vendors keep a lookout for police, city officials, and curious hands. At any moment they may have to pack up their belongings and move to another spot to avoid receiving fines. Next we approach the sweet

stand, my favorite spot in the area. We select a few goodies for the kids in the neighborhood and move on.

Soon we come upon the vegetable market where we stop to say hello to Sha'baan, a local basket weaver who works out of a small bamboo hut. We meet several other acquaintances from the cemetery who are there to sell their goods and produce. Continuing along the winding alleys that pass through an agglomeration of formal and informal housing structures, we finally arrive at our destination. I knock on a large, green, steel gate. A woman, carrying a bucket of water slowly appears to remove the large lock and chain. Splashing the water on the ground to settle the dirt, she apologizes for the dusty conditions and warmly welcomes us into her tombhome.

My trips to and from the cemetery brought the intersections between class, politics, gender, health, sickness, and violence in the contemporary urban city to life. But it also highlighted the everyday ways life and death converge in post-Mubarak Egypt. Street scenes of life and living unfold within space and zones of death and dying, and visa versa.

Not surprisingly given the tense political climate, my family was concerned for my safety. Conducting research in a cemetery, or, a "cut off area" as they described it was one thing. But doing so as a single, American, Egyptian, woman with no Egyptian passport was unheard of. Rumors were floating around about women and children who had been kidnapped, attacked, raped, and murdered on the streets and in the privacy of their homes. They urged me to find a travel companion, and ideally, a male family member. But all of my cousins who lived in the city, male and female alike, worked full-time jobs to support their families. This was the complex situation in which, I, a stubbornly independent heritage anthropologist born to Egyptian parents in the diaspora, and intent on completing my doctoral fieldwork, suddenly found myself.

“Have you heard about the girl who was kidnapped and ransomed,” my aunt asked me one evening as she caught me attempting to slip out unnoticed. “No, I haven’t heard about that ‘Amitu (paternal aunt),” I answered. “What happened?”. “After her dad paid the money they asked for, someone found her dead near the train tracks,” she replied matter-of-factly. My aunt was not alone in her fears. “Guns and thugs (*baltagiya*) are everywhere now” my neighbor warned me one day after a gunfight broke out on our corner. “They started funneling them in during 25 January. Ever since then there has been no law besides the law of guns,” he continued nonchalantly. I watched in horror as a woman from across the street wailed over her son's lifeless body. “Go back inside, it’s honestly not safe for you,” he told me. I nodded, turned around, and walked inside. It became clear to me that the escalation of violence and the spread of fear had dramatically altered women’s lives and limited their mobility.

Even my subjects in the cemeteries warned me not to travel alone, or to venture beyond certain areas. “Several girls have been raped in the tombs just south of here,” one woman told me. Others spoke to me of young men who had gone missing never to be heard from again, and of mothers and families who waited anxiously for any bit of news regarding their whereabouts. Still others told me about anonymous, tortured corpses whose families were too fearful of political retribution or social repercussions to publicly claim them. Instead, their burials were negotiated in the whispers exchanged between desperate families or corrupt officials looking to deal with the problem of piling bodies, and tomb owners, undertakers, as well as cemetery squatters looking for opportunities to make ends meet. The bodies are interred under the cover of night in tombs whose secret locations are heavily guarded.

While I insisted that I had already successfully undertaken previous fieldwork stints in the same cemetery, and reminded them that I lived alone as a single woman in the United States,

their protestations continued. Ultimately, my mother flew to Egypt to accompany me on my fieldwork excursions. It was largely her presence with me during those tumultuous last months that enabled me to complete this project.

Research Site

Contrary to impressions of the tombs as "cut off" from society, the 'Arafa is in a particularly social area where the cities of the dead and the living converge. Informal housing units weave themselves in and through the architectural and social fabric of the cemetery (El Kadi 2011). The lively Friday market draws people, materials, and resources from various parts of the city, and with it, an extra, though meager source of income. The parallel Imam al-Shafi'i Street is an important road that connects the cemetery and its occupants to the city-center in the north, and other cemeteries, as well as the Basatin factories in the south. It is also a source of frequent and life-threatening vehicular accidents. In a controlled sort of chaos, city buses, communal microbuses, private cars and cabs, *takatik* (motorized tricycles driven haphazardly by teens looking to make a living), and donkey-drawn vendor carts maneuver their way around pedestrians, as well as the ornate displays of vendors that spill halfway into the street at times.

History

The origins of this vast necropolis date back to the earliest Arab conquerors in 642 AD, after the Arab victory over Byzantine forces at Babylon. The new governor of Egypt, 'Amr ibn al-'As, established a new capital, al-Fustat, on the Eastern bank of the Nile. Today this area is called "Old Cairo," and is located south of the contemporary city-center (Abu-Lughod 1971). 'Amr also oversaw the construction of the country's first Arab cemeteries at the foot of the Muqattam Hills; an area believed by Coptic Christians and Arab Muslims to be hallowed ground (al-Maqrizi). This would become the first section of the expansive necropolis now known as the

City of the Dead upon which subsequent Arab dynasties would expand. The first parts of the cemetery with al-Fustat forming its western border, Muqattam defining its borders to the east, al-Fustat to the west, the hills of Yashkur to the north, and Birkit al-Habash to the south (Abu-Lughod 1971; Ohtoshi 1993; El Kadi and Bonnamy 2011). Subsequent Islamic dynasties have each contributed to the growth and decay of the cemeteries.

As the religion of Islam spread throughout Egypt, it also "adapted to suit the culture and unique society". This was especially evident in the integration of ancient Egyptian and Islamic burial practices. The sociality of death in Ancient Egypt, including the forty day mourning period, carried over into Islamic Egypt and thus "there has always been a small population of people living in the cemeteries, including undertakers, guards, stone cutters, the sick, the poor, criminals, and Quran reciters" (Nedoroscik 1997:43; see also Taylor 1999). It was not until the short-lived French occupation of Egypt by Napolean, however, that Nedoroscik notes a change in attitudes towards cemetery living. "The cemetery," he argues, "began to be seen as a place for only the dead. The only acceptable reason to visit the cemetery was for funerals, visitation of the deceased…and prayer" (1997:27).

In 808 AD under the Abbasid Dynasty, the tombs of two important venerated Islamic saints, Sayidda Nafisa and Imam al-Shafi'i were constructed (El Kadi 2011). The mosque and tomb of Imam al-Shafi'ii was the "first ever to comprise a *madrasa* (religious school), a *khanqah* (Sufi retreat), and a *zawya* (small prayer space)" (Abu-Lughod 1971:31); marking the area as simultaneously sacred and social. The cemetery's first "resident nucleus," therefore, consisted of the dead, as well as "the custodians who managed the nobles' graves and shrines, the staff in charge of the burial service and the Sufi mystics in their *khawaniq* (colleges)" (Di Marco 2011:40).

When the Fatimid conquerors established al-Qaahira (Cairo; "The Victorious") as the new capital of Egypt in 969 AD, the cemeteries became displaced outside the city-proper as part of "Old Cairo," which had deteriorated by the end of their rule. The *kharab* (mounds of ruins) include the remnants of the Abbasid capital and the later ruins of the 54-day burning of Misr-Fustat. According to Abu-Lughod (1971), the *kharab* demonstrates the ways previous empires rendered the land in the region of Misr-Fustat essentially useless. Because of the presence of the kharab and the neighboring cemeteries, and with the exception of a few housing projects (Tilal Zaynhum and Ain al-Sirah), "these areas remained absolutely closed to habitation, serving variously as a squatters' preserve, a municipal rubbish dump, and, most recently, as a site for archaeological excavations" (Abu-Lughod 1971:22). As a result, the city could not expand to the south, and thus the bulk of urbanization was concentrated north of this once thriving city, now "merely an industrial port suburb of the new metropolis" (Abu-Lughod 1971:22). One third of this southern zone, near the tomb of Imam al-Shafi'i in the district of al-Khalifah, is the site where I conducted my research.

By the latter part of the tenth century, Misr-Fustat began to crumble under the weight of several disasters including the Great Plague of 1063, the seven-year famine shortly after, and the earthquake of 1138 AD (Abu-Lughod 1971:19-20). The significantly smaller population either relocated westward to the port or gathered closer to the original core of Fustat at the Mosque of 'Amr. During the crusades in 1168 AD, when the Ayubbid Dynasty gained entry into Egypt by rushing to the aid of a weakened Fatimid Empire. The corrupt wazir Shawar ordered Fustat burned to the ground over a period of 54 days and nights, fearing this now indefensible city offered crusaders an easy route to the subsequently thriving capital of Cairo to its North.

Under the rule of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin) the splendor of the cemeteries was

restored. Of particular relevance was the construction of an imposing mausoleum over the tomb of Imam al-Shafi'i built by al-Malik al-Kamil in 1221. Despite the efforts of Islamic reformists and modernists, these mausoleums have continued to draw *zuwaar* (visitors) from all over the country annually, offering their prayers for intercession and reprieve from suffering to the saints interred within (Ohtoshi; El Kadi). The cemeteries declined under the Turkish rulers who preferred to be buried in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul and therefore neglected their upkeep and care.

Population

According to an interview with a high-ranking official in the ministry of Housing, the City of the Dead is not recognized by officials as part of Egypt's informal housing sector and is thus not incorporated into official interventions in other "slum" areas. The constant reformulation of official terminology regarding squatter settlements complicates the task of arriving at accurate population estimates.

Available population estimates are therefore contested. Total estimates of cemetery squatters range anywhere from a few thousand to over one million depending on who is doing the counting (Nedoroscik 1997; Di Tozzi 2014; El Katsha and Watts 2009; El Kadi and Bonnamy 2011; El Kadi 2013). Anthropologist Jeff Nedoroscik (1997) cites the number at one million, as do El Katsha and Watts (2009). Stewart (1996) described the housing crisis as "so bad that nearly 1 million people are said to live within the vast graveyard known as the 'City of the Dead'; another million people are believed to inhabit the city's rooftops" (Stewart 1996:461). On the other hand, El Kadi's work reveals less than thirteen thousand people living in cemetery tombs. She does not consider the inhabitants of shantytowns that have grown in and around the tombs in her estimates. I was unable to undertake a survey of the area due to the interruption of

my fieldwork in the wake of the military coup.

Regardless of population size, trends show that the numbers of squatters and informal settlements have only increased since the 1990s (see Kipper and Fischer 2009 for example). The claim that this issue is linked to overpopulation is challenged by the reality that there exist many vacant housing units in the formal sector (El-Batran and Arandel 1998; Fahmy and Sutton 2008). Therefore the question that must be posed is, why, despite the availability of formal housing units, have people continued to occupy cemetery tombs?

For those who were born in the graveyards during the period of heavy settlement in the early to mid-1960s, there are high levels of illiteracy. Incoming populations migrated from predominantly rural villages of Middle Egypt where literacy was not emphasized. Many elderly people in the cemeteries are therefore unable to read. Furthermore, as the practice of moving into the graveyards was still relatively new, children were kept at home or put to work as gravediggers and errand boys for local businesses. These children, now grown adults with their own families to care for, also never learned to read or write and are known as *basmagy* (from the word "fingerprint"; someone who signs documents with a fingerprint rather than a signature). They have a hard time finding work that would allow them to save up enough money to move out of the graveyards. Among this second illiterate generation, however, I noted a strong desire for and emphasis on educating their children as a form of empowerment and social networking with the potential to change their living situation and better their futures.

Independent charity organizations or wealthy individuals have taken steps to provide the various cities of the dead with electricity and running water, but the progress has been slow and limited (see Figure 9). In the 'Arafa, most families still live without these basic necessities. Water is carried from a communal water hose in large containers and electricity is lacking, or is

otherwise stolen from nearby tombs or local shops. The task of carrying water to and from the pump is assigned to women who complain that the laborious work causes arthritis that makes it difficult to walk. One elderly woman named Um Kareem, 59, told to me, "I have roughness in my knees from carrying the water for long distances every day, but what can we do? We need water to survive." Plumbing is also minimal or lacking, and abandoned tombs have been used as makeshift toilets for human defecation and wastes, which remain exposed to the air (see Figure 9).

Figure 8: Water and Sewage Systems. Cairo, 2008, Ghazali.

Social Organization

The family forms the basic unit of social organization in the cemeteries. When I began my work in the cemeteries, households often consisted of extended kin network sharing tomb spaces. Though raising children is often financially taxing, through education, marriage, and employment, children offer families hope for a better future in their various untapped potentials. Thus money is redirected towards the payment of transportation fees to and from school, tutoring for children, marital dowry (*gihaaz*), daily living expenses, and on the rare occasion when there

is extra, for renovations and additions to the hawsch, including the purchase of used appliances and furniture items. Sadly, by the time I returned in 2013, many of these large households had broken into smaller nuclear units, reflecting the mounting economic pressures placed on families and their subsequent dissolution.

Women are primarily responsible for the rearing of children and tending to the upkeep of tombs, acquiring groceries, preparing meals, doing laundry, and other domestic tasks (see Figure 10). Gender norms play a role in enabling women, more than men, to contribute to the family finances by accepting available work such as cleaning houses, working as vendors in the nearby vegetable market, selling food and drinks on the busy Imam al-Shafi'i street, and collecting handouts from cemetery visitors, and donations from local gam'iyaat (charities). On Thursdays and Fridays, and also throughout the month of Ramadan, when family members are more prone to visit the tombs of their deceased relatives, women collect handouts from passersby and seek out odd jobs tand services they can provide to zuwaar in exchange for money. Therefore women in the cemeteries play a central role in shaping family and social life.

Men play a role as economic providers, though their opportunities are often limited to funereal work and construction, which are both unreliable and dangerous. Men's labor is relegated to funereal work because of the laborious tasks associated with burial and also due to the fact that the *hawsch* becomes a gendered space during funerals, as women stay behind to mourn in their homes. Historically, the owners of a tomb employed a *turaby* or "grave digger" to look after and guard the tomb. This person was trained and certified in the vocation of grave digging. Payment for this work amounts to about 300 EGP per burial.

Figure 9: Everyday Life. Cairo, 2013, Ghazali.

Some men seek work outside funereal avenues. A few work as janitors in local stores and large corporate office buildings. They commute to and from the city daily. Others work alongside their wives and children as vendors selling various goods at the local markets. A few even open up workshops in vacant hwash and offer the community laundry, furniture reupholstery, automotive repair, and even tailoring services (see Figure 10). In spite of these efforts, squatters still find themselves struggling to acquire the basic necessities to sustain everyday life, let alone their varying health conditions.

Nevertheless, numerous squatters assist with funerals and burials. As migration to the graveyards increased, the work of the professional undertaker (*turaby*) was taken over by squatters looking for a place to live in exchange for free tomb upkeep services for tomb owners. This cut costs for tomb owners who, instead of paying a specialist to do the work, can pay fifteen pounds per month to unskilled migrants in exchange for providing them with a place to stay. In this context, however, the turaby have not disappeared. Rather, they have risen to the more prominent role of cemetery manager (see Figure 11). Turaby and their assistants oversee many of

the daily activities in the cemeteries. They control the keys to private tombs, which they often use as leverage against tomb owners seeking to visit their deceased in order to receive tips. They act as liasons between the cemetery and broader community, creating connections between locals and residents of the 'Arafa and providing solutions for cemetery squatters' problems, at a cost. For example, they sometimes arrange secret burials for families looking to circumvent the costs associated with funerals and burials, including transporting bodies to natal villages or distant family tombs. They also provided these burials to families who wish to avoid association with certain contested corpses that are labeled as traitors or political dissidents out of fear of government reprisals.

Turaby also distribute the tasks of funeral preparation and burial to saby (assistants) or cemetery squatters. Turbay take the majority of the money while doing very little work. Nevertheless squatters are happy for the opportunity to earn income. They are responsible for digging up the ground, opening and airing out burial chambers and tombs, moving and repositioning corpses to make space for new intakes. During funerals they physically carry the body into the ground, and once family members leave, seal the tomb back up again.

Figure 10: Turaby stands guard over the tombs. Cairo, 2008, Ghazali.

Acquiring a tomb in which to live is not easy. Oftentimes it requires networks with individuals or families who live in the cemeteries or the families who claim ownership to the tombs. Squatting is arranged verbally, either directly with the owners of a particular tomb, or, more discretely through the turaby. Thus, families are permitted to stay so long as they guard the tomb, maintain its upkeep, and agree to bury the incoming dead. They are also only allowed to remain in the tombs until the owners or the turaby decide to terminate the agreement. and had negotiated the terms of their tombhomes with turaby who may or may not inform tomb owners. This generated a strong sense of instability for the families, causing them to constantly worry about when tomb owners would discover them, and when they would be forced to move. Due to

these unstable circumstances, many of the people involved in this research had relocated tombs within and between cemeteries several times. In these instances, they either formed new agreements with different owners, or found other tombs that were not already occupied.

Families invest in converting tomb structures into homes. They acquire used and discarded furniture, or furniture acquired through marriage to create living and sleeping areas. Some who have lived in the cemeteries for years have managed to make renovations to the tombs in which they squat with the permission of tomb owners. These include the addition of water sources, kitchen spaces, and installing partial roofing over the hawsch (see Figure 12).

Figure 11: Living Spaces and Renovations. Cairo, 2007, 2013, Ghazali.

Procedure

I began by developing a firm handle on the literature about the City of the Dead. The review revealed that academic literature on the cemeteries was subsumed under three overarching categories: historical examinations of the legacy and impact of the Arab Muslim presence on contemporary Cairo including the practice of Sufism in Egypt, and the contested

celebration and veneration of saints that surround prominent shrines; the architectural features of the cemeteries and associated tomb structures; and cemetery squatting in relation to the larger discourse on informality in Cairo. This revealed ample room for phenomenological studies about cemetery squatting.

My next step was to venture to the cemeteries and to familiarize myself with the different cemetery cities. I found I was able to make the richest connections in the safest way in the cemeteries of the 'Arafa because it was more integrated into the surrounding city than others. Furthermore, the cemetery offered me access to several smaller cemeteries in the area that were easier to navigate and whose communities identified their neighborhoods using particular cemetery names like “al-Imam,” “al-Laythi,” “al-Yahud,” etc. The discovery that the shrine of Iman al-Shafi'i, which is also located in the 'Arafa, occupies a place of healing in the popular imaginary further influenced my decision to settle on this cemetery as my research site (Mittermaier 2011).

Following from this I began to seek out research partnerships in Cairo. This proved difficult for a number of reasons. Responses received indicated the difficulties and risks involved with obtaining research permission for critical social science research among native Egyptians. I therefore turned to the government for answers. Through a personal contact I met with a high ranking official in the Ministry of Housing, I was informed that official intervention in the cemeteries is beyond their purview due to the legal labels involved. Instead, they fall under the domain of private ownership or, for historic tombs and shrines, under the Ministry of *Awqaaf* (Religious Endowments). The official went on to reassure me that “most of these people have running water and electricity and are actually doing very well compared to others in places like Manshiet Nasser,” Cairo's largest *‘ashwa’iyah* that houses over one million inhabitants.

I encountered this same attitude when I turned to former colleagues at the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) for assistance. According to one, there were more "relevant" and "pressing" topics to be covered like "agricultural development." I was also advised by extended family to seek a different project, one that was "less dangerous" and focused instead on something more positive, or by contrast, to focus on those "even *less* fortunate" than the tomb squatters; the poor rural families of the *aryaaf*. Attention to social suffering in a world characterized by it was no easy task. Amidst so many forms of human suffering, decisions about who to help, how to help, and when to help operate through a system of triage (Nguyen). But in this case, those who make these detrimental decisions are often disconnected from the lives and contexts over which they wield such awesome power.

Reaching out to the Social Science Research Center for the possibility of a collaborative project, I was informed that social science permissions and funding are difficult to come by, even for Egyptian researchers. Calls and emails to cultural preservationists and architectural historians interested in the cemeteries also went unanswered. These early silences foreshadowed the responses I would meet among researchers, but also among the cemetery community, over the course of my fieldwork. What no one would explicitly state was that you can't do critical research without getting in trouble by the state.

Unconvinced, I returned to the cemeteries with my mother. We walked the local vegetable market until I met a local vendor named Sha'baan. Sha'baan is a basket weaver who sells his goods out of a small bamboo hut located in the alleyways that comprise the market adjacent to the cemetery of the Imam. He and his family relocated from the tombs to a formal apartment in the area several years earlier after his wife, suffering from a debilitating congenital condition that has left her unable to walk, won a guest spot on a television show offering housing

to a lucky family in need. Their story has inspired many in the cemetery to seek housing outside of formal or even typical avenues. Though the odds are not likely stacked in their favor, the potential these opportunities provide the poor receives more attention and optimism than formal routes to housing.

Having previously lived in the cemeteries, Sha'baan readily introduced me to a local turaby named Mahmoud. I began by introducing my project to the turaby as a *bahth* (examination) of the relationship between cemetery living and sickness. Mahmoud recognized that sickness and suffering are prevalent experiences in the cemeteries and after chatting about research prospects in the area and offering a handout, he agreed to introduce me to a family in the cemetery. From there, I was able to connect with several other households who welcomed me into their lives and homes; sharing their most intimate experiences with me in the hopes that doing so might lend to a better future for their families and children.

Research Instruments:

Because this is a phenomenological study of social suffering and embodiment in a cemetery community, I rely primarily on qualitative research methods rooted in a discovery-based approach. Medical anthropologists draw on phenomenological accounts of illness and suffering as a way to attend to the embodied, situated, self; a first-person, subjective perspective. Based on my own Egyptian background and familiarity with Egypt, and specifically with low-income parts of Cairo over the duration of my life, I spent eight months of engaged fieldwork in Cairo's Southern Cemetery between 2007-2013. I conducted participant-observation among cemetery households, and collected numerous hundred semi-structured and unstructured interviews. My primary data is based on in-depth narratives collected from the members of thirty cemetery households.

Participant-Observation and Deep Ethnography

I drew heavily on participant observation to understand the particular ways life unfolds in a space of death. I accompanied women on their errands and sat with them in their tombs as they prepared meals, exchanged gossip, and shared their struggles and hardships. I walked the streets with youth running errands and accompanied grave workers on their daily tasks such as tending to their work watering plants, cleaning and sweeping vacant hwash. I accompanied fathers and husbands as they went to work in their various vocations. Most of my time was spent in the hwash with women and children as they kept each other company, gossiped, and tended to daily life.

I frequented local pharmacies and government-subsidized hospitals, like Ahmed Maher and al-Khalifah, where many of my informants went for their various health care needs. I asked questions but also observed interactions and exchanges between cemetery squatters and biomedical professionals. I also accompanied local NGOs in their service trips to Manshiet Nasser, Egypt's largest "slum area." I attended planning sessions and events organized by these NGOs in Manshiet Nasser. These groups were composed primarily of middle and upper class Egyptian youth, and were intended to target "at risk" communities in Cairo's informal settlements. This included "cultural enhancement" classes offered in the community's school building on Fridays, when children are normally on break from school, and various *Maa'idaat al-Rahman* ("Tables of the Merciful"), charitable Ramadan dinners offered to the poor and needy in the public streets and spaces of the city.

On the other hand, my site also included lavish dinners at upscale restaurants, like Sequoia on the Nile, with the individuals who run these NGOs. It also included the offices of government bureaucrats and city planning officials who are charged with the oversight of the

informal housing sector. In one conversation with a director of a low-income service hospital, I was cautioned about the dangers of "working with people who are desperate."

Set in a context of social upheaval and violent political transition, I extended my research to the public and private spaces of the city in which the confrontation between popular demands for the right to bare life and the capitalization-driven agendas of the military-state apparatus were most salient. Thus my "research site" included the cemeteries and surrounding neighborhoods, but also extended to the public squares of Tahrir and Rab'a al-'Adawiyya where I visited with individuals and conducted unstructured and structured interviews with observers, activists, and organizers.

Illness Narratives

During the early stages of fieldwork I conducted structured and unstructured interviews with cemetery inhabitants and began the collection of illness narratives from twelve individuals living with daght. Illness narratives are insightful in phenomenological studies because they offer a first-person perspective on human experience. Bruner characterizes narratives as one way by which people take up the task of "ordering experience, of constructing reality" (Bruner 1986:11). Mattingly and Garro add, narrative creation is "a fundamental way of giving meaning to experience" and is an "active and constructive process…that mediates between an inner world of thought-feeling and an outer world of observable actions and states" (2000:1). Initially I did not give attention to other illness conditions. When I returned in 2013 and after reviewing the earlier narratives, marad began to emerge as an encompassing experience that included daght and other incurable afflictions included in this study. The narratives were collected over several sessions and physically transcribed. Most narratives collected in 2013, which comprise the majority of the narratives collected, on the other hand, were audio recorded when informed consent was given.

These were translated and transcribed after my return from the field. Overall I collected illness narratives revolving around different formations of marad from 35 cemetery squatters. Each narrative was collected through several sessions over a period of five years. Therefore they offer a longitudinal study of social suffering and its transformations across time and space.

Studying narratives is especially helpful for understanding local and national mechanisms of social order and control, and the cultural and historical discourses that shape personal and collective experiences of being-in-the-world. When paired with context, what is told, and what remains unspoken, offer reflections about these cultural mechanisms and can therefore help to uncover answers about questions relating to terror, fears, silences. Narrative analysis is, therefore, an important tool for uncovering morals, values, beliefs, and ethics that underlie social behavior that tie together the social fabric of a particular group (Kleinman 1988; Janzen 2002). in understanding collective identity

Narratives are a form of discourse and therefore often govern what is said and what remains unspoken. Through discourse analysis, narratives are both socially constructed and under a process of construction (Foucault 1972, 1991; Kerby 1991). The subject constructs the narrative with an awareness of the discourses that operate in his or her society. Thus while constructing the narrative, the subject is simultaneously being shaped the process. Furthermore, as the narrator narrates, the story works to embrace, reject, reinforce, reaffirm, or renegotiate reality, as that particular individual perceives it. Yet these choices in narrative strategies are made within, and mediated by, the social, political, cultural, and historical environment in which the narratives are created as well as those in which they are told. This is not to say that context determines narrative content, but rather, that choices are made within particular contexts and these contexts must be taken into consideration when examining a narrative text. I discovered

that one of the most important and insightful questions during my fieldwork, which gave me the answers to the questions I was asking, was the simple and mundane greeting, "how are you and how is your health?"

Though many things in Egypt today remain unspoken, silenced, and repressed, illness narratives are important exceptions. The narration of illnesses is part of daily life and permeates social encounters. Inquiring about the health of others, along with visiting the sick and preparing meals for them and their families, are integral to maintaining social relationships and manifesting social and moral values in the cemeteries. Illness narratives are therefore ideal discursive texts through which to examine local meanings and agencies of sickness and suffering. As Michael Taussig has noted, "it is in the coils of rumor, gossip, story, and chit-chat where ideology and ideas become emotionally powerful and enter into active social circulation and meaningful existence" (Taussig 1984:494).

In the cemeteries illness narratives occur frequently, spontaneously, and are often repetitive in nature. They are recounted multiple times, even to the same audience. Narratives describe symptomology, but also, and more relevant to this study, they explore the origins of bodily affliction. These unspectacular everyday conversations about health and sickness are therefore where I located important emergent political subjectivities.

Through narrative, the cemetery residents attempt to make sense of, and communicate, their inner suffering to others, even if only by the analogies offered through spoken language. Teasing apart, and then piecing the origins of their afflictions back together into a continuous story constitutes part of a larger "quest for therapy" (Janzen 1982) through which afflicted individuals and communities struggle to understand, manage, and embrace their bodily states.

Illness narratives followed a complicated path that implicated forces ranging from

biology and environmental conditions, to economic restructuring and inflation, political repression and upheaval, and the breakdown of morality, family, and social relations under the weight of local and global forces. The narratives reveal that, for many in the ‘Arafa, illness trajectories and poor health are driven by the entanglement of individual bodies with processes of poverty, inequality, immorality, and the subsequent breakdown of kinship and social relations under their weight. They often begin with a praise to God, “Alhamdulillah,” (praise be to Allah), which acknowledged the person’s acceptance of God’s will before going on to converse about the illness further, sometimes in gruesome detail.

Advantages and Challenges

Because I am a heritage Egyptian with a working knowledge of colloquial Egyptian Arabic dialect, and I had precursory knowledge of Egypt and it's various communities. Furthermore, being a veiled Muslim woman whose father’s origins stemmed from the same villages as many of the cemetery displaced, facilitated my ability to gain entrance, acceptance, and trust in the cemetery community. Many referred to me as "bint-balad" (“daughter of the country”). Furthermore, through personal connections developed over the years of travel to and from Cairo, I was given access to people occupying prominent political positions and was thus able to access the state or “official” narratives about informality and the City of the Dead.

Because the topic of marad is so pervasive in everyday life, I was able to access the narrative with relative ease. The ethnographic methods of anthropology, which as mentioned previously emphasize narratives and the body as discursive texts, were ideal for such an environment where illness narratives are widely circulated and shared.

But I also faced challenges in my fieldwork setting, especially as I conducted critical research during the summer of 2013. The political upheaval that followed the military ouster of

Mohammed Morsi made me for the safety of my subjects in the cemeteries, as well as for my friends and family members who could not easily leave the country to escape the violence. The coup also made it difficult to navigate the city. When violence began to spread beyond the confines of certain squares of protest, I found myself following the recommendations of the United States Embassy in Egypt to depart Egypt and return to the United States. These events therefore forced me to exclude parts of my research plan, which included conducting a survey of the Southern cemetery and expanding my narratives beyond the thirty-five I was able to collect. The uprisings also forced me to rethink the way different communities engaged with political agencies, taking into consideration the role of silence and fear, and recognizing them as thoughtful decisions undertaken by individuals and families who already found themselves on the edge of life.

One experience that brought the complex questions and painful realities faced by my cemetery subjects into my own life in reflexive ways was the death of my uncle Ahmed, to whom this work is dedicated. He suffered silently with daght, sukkar, and al-'alb for years, rarely informing us of acute illness episodes until they had passed so as to avoid causing panic and alarm. Shortly after my return from the field, a few days after his 73rd birthday, he died from complications of his *amraad*. This experience gave me visceral insight into what it means to lose someone so central to the family to marad, and to undergo this experience in the context of *al-ghurbah* (estrangement/displacement).

From our own position in a sort of *ghurbah* my family in Egypt and in the United States debated over which moral guidelines to uphold, including religious, cultural, and familial. The discussion more broadly was about where my uncle's body would be most "at home." Should we fly his remains to be buried alongside his mother, father, and older sister in the family tomb in an

Egyptian village he rarely visited? If so, the question of timing would be an issue since my family's Islamic view was that the body should be buried within three days of death. Transporting his body would take time and the funeral arrangements and process would conflict with the emphasis surrounding the timeliness of burial. Was it New York City where he had spent the majority of his life and where my cousin who spent most of his time with my uncle resided? If so, he would have to buried in New Jersey, the closest available cemetery with a designated section for Muslims. But Jersey was never home for my uncle who rarely frequented the state. Was his home in Kansas, where our family had spent most of our lives together and where those of us remaining could regularly visit him and say prayers over his grave? If so, he would be buried in the nearest Muslim cemetery in Missouri, where he rarely visited and which he never called home. Was it in Texas, where his brother (my father) had built a career in academia and rerooted himself and where they might ultimately be reunited?

Also similar to the people of the 'Arafa, my family worked to narrate my uncle's life, highlighting his multiple sacrifices for the good of the family as a sign of a good life, and therefore of a good ending. We too began piecing together moral constellations about his death, and what it could reveal about his fate. But also, through his example, we attempt to reproduce his moral lifestyle in order to both honor him and to produce our own good endings as a result.

Analysis

To analyze the narratives I began by listening to and rereading the interviews collected between my trips to the field. Because some were written up based on field notes while others were audio recorded, I began to translate and transcribe audio narratives and combine them with written narratives to piece individuals' stories together. During this process I rearranged the narratives, providing local context to the stories while working to maintain their original content. Because, as I described above, narratives of marad are often fragmented and disorganized, this

process enabled me to put these pieces together into an integrated whole. This process allowed me to see the fragmented parts together as a whole. It also gives the reader a sense of continuity and eases the reading process.

Next I reviewed each narrative for recurring themes. I noted the prevalence of the association between the body and its social environment. As I attempted to sort out political comments from statements about the body, marad, relationships, and emotional states, I found their convergence was actually essential to understanding the broader experience of marad in the cemeteries. I found that across the narratives, not only did various illnesses converge in the force of marad, but also, life and death blended together in myriad ways. Rather than working to break down these overlaps, I began to make sense of why they exist and the way these now familiar convergences operate in positive and negative ways in the lives of cemetery sukaan.

Fear was a prominent feature across the narratives. People feared many different things, including being forced to remain in the tombs or being forced to leave them without better alternatives, violent government reprisals based on speaking out and popular stereotypes of squatters as thugs, and having their children grow up without improving their spatial and socioeconomic situations, and therefore, not offering them a chance to live better, longer, healthier lives.

To make sense of these discoveries I worked to place the narratives in broader national and global contexts. To do so I turned to literature on people's places of origins and their transformations over time. This allowed me to understand the interconnected forces that have pushed them out of their homes and into the tombs. I also began to pair my discoveries with historical processes of imperialism, the struggle for independence and nation-building, and the economic shift from socialist economy to a liberal free market. These political processes have

enabled the proliferation of marad in the cemeteries and beyond, placing low-income communities at increased risk for social suffering.

Chapter 4: Salwa's Story

Introduction: Tasting Death

It is nearly sundown in the City of the Dead and soon the *athan* will billow beautifully out of sync from the numerous minarets of the surrounding mosques. As we enter Salwa's hawsch, a young girl from a few tombs over, stops by to borrow some tea packets. Her grandmother (*situ*) has dropped in on her family unannounced and intends to stay for the remainder of the month of Ramadan. Neighbors offer swift greetings as they rush past the open gate to break fast with their families. Salwa prepares our *iftar* on two small gas burners in a corner of her *hawsch*, an open courtyard that also serves as her kitchen, living room, and prayer space. Salwa has been living in the cemeteries for 16 years. She moved from her natal village Fayyum at the age of 16 as a new bride to live with her husband's extended family. Today, she shares a tombhome with her two young children and her husband, who works on and off as an assistant (saby) to the cemetery undertaker (turaby).

I have known Salwa for six years. At 5'10'' she is taller than most. Her tan skin and deep brown eyes compliment her dark features. Her shiny black hair is now sprinkled with strands of silver. She wears a black *galabiyya* (traditional house dress) that partially exposes her swollen legs and feet. Though we are only a few years apart in age, life in Egypt has taken a harsh toll on her body. Since the age of sixteen, Salwa has battled a barrage of serious illnesses and medical conditions. Following prolonged symptoms of fatigue, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, and lethargy, and after consulting with the local sheikh on *'amal* (witchcraft) and enduring a series of medical tests and overnight stints at the government subsidized Ahmed Maher and al-Khalifah hospitals, Salwa was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease by the age of 26. Over the years she

has also struggled with *daght al-damm* ("blood pressure"; hypertension), severe asthma, and chronic respiratory infections.

Salwa suffers from incurable and largely unmanageable conditions that collectively contribute to the deterioration of her health. But she often reassures me that she does not engage in risky behaviors like smoking, drinking, or "obesity." Though she has noted a significant change in her body size, she refers to it as "swelling" and attributes it to a variety of side effects of her kidney treatments. In fact, she rarely connects her death to the biomedical realities of her body. Instead, she often, as in this statement, attributed the process of dying to the breakdown of her familiar moral world.

This evening, Salwa's husband and two children are attending a nearby *Maa'idat al-Rahman* ("Table of the Merciful"; charitable outdoor open seating meals for those in need), leaving us to our conversation. With our meal skillfully balanced on a tray, and moving slowly towards me in a gesture of both pain and endurance, she joins me on the floor. Though she has been fasting all day, she struggles to finish her plate. She rarely has an appetite and admits that, over the last few years, she has lost her "appetite and taste for food."

As we eat, Salwa places her hand on my knee, as if to disclose an intimate secret, and quietly reveals, "every day I die a little. Every day I die when I hear and see the chaos (*fitnah*) that has come between us, and when I see Egyptians killing each other in the street." It was not the first time I had heard such a morbid revelation in the context of everyday conversation. Nor was it uncommon to encounter the overlap between the political, the socio economic, and the body-self. In the cemeteries, discussions about health were almost always both political and moral. Everywhere I went people spoke to me about their health, and about the declining social, political, and economic environment in which they found themselves. Many made similar

statements about themselves as "already dead" or as being both alive and dead/living and dying, at the same time. Some drew parallels between their embodied conditions and the forgotten corpses buried beneath their floors, referring to themselves collectively as *al-'aysheen mayyiteen* ("the ones who are living-dead," or, "the living-dead").

Furthermore, in Islamic circles, *fitnah* (chaos/tribulation) is used to explain social disharmony through the framework of religious and moral failings. Based on this perspective, social disintegration is the outcome of moral vices such as egocentrism, greed, lust, envy, and the allure of power, wealth, and status, among others. Cemetery *sukaan* often took up derivations of this concept to explain the sectarianism, violence, and death that had come to shape their sociopolitical landscape.

For example, one woman discussed her feelings about moving to the formal sector in light of the splintering of society, stating, "I would rather live with the dead than the living because the living no longer fear God. They don't fear God. We live with the dead and thank God (Alhamdulillah), we know where our fate lies." Another woman who has been living in the cemeteries for over forty years told me, "I don't worry about evil spirits *('afareet*) that are buried here. What causes me to worry (*'a'la'*) are the *'afareet* out there. The only *'afareet* we have to fear are the living sons of Adam [father of mankind]."

But what did this sociopolitical reality have to do with Salwa's daily death? Why did so many people speak of themselves as "dead" and why did they continue to make connections between their afflictions, decay, and the conditions of Egypt more broadly? Furthermore, in the sense of chronological aging or biological senescence, aren't we all dying a little every day? What makes Salwa's assertion stand out against these inevitable bodily processes from a phenomenological and analytical point of view?

While contemplating her statement, my gaze wanders to the Arabic verse painted on the wall in beautiful black calligraphy above where she sits. *Kul nafs thaa'iqatul mawt*: "every soul shall taste death," the sharp angles and dark curves of the letters read. In a space where the living and dead coexist, this familiar Qur'anic verse takes on new meaning and significance. Death, it suggests, is a *taste*; a sensual experience of the body-self. But perhaps, I thought, death is not one final taste, as we have imagined it to be. Reflecting on Salwa's words, and the gradual loss of taste for the very things which sustain life, I wondered: What if death, instead, is a taste that is acquired over the life course, under the weight of social and structural pressures, and through subsequent experiences and interactions with affliction and decay?

A stifling Cairo breeze blows through the open courtyard, circulating whiffs of sautéed garlic and coriander that blend with the unforgettable stench of latrine effluent, and the faint scent of decomposition emanating from the dilapidated tombs nearby. It is this combination of smells that I have come to associate with the comingling of life and death, and the everyday ways living and dying have become entangled in the cemetery cities and in contemporary Cairo.

* * *

Salwa's narrative is divided into two parts. The first retraces the onset of her marad in Fayyum to show how her body is entangled in agrarian reform and its impact on marriage practices and kinship and social relations. The second part draws from her life in the cemeteries to illuminate the everyday pressures and stressors that contribute to the exacerbation of her marad, especially in the post-Mubarak context. It also reveals how women and men direct their efforts and resources towards making a better life for their children while they inhabit dying bodies. The narrative is followed by a discussion and analysis, which puts Salwa's words in context, in order to draw conclusions about political etiologies of marad and their associated

meanings and dispositions in the ‘Arafa.

I met Salwa on the first day of my first fieldwork stint in 2007. She has been living in the tombs of the Imam for seventeen years. Back then, she was a 28 year old wife and mother of two who worked tirelessly preparing and selling *tirmis* and *dora mashwy* (lupine seeds and grilled corn) on her street corner. Upon my return in 2013, Salwa’s health had visibly declined. Her body swelled with infection and sickness. She rarely visits the government-subsidized hospitals of al-Khalifah and Ahmed Maher for treatment anymore. This was in part due to her financial situation and the lack of available funds to pay for transportation and service fees associated with hospital visits, but also because she felt the treatments and advice offered by healthcare professionals were redundant. Nevertheless, Salwa adheres to her medications, though like many others in the cemeteries, she alters her doses to account for her belief in the dilution of medications offered at subsidized rates for the poor.

Her son Amr, 14, has since been diagnosed with asthma and hypertension. Combined, their breathing treatments at the hospital cost LE 50 per session, plus the cost of round trip transportation. As a result, Salwa and Amr often choose to forego their asthma treatments. Her husband, a prominent saby, is a frail and quiet man who always dressed in the traditional style. Three years prior he was involved in an accident with a horse-drawn fruit cart that has left him with two broken legs. He has undergone several operations, and complications, as a result. He also lives with unmanaged diabetes and *daght*. Her daughter is mentally disabled and is not able to care for herself. Though she has been registered as disabled, and even holds an official disability card, she has never received any help with the cost of living or care.

To understand the events that have “poisoned” her body and rendered the bodies of her family vulnerable to suffering, disease, and an accelerated descent into death requires

understanding the broader context of inequality, marginality, and the relevance of relationships to the body since the withdrawal of the for-profit state from the public sector in Egypt.

The *hawsch* branches off into three rooms. One remains locked and is only accessible to Yassir, the local *turaby* (tomb undertaker/cemetery manager) with whom the family shares a long relationship. The second serves as a workshop for Ibrahim, Salwa's husband. He reassembles furniture from scraps to earn extra income after an accident two years earlier left him unable to perform the laborious work of *saby* (assistant to the *turaby*). The third serves as a bedroom/family room, equipped with one large mattress on the floor and a small box-style television set with an antenna that picks up one or two mostly scrambled channels. The bathroom is a small rectangular shaped room composed of an *asriyyah*: a non-flushing, squat toilet that dispenses to an underground septic tank rarely emptied due to a lack of official oversight in the area. In this neighborhood in Southern Cairo, most utilities like running water and electricity are becoming more prevalent, but remain inaccessible to many.

The Cinderella of Fayyum

Salwa's marriage is an important factor in her relocation to the cemetery. But it also constitutes an integral piece of her political etiology of marad. In this section, therefore, I turn to the story of her engagement and marriage in order to demonstrate how Salwa goes about understanding the sources of her ailments and, subsequently, the therapeutic trajectories she adopts.

Salwa grew up modestly in Fayyum, a rural governorate just west of the river valley to the south of Cairo (El Katsha & Watts 2002:11). Supplied by water directly from the Nile, residents of Fayyum are predominantly farmers. The area is also known for its high prevalence of schistosoma infection and other water-borne illnesses. Along with her four brothers and two

sisters, Salwa was always expected to help in the *ghait* (farmlands). She describes the community as very tight-knit with households pooling their resources to survive the realities of aggressive agrarian reform, the proliferation of large farms, and the uneven competition posed by innovative and unaffordable farming technologies (Mitchell 2002).

Her parents were both illiterate and Salwa received no formal education outside of the religious lessons offered through local *kuttaab* (mosque schools). Nevertheless she has managed to acquire a wealth of knowledge about a range of religious and secular topics from the small television set in her bedroom that is almost always on (for more on the anthropology of Egyptian television see Abu-Lughod).

Like all the women she knew, Salwa had undergone a female circumcision around the age of 9. She recalls a high level of pain accompanied by a bad infection following the procedure at the home of a local village woman. But she recognizes the experience as an essential part of womanhood and a moral sacrifice that Egyptian women must make to maintain the honor and wellbeing of their families. "I am glad I did it," she told me one day. She continued:

> No man wants to marry a woman who can't control herself. A man wants a stable woman who he can trust that she will be a good and honorable mother for his kids. They are his lineage and they carry his name, so of course he thinks about these things. When a man sees a woman, and she looks beautiful and she is innocent and respectable, he knows she is honorable and he will ask her father for her hand [in marriage].

By the age of 16 Salwa had grown into a beautiful, and by her husband's accounts, "tall, shapely, darker version of So'ad Hosny." Her long, thick, shiny black hair was always collected under an small scarf and gathered into a single braid that dangled elegantly over one shoulder. She liked to dabble in the latest fashion trends. When her father gifted her with hoop earrings from a trip to Cairo, for example, she demanded he return them and bring her "the nice dangly ones like the movie stars would wear." Along with her beauty, she was also known for her

dedication to her parents, and was celebrated around the village for her immaculate domestic skills. Her reputation as a dutiful daughter and skilled homemaker were coupled with a growing awareness of her sexual appeal and the socially sanctioned venues for its expression.

Salwa worked tirelessly to cultivate the moral disposition of a respectable daughter and woman. Aware of the gendered expectations in her community, and careful to uphold them, she quickly recognized the attention directed at her by strange and familiar men alike as she made her way through the village. Faced with an important decision about how to handle their advances, she resolved to thwart their efforts. "I always kept to myself, and even though I saw all the men looking at me I made sure to always lower my gaze."

Early marriage for young women is not uncommon in rural parts of Egypt where El-Katsha and Watts (2002) argue, "fathers considered that girls did not need an education, as their role was to help at home, and in the future, to be mothers." These ideas, they note, "favored early marriage" (Katsha & Watts 2000:15). Beyond these gendered beliefs, children can be a financial burden, especially during times of marriage. Families prepare for the marriages of their children from their birth. The purchase of furniture items, kitchenware, and other household appliances collectively known as the *gihaaz* makes the cost of marriage almost prohibitive.

Although these trends have begun to change, many of the economic, social, and political structures that drive these practices remain in place. In Fayyum, as in many places across Egypt, unmarried women are the cultural/religious, financial and legal responsibility of their closest living male relatives. Daughters continue to live in the parental home, provided such a home exists, until they are married and move to their husband's family's estate. This places a heavy long-term burden on low-income rural families caught in the throes of aggressive agrarian policies. These factors provide much of the impetus for early marriages.

Aware of her father's monetary troubles and his struggles to fulfill his financial, cultural, and religious obligations towards his family, Salwa realized he would soon insist she seriously begin to consider viable marriage proposals that came her way. Salwa works hard to maintain the status of her family by developing a conscious awareness of their expectations of and for her. She is also mindful of the role she plays in contributing to the alleviation of their suffering and easing the financial pressures they face. By maintaining control over her body and her sexual impulses Salwa secures the possibility of a good marriage and the subsequent power to improve her family's status in the community.

Her sister-in-law and close friend, Fatin, also took notice of the opportunity and arranged for a potential union between Salwa and her brother Sherif. When her husband Riyad, (Salwa's older brother) proposed the idea, however, his father refused him. Salwa recalls his reasoning at the time:

> My father accused her of doing this for her own benefit, so she could increase her influence in the family. And it's true. She had no one to support her in certain situations like when my brother mistreated her. She knew if she could get her brother to marry me he would protect her *maslahah* (interests) and defend her.

Her father had already found a way to forego the costly obligations of formal marriage arrangements. Secretly, he arranged a marriage between Salwa and his sister's son, Ibrahim. Though his sister had since passed, the siblings had agreed it was best to keep assets in the family, and to forego the excessive burdens associated with marriage such as a flashy wedding, a shabkah, or the *gihaaz* (marital furnishings), a perpetual source of stress for millions of Egyptians looking to start their own families (The Marriage Crisis). A marriage to her cousin in Cairo would allow her father to see his deceased sister's wishes through to fruition, proving him an honorable brother and man. More importantly, the marriage could unburden her family financially, while also allowing them to maintain tight control over their assets, and their

daughter's wellbeing, at the same time. The only catch, however, was that Ibrahim lived in the tombs of Cairo's Southern Cemetery. When her father finally brought this news to light, Salwa admits she was surprised:

> I was like any other girl. I wanted to get married to someone who could lift me up and offer me a good life. If I was going to leave my family and my home village I wanted it to be for something better. I dreamed about moving to *Masr* and living in my own *sha'a* (apartment). Then I found out I was going to move to a cemetery. What if I got lost like my grandma, may Allah have mercy on her soul? But when a person walks towards the good and trusts Allah, God will never forget him. This is what Allah wrote for me, Alhamdulillah.

Salwa's brother, on the other hand, was less accepting of his father's decision. According to Salwa, their father's duplicitous actions, along with the fact that he clearly did not consult his eldest son on such an important matter, made Riyad appear weak in the eyes of the family and community. "Don't you remember your mother? We still don't know her body is buried! Is that what you choose for your daughter too?" her brother exclaimed to their father.

Several years prior to their aunt's passing, their paternal grandmother left Fayyum to spend the month of Ramadan with her daughter's family in the 'Arafa. This is a common practice during the charitable Islamic month of fasting, when the spirit of giving leads to increased handouts in the cemeteries. Family members frequently arrive from different parts of the country to partake in the gains, and return to their separate homes shortly after the Eid al-Fitr celebration that concludes the holy month. But on this particular occasion, Salwa's grandmother never returned.

During a later conversation with Ibrahim I discovered that their grandmother had died suddenly in her sleep during a visit to the 'Arafa. Ibrahim, who was born and raised in the tombs, told me that his family lacked the funds necessary to transport her body to Fayyum for burial. Fortunately, his father, a *saby* to the local *turaby*, was able to secure a secret burial in an

abandoned tomb nearby. Soon after, they informed the family back home in the village of her death, and told them she had already been buried so there would be no need to make the costly trip to Cairo. Ibrahim's father has never disclosed the location of her final resting place to anyone in order to protect the *turaby* and his family from official repercussions. His decision to do so, however, has clearly left its mark on the family, shaping their perceptions of their extended kin in the city, and of the cemeteries more broadly.

Becoming Mareedah

Fatin's household was also enraged by the news of Salwa's impending union to a man living in a cemetery tomb. "Even though her [Fatin's] brother got engaged and got the *shabka* (bridal jewelry) and everything, he was still mad that I got engaged so soon after my father rejected him, and to someone he thought was less than him" Salwa recalls. Soon after the news went public, Medhat and his brothers confronted Salwa at the water-well and initiated a physical assault against her. She elaborates:

> About a week before my wedding, I went to fill water to bake for my mother before I left home. She was old and couldn't do the baking alone and I would be married and gone after a week. While I was filling the pot with water Abu Sayyed's kids attacked me. His sisters were there and they were hitting me too, including Fatin. She knew what was going to happen but they told her to take the water and leave so she would not be involved. So she left. They wanted to bruise and injure me. They had beaten me and ripped my clothing to ruin me before my wedding. If you saw me afterwards…anyone who saw me would think I did something to deserve it. They were offended because my father had rejected him, and they wanted me to pay for that. You don't say no to a man, especially not back then.

Medhat's humiliation and anger at being rejected were unleashed on Salwa's body through an assault intended to disfigure and maim her in the public eye. What was once private and intimate is made public through the manifestation of this conflict on and through Salwa's body. Salwa's father rushed her to the police station where they filed a report, as Salwa recalls:

> My dad took me to the police station. An officer there asked me, "who did this to you?" And really it was the women who had done most of the damage. I told him it was Abu Sayyed's kids and he wrote it down. So I filed a report…and the courts took care of it because the courts at that time [Mubarak era] were not like today [Morsy era]. They were actually effective and functional. If someone committed a crime they had to pay for it.

But soon after their visit to the police station, word spread through the town. The news reached Abu Sayyed's household. The patriarch rushed to meet with Salwa's father and plead his case. Salwa explains:

> Abu Sayyed knew his kids were in real trouble. He came to my dad and begged him to drop the charges. He told him, "I'll kiss your hands. My kids are going to be lost. Their lives are going to be ruined. I will pay you. I will give you all my land. But please drop the charges." My father felt for Abu Sayyed. "He knew he would be humiliated by his son going to jail and he would lose his right hand in the family. So my father agreed. He went to the court and told him [police officer] he wanted to drop the charges. The officer told him that, because the report was filed in my name, I would have to go to court and drop the charges myself. My father told him, "but I am Salwa's father, she is on my *bita'a* (Egyptian identification card). She is my daughter, and if I say to drop the charges you should drop the charges." So they dropped the charges.

"My father was a very kind and forgiving man," she tells me as her voice trails off in thought.

With her wedding fast approaching, Salwa was riddled with guilt over the family discord especially since it primarily centered on her impending marriage. She was so busy worrying about her family that she "never made any wedding plans or even thought about the wedding party." Upon witnessing her daughter's distraught state, Salwa's mother encouraged her to initiate reconciliation between her father and brother as a final gesture of her dedication to the family. This would also allow her to leave home on a good note as she embarked on her new life in the city.

Salwa agreed. She arranged the meeting between her brother, his wife, and their father.

She explains what followed:

> I went to them on Tuesday and helped them to make up. We sat and talked. I said look, the two of you both care about me. You are both trying to do what is best for me. But, I said, if I am *radya* (accepting) with my situation then why should anyone be upset? I accept the decision and my future. I told them it is in Allah's hands not ours. They were both stubborn, may Allah have mercy on their souls. Eventually they hugged and my brother kissed by father's hand. I hadn't eaten for days because of all the stress. I was starving. Fatin brought me a big dinner of bread and *mulukhiyya* . My pregnant sister came over and we all ate and sang and had a good time together because I was getting married in a few days.

Salwa returned home. The following day, however, her happiness turned to physical sickness. She explains:

> I felt like my insides were being ripped apart. I got dizzy and had diarrhea. My blood pressure dropped and almost stopped. I got a horrible stomachache, and was vomiting. I vomited something white, like milk. I was thirsty and kept drinking water. The strange thing is that at the same time my sister went into labor. My family rushed us to the hospital. I waited a long time before the doctor came to see me. He did tests and gave me injections. They told me I had an infection and I needed to take medicine. He gave me something, I don't know what it was. I felt like my entire body was being torn apart. Because of how sick I was, I stayed there for two days. In my heart I…felt it was Fatin. But there was *'ishrah* (;intersubjectivity) between us. She used to braid my hair for me and we shared secrets. Even though we had some problems, it was hard for me to think she could do something so serious to harm me.

At the same time that Salwa relies on biomedicine to alleviate her physiological symptoms she begins to seek alternative explanations and therapeutic trajectories to address the various facets of her suffering. Her pre-existing suspicions about the sincerity of Fatin's reconciliatory actions lead Salwa to suspect that she is somehow involved in her illness. But this would challenge the very basic bonds that hold the family together. Such a huge betrayal, according to Salwa, could irreversibly impact family relationships.

When Salwa's mother receives troubling word through sympathetic neighbors that a family friend, Sheikh Hussein, has recently come into a large sum of money, her suspicions are heightened. The sheikh is also known for his knowledge of witchcraft (*'amal*). Salwa admits her

family found it difficult to believe either of these individuals could ever act with such malice against them. She recalls her mother's startled reaction, exclaiming, "It's impossible! Sheikh Hussein would never harm us. He has eaten in our house!" To avoid casting blame on a prominent sheikh with whom they shared a close and amicable relationship, Salwa needed to be sure. She sought the advice of a different sheikh who advised her that in her serious case, the act of *'amal* could only be "undone" by the sheikh who performed it.

Returning to her only lead, sheikh Hussein, Salwa pressed him. Finally, he confessed to the act. Under extreme financial duress, he admitted, he accepted a large sum of money from Fatin's family to perform the service against her. She recalls her reaction to the news:

> …something about her [Fatin] just wasn't right that night [the evening of the reconciliation]. My sister had eaten a bite from the meal Fatin cooked and she started having contractions. We thought it was just natural at the time. But what we couldn't imagine was their [Fatin and the El Sayyed's] intention was not pure. They wanted to do anything to hurt me and to ruin my wedding. First they beat me. But that didn't work. So they decided to do *'amal* (witchcraft) on me. Her family paid for it, the sheikh did the *'amal*, and Fatin put it in the water for the *mulukhiyya* that she knows I love. It hurt me the most because the *'amal* was made for me. When I kept drinking water after I got sick what I didn't realize was she had put the *'amal* in all of the water in my father's house. When I left the hospital and felt even worse it is because the *sihr* was still working.

"Sheikh Hussein was like a part of our family and Fatin was like my sister," she recalls sadly. The comparison to "family" is important to note given the realities I have described in this chapter. It shows how deep the pain has cut. But she also blames Fatin and the sheikh for the choices they have made, particularly because their betrayal was born out of anger and desperation. Referencing her own difficult sacrifices, Salwa notes, "It is exactly in the moment of suffering that we know if we are strong enough to do the right thing."

Because many forms of 'amal cannot be reversed without the participation of the *sheikh* (practitioner) who is responsible for the initial act, *shuyookh* (pl. of *sheikh*) often hold the upper

hand. Many demand exorbitant fees for their services that exceed the ability of individuals to pay. Reversal, the only treatment, therefore almost always requires pooling the efforts and resources of family members, friends, and neighbors.

Sheikh Hussein requested LE 400 for his services. Salwa's fiancé was unable to contribute to Salwa's cost of treatment due to his meager financial situation in the cemeteries. But desperate to reverse the 'amal and halt its immediate effects on her body, Salwa's mother and uncle gathered enough money from willing family members to pay for the cost of treatment. Salwa recalls the experience as follows:

> Sheikh Hussein wrote things in red on a piece of paper and crumpled it in his hand. Then he read some verses from the Quran. I could understand some of what he said but not everything. The whole time I stayed quiet. He was chanting verses and there was incense smoke all over the room. Then, twenty days later he was dead. God loves me because if I hadn't found him in time and had him undo it I would have been dead too. Allah never forgets anyone.

Like many others in the cemeteries, certain specialists address different aspects of *marad*. It is only through a return to 'amal that she is able to make sense of the nuances between her embodied condition and the broader context of her life

Marriage and a Tomb

Though her wedding was delayed, she soon recovered and her betrothed came to the village to begin the wedding festivities on Thursday. By Sunday she was waving goodbye to her family from the window of a bijoux (stationwagon-turned-taxicab) in which her husband had reserved three of the eight occupied seats to take the couple, and Salwa's few belongings, back to Cairo. Salwa describes her arrival to the cemetery where she would start her new life:

> My husband was born here in the cemetery and grew up here so he was used to it. But I was so afraid. We stayed here in a room in the tomb of my in-laws. After some time, when I realized my husband had no income and there was no money and no way to make a living, I gave myself up to God's will. Soon I had my two kids. I was always too tired to move and couldn't do much to help around the

> house with the cooking and cleaning. After that everyone started fighting. The space was too small and my husband's stepmother hated me. My father-in-law witnessed it but never stopped her from attacking me.

When her father found out about the living arrangement, he called Salwa's husband and confronted him. Salwa's father also spoke with his brother-in-law to sort out the issue. Soon after, Salwa's husband agreed to look for new living arrangements. But the involvement of Salwa's father complicated the relationship between Ibrahim, Salwa, and Ibrahim's father. Therefore as Ibrahim searched for a new home, he found himself doing so without the support and connections his father, a saby to the turaby, could give him access to. Eventually he was able to negotiate a private agreement with the tomb owners of a *hawsch* in Turab al-Yahood (the Jewish Cemetery) nearby. But, as I noted in the previous chapter, agreements with tomb owners are often exploitative and come without the support networks and interventions otherwise available through arranging tenancy with the turaby. As a result, the family's situation remained unstable. Salwa's father again became involved. She elaborates:

> The situation there was dangerous. There were *baltagiyya* (thugs) running the streets at night and if they saw a woman they would harass her and hurt her.
> My father called my husband again and told him, "you are my son-in-law, but don't forget that before that you are my nephew. If you don't improve my daughter's situation I will take her back to Fayyum." My husband told him "no one is taking my wife away against my will" and reminded my dad if he took me back he would be committing a sin. My husband also threatened to go to the courts and sue my father if he took me because I belonged to my husband now. My older brother told him to leave me to my decision. He said, "As long as she is *radya* with her situation, then leave her. You cannot commit a sin against yourself by taking her against her husband's will." I knew my husband's financial situation was not good, and he had no income or salary. But I also knew my father was sick and getting older. I insisted on staying with my husband and children no matter what or where. But I still talked to my father on the phone almost every day.

Salwa's decisions to remain with her family is based on being-in-between the suffering of her family and that of her father. In order to avoid putting added stress on her already sick father, she makes a sacrifice; she remains silent and accepts her situation as a cemetery resident. At the

same time, in order to appease his father-in-law and to avoid further confrontation with his extended family back home in Fayyum and his father in the ‘Arafa, Ibrahim moved the family once again.

But the family struggled to maintain their tenancy under strained and uneven relations with the family that owned the tomb. According to Salwa and Ibrahim, the tomb owners exploited their position of power by calling on the services of Salwa’s family at all hours of the day and night from their apartment nearby. Salwa describes one encounter:

> I felt like I was a servant. I was cleaning my hawsch, tending to the hwash that the turaby tells my husband to look after, and anytime they would call me and tell me “come here and clean this. Go get us this from the market.” And I was sick. My body was tired and could not handle all this. And I have my daughter. But if I didn’t go wipe their floors and do whatever they asked, I was always afraid we would be kicked out of here and we would find nowhere to go. One time the wife of the son of the tomb owner came here and told me I had to go clean her house. I told her the agreement was between the Hagg (respectful way to refer to elders) and me, and that I should talk to him first. She got so angry and said she would take the key of the tomb and kick us out. I started crying. I turned my face to the heavens and cried. I said, Oh Allah, I am a guardian of this tomb. I am a *ghafira* of this place. You know I take care of this place and look after its dead.

Seeking to avoid the complications of family altercations, Ibrahim moved the family yet again. By this time he had repaired the relationship with his father and was able to call on him to intervene on the family’s behalf. With his father’s help, he was able to find a spacious tomb, although initially they shared the space with two other occupants. Over time, the other residents moved out or passed on, leaving the hawsch primarily to Salwa’s nuclear household. This is where they live today and where the two of us, along with her son and daughter, spent most of our time.

After deciding to remain in the cemeteries with her husband and children, Salwa began seeking ways to improve her family’s financial standing. Eventually she became a vendor on the street corner, as she explains:

> I wanted to go sell anything. I started to sell *tirmis* (lupine seeds prepared with boiled water, lemon, and spices, a common snack for Egyptians) and stay out till maghrib or isha. I wouldn't make a profit off of it all the time either. But I would sit there and sell from sun up to sundown anyway because sometimes a kind person comes along and gives me more than she owes me. God didn't used to forget me.

According to Salwa and Ibrahim, the tomb owners of their hawsch exploited their position of power by calling on the services of Salwa's family at all hours of the day and night from their apartment nearby. Salwa describes one encounter:

> I felt like I was a servant. I was cleaning my hawsch, tending to the hwash that the turaby tells my husband to look after, and anytime they would call me and tell me "come here and clean this. Go get us this from the market." And I was sick. My body was tired and could not handle all this. And I have my daughter. But if I didn't go wipe their floors and do whatever they asked, I was always afraid we would be kicked out of here and we would find nowhere to go. One time the wife of the son of the tomb owner came here and told me I had to go clean her house. I told her the agreement was between the Hagg (respectful way to refer to elders) and me, and that I should talk to him first. She got so angry and said she would take the key of the tomb and kick us out. I started crying. I turned my face to the heavens and cried. I said, Oh Allah, I am a guardian of this tomb. I am a *ghafira* of this place. You know I take care of this place and look after its dead.

Many of the women I encountered in the cemeteries felt similarly exploited by tomb owners. Salwa's appeal is to god, but also the practical role she plays: ghafira, or, "guardian" of the tomb. By assigning a title to her duties she reminds the audience that she is not just a squatter, but a person with a job to do. More importantly, that job is itself a moral sacrifice, as she must live in tombs and tend to the dead so that others do not have to do this unsavory but necessary work. In this encounter, the threat does not originate from the tomb owner, but from his daughter-in-law who leverages her status to procure free domestic service for her home. The encounter between Salwa and this woman is not uncommon. In the cemeteries, where private ownership predominates, tomb owners and local turaby often hold the power to determine who comes, who stays, and who goes. Fears of eviction by tomb owners or local turaby are prevalent

across the community. But so is the threat extended members of the family pose to the wellbeing of squatters.

By age 26, Salwa began to feel lethargic, and exhibited symptoms of marad. After a visit with the doctors of the hospital, and following some tests, she was diagnosed with kidney disease.

> I asked a sheikh about 'amal and sihr and he said it was possible for sihr to cause kidney disease and respiratory problems. These are the same problems my doctor tells me I have now. I drank it and ate it and took it into my body. It takes a toll. You see, when a person is injured and even after he has surgery, there are long-term consequences. That's what's causing my problems.

According to Salwa, she is not dying from kidney disease or its associated complications. She is dying from the lingering effects of betrayal and its driving forces. While biomedicine does not provide her with this framing, it supports the conclusion that she and the sheikh have reached together. Medical knowledge is taken up as a way to support and legitimize her assertions, rather than as a contentious and disqualifying force.

> What did you think when you found out? I asked her hesistantly.
>
> …That's when I knew I was going to die. I started to think of what kind of life I had been living and I wanted to get closer to Allah. Just like we are blessed with beautiful shade that protects us from the hot sun, we have good people living here in this tomb with us. They are the people who have passed away. They remind me about being a good person. When I don't get up to pray these people come to me sometimes and ask about how to pray. They ask, what do you say when you make ruku'? What do you say when you prostrate? I tell them, I say "subhana rabi al-'athim three times. And when I make sujood I say subhana rabi al-a'laa three times." And when I get up to pray I find them standing behind me dressed in white and I am leading them as their imam. What does that say?

Though she acknowledges the doctor's inability to "see what is in" her heart, she strengthens her own conclusions through a biomedical analogy of the compromised body after serious injury, and even following surgical interventions. Salwa acknowledges the limited role of the doctor in the treatment of her *amraad* because the origins of her suffering are located beyond the scope of

his expertise. The diagnosis of her bodily condition is met with a sense of mourning over the loss of a life that still technically lives. She describes her subsequent feelings.

Another problem with informal economies is they often depend on uneven webs of relations to produce outcomes. What is at stake is not simply the nature of one's relationship to others, but the relations of others to moral constructs. Trust in the relationships of others plays a pivotal role in the survival of cemetery inhabitants. The following interactions between Salwa and the leader of the local charity (*gam'iyya*) demonstrate how these informal economies operate, often to the disadvantage of cemetery residents. Gam'iyyat (p,.) are institutions responsible for distributing donations and resources to the poor. Gam'iyat are also responsible for helping cemetery residents to file housing applications. Technically, according to Salwa, following assessments of dire living and housing conditions, they file reports with the appropriate office or ministry to initiate a process of change. The narrative excerpt offers a microcosm of the corruption that permeates the formal housing sector and the Egyptian state more generally. It also reveals how squatters construct moralities surrounding the politics of charity, handouts, and donations, even among the desperate cemetery squatters who struggle to acquire basic necessities.

One day a famous actor named Ahmed Falawkas made his way through the 'Arafa with a camera crew. He had come to distribute money and food items to the residents of the tombs. By chance, Falawkas saw Salwa and her daughter standing outside their hawsch. Accompanying the actor was the leader of the gam'iyya, Hagg 'Abdo. Salwa describes the interaction between the three:

> Hagg Abdo said, "look at the people of Egypt, how they live in the cemetery and are patient and doing their best to survive." Ahmed Falawkas came to me and asked, "How are you living here like this?" I told him "we are living by the grace of God. Has God ever created someone and forgot about him?" He looked at my

> daughter and asked, "what's wrong with her?" I told him, "her brain is incomplete." Hagg 'Abdo told me to show them the disability papers, so I did. Hagg Abdo mentioned to this man that he could help look out for Shuruuq and take care of her expenses and her treatment. He was so generous he agreed to pay for everything from A-Z. He told Hagg Abdo, "I entrust her to you" (from *wasiyyah*).

Though the social distance between the actor and Salwa is vast, she suddenly finds herself hopeful as she connects with someone who has the power to exert influence on her behalf. Her mention of the *wasiya*, the act of entrusting another with the care of something or someone valuable, is significant because it gets beyond small talk to a socially and religiously recognized pact, the maintaining of which a man's honor depends.

Over the next few weeks, Salwa waited to receive word from Hagg 'Abdo about the arrangement with Mr. Falawkas. After a month of silence, she decided to visit him in the *gam'iyyah*. She describes the encounter that precipitated between the two:

> I went to Hagg Abdo and asked him, "didn't mister Ahmed agree to take care of Shuruuq?" He said, "ok, bring the disability papers for your daughter and come back." I went home and got the disability card and the medical papers that prove she is *mareeda*. After some more time passed and I hadn't heard anything I went back to him again. He said, "no. There is nothing here for you. I asked him for her disability papers back but he refused. This man took my paperwork and he decided not to submit it and won't give it back to me.

These statements show that Salwa actively pursues the interests of her family through all routes available. It also shows how Salwa's pursuits are complicated by hierarchies that place her at a disadvantage since she must depend on others to uphold moral virtues at a time when Salwa finds society afflicted with immorality and corruption. Recognizing the power differential, and perhaps the opportunity to earn extra cash, Hagg 'Abdo chooses to act immorally. He betrays what the wasiyah (define) entrusted to him by another, and denies Salwa what she has been promised. But, also, from his position of authority he is able to erase the encounter altogether. This scenario offers a microcosm of the broader historical erasure that operates in Egypt and

which enables the reproduction of inequality in housing and other realms of daily life.

Soon after, Hagg ‘Abdo showed up at her tomb. Salwa explains:

> He knew my husband was in a cast. He came around 10 PM and called into the tomb. Who did he call for? If he would’ve called out for Ibrahim, he would go to the door because he is the man of the house. It was winter and I was laying down under the blanket getting ready to fall asleep when I heard him at the door, you see the door it not really a door but a gate, calling to my husband. He said, “hey, where is your wife boy?”That man called for me that night to give me one like it. It’s not even the expensive kind. It’s not the kind people donate. Other people get actual money. They get money! The millions that are just sitting, what about that? They take money and reserve it for themselves and certain people. For a car, or an apartment, or furniture.
>
> Is this for real? Is it appropriate? Is this “boy” working for you? When Allah says “Allah is at the aid of his servant when his servant is at the aid of his brother”. This means that god will be at your aid only when you come to the aid of other people. The slave will not be of help to you, God is the only one whose help matters. Because he is weak and tired, does that mean you can insult him and ask him “where is your wife, boy?” I tried to let it go in one ear and out the other, but honestly, I felt that my husband was hurt. His honor was insulted. God commands us to care for one another and look at for one another. And the prophet Mohammed it was his character to look after the poor and sick and needy and orphans. He entrusted us with the care of one another.

Salwa decided to speak up for her husband and to confront Hagg ‘Abdo who seemed intent on humiliating her husband and complicating her already difficult life. She recalls:

> I told him, “you know, you have no manners. You have no manners” He asked me “why?” I said, “put yourself in my shoes. Your wife is sitting at home and a man comes to your door with something and calls for her, what would you do? What would you say to him? God says “every Shepard is responsible for his flock” ‘what would you say to him? Wouldn’t you protect your wife if someone asked for her? Or would you just let her go? He was quiet. I told him, “you, who quotes God and his prophet. You, the one who assumes to know God, what do you want from his wife when the man of the house has answered your call? Why are you insulting and humiliating with your words for a piece of *wizrah* that you’re giving him that isn’t even necessary? We don’t want anything from you. Not your blanket or your company. Don’t come back here. And turns out we are good people. We didn’t drag you into our home and tie you to a tree and beat you up and report you to the authorities. We are good people who know god and we don’t want or need anything from you. You think we’re going to keep this thing you gave us for the rest of our lives? Of course it isn’t going to stay with us forever, nothing ever does. You think you can walk in here and disrespect us because you

> are giving us a handout? What comes with disrespect, we don't want or need. What comes with "mardaat nifs", a pure intention, and a kind smile, ahlan wasahlan". Instead, *biyminnoo 3alayna* and hurt us. Is my husband working for you? Is he your son that you command? If you're coming to give us charity, you should do it with a smile on your face and a kind prayer like, "may allah give you good health. You're my brother and if you ever need anything, take my number and call me. If you need medical care or help, call me and I will help you". No, instead he comes to my door and humiliates us…Dignity (*al-'izza*)…*al-'izza* is everything.

After this interaction, Salwa noticed Hagg 'Abdo's demeanor toward her began to change. "What do I do? Where do I go when the money and things intended for us are being stolen by the people running the country and those entrusted to deliver them to us?" Salwa asked me rhetorically. By standing up for her husband she had simultaneously placed herself at odds with the person who controls the distribution of goods in the cemetery. "What do I do when we were betrayed by the people who were supposed to take care of us?" Salwa's words implicated Hagg 'Abdo, but also the system that made it possible for him to use his authority for self-gain. It also ties back to the betrayal of her sister-in-law and the sheikh whose greed and desire for power compromised their morals and relationships. "I went to his sister and told her what happened," Salwa tells me. It was her last recourse. "She just said, 'may Allah forgive him.' I am tired of the opinions of other human beings, and I have surrendered my whole life and all my problems to Allah."

A week later, Salwa's neighbors dropped by so they could walk down to the gam'iyyah together to collect their share of meat donations that had arrived to celebrate Ramadan. But Salwa's altercation with the Hagg discouraged her desire to go, even though she could collect meat, a commodity in the cemeteries, for her family. She explains:

> My neighbors came here and told me, "Hagg 'Abdo is giving out meat." I told them, "no, I had a fight with him and I don't want anything from him". Anyways, my neighbor was like, "just come with me maybe he'll give us something from what he has". I told her, "the one who gives is Allah". She convinced me to go

> with her finally so we went. I swear to god, these people have no wisdom in the way they give. The people they were giving meat to were mostly women who live in privately owned flats (*bayt milk*). They're sitting there with their dyed hair and makeup and short sleeves wearing 200-300 LE dresses taking the handouts. These are people who live in nice houses some of them are even rich enough to rent out one of their houses. They're well-dressed, living in nice places, plump and healthy, not living in the cold, in the sun like we are. Where is the mercy? Where is the fear of god? Where is faith? And Hagg 'Abdo was just standing there and talking and laughing with each one and asking, "are you wearing lipstick? Are you wearing kohl? Did you get your hair done?" I was shocked. I wanted to ask him, are you here to give out meat or flirt with the women?

This section demonstrates the unspoken and uneven politics that underlie patterns of resource distribution in the cemetery, and how women struggle to balance morals with procuring necessities for their families. The scenario set up allows Salwa to further questions Hagg 'Abdo's moral bearings, as well as those of women who rely on immoral avenues to acquire necessities for their families. The revealing clothing worn by women and their exposed hair, which they intentionally adorn with henna or hair dye, based on Salwa's reading, are intended to play into Hagg 'Abdo's unspoken but nevertheless established mode of reciprocity or "affective economy."

Salwa's statements insinuate that everything in Egypt comes at a cost that must be weighed before agreeing to the exchange, whether one is the recipient or the giver. The desperation that surrounds cemetery life only further entrenches Salwa's acts in solid moral grounding. When one is desperate it is the perfect time to test moral strength. The encounter shows how Salwa uses these exchanges to nothing is free in Egypt, especially for women who find themselves in the position formulate, exercise, and articulate moralities and moral hierarchies. This, I argue, is a demonstration of passive-active form of agency discussed in chapter one. She chooses to disengage in order to produce immaterial but meaningful moral outcomes.

In the midst of our discussion about Hagg ‘Abdo, Salwa shared the following story:

> I heard of a hadith that made me cry. This man had a horse and he was standing in the market eating bread. Another man came up to him and asked him for a ride. So he agreed. The other man told him, let’s go that way. The other man said no. But the stranger insisted and they went in the direction he pointed to. They went a long way. The man asked him, are we not there yet? He replied, no keep going. The whole time they rode they kept seeing dead bodies in the street. The man asked the stranger, my god who killed all these people? The stranger replied, “I killed them. I killed them all. And now I’m going to kill you just like I killed them.” He took out his sword and said, “I’m going to cut your throat the same way I cut their throats.” I mean just think about it, the stranger asked this man for a ride and he gave him one and this is his reward. The man said, “ok, fine. Let me just pray one more time and then you can do what you want.” The stranger agreed. In his prayer he cried and wept as he kneeled on the floor, and he asked Allah to protect him from this man. He said, “Oh Allah, please save me from this evil man.” And while he was praying, the stranger would hold the sword to his throat and ask him, “are you done yet?” And he would reply, “no just a little more.” While he was praying, God answered and assured him he would protect him. So the man finished praying. God sent an angel to help this man. And while this stranger was going to cut this man’s throat, God sent this angel and chopped this stranger’s head off. That’s the power of prayer. He trusted in Allah and asked him for help in his most difficult time. The man asked the angel, “who are you? You are a brave soldier (*faaris*). Who sent you here to help me?” He said, “didn’t you pray to Allah to help you? Didn’t you kneel on the ground and pray to Allah to help you?” The man replied, “yes I did.” And the angel asked him, “didn’t you know that Allah heard your request? I am an angel sent to you from the fourth heaven by God to help you out of this predicament because you turned to Him. Now take your horse and continue your journey.”

At first I was confused about the meaning of this hadith and why Salwa decided to share it with me at this particular moment. What did the story symbolize? What lessons was I supposed to draw from her story? I paused, not quite sure how to respond. This pause opened a space for Salwa to elaborate:

> …When I heard this hadith I started to cry. I mean, how could I get on my knees in front of a human to get bread for my family...to feed my family? How could I kneel to another human being and beg him for sustenance? This man wants to kill me the same way the man in the story killed all those people. I mean this stranger who killed all these people and stood there threatening this man who turned to Allah. He said let me pray a couple of rakaa. He got down on the ground and begged Allah for help. And Allah tells us that when we get on the ground and ask Him something, it will rise from the ground to the fourth heaven. And God’s

> doors are never closed. Allah said, "and if my slave asks you about me tell them I am near, I answer the prayers of my servants if they ask". God is great and he answers prayers. And that's why I am never going to take anything from this man who gives and then humiliates. I went several times to him and to his family.

Now I understood. The man with bread and a horse represents the rich and powerful segments of society that control the distribution of resources and have the moral opportunity to use those resources to help others. The man who asks him for a ride represents the poor and disenfranchised cemetery squatters, who like Salwa, must depend on these strangers for help. In this story Salwa associates Hagg 'Abdo with the stranger on the horse and relates to the man asking for a ride. When the stranger accepts, it suggests the stranger has recognized the moral obligation of *wasiyyah*, or, taking care of what has been entrusted to him especially because the man is in need. Feeling safe, the man rides with the stranger only to realize he has depended on the wrong source for protection and provision. In a final moral gesture he asks for a moment to pray to God. This is his saving grace, not only rescuing him from harm, but also, enriching him in material and spiritual value. The story, and Salwa's reflections about it, expands the meaning of death beyond the physiological process. Death is the ultimate failure to act on moralities that uphold reliance on God above all else. By rejecting Hagg 'Abdo's offerings Salwa rejects his invitation to die a bad death and is instead able to formulate herself as a moral actor.

Social Im-Mobility

After Ibrahim's father retired as saby, he arranged for his only son in a family full of daughters to take over. Suddenly Salwa found herself in a better situation than before. Cemetery zuwaar often sought her out for questions, to which she provided answers and solutions for a small handout. These encounters with outsiders have also allowed her to establish relationships, superficial though they may be, beyond the cemeteries.

The extra income and networks also allowed her to better tend to the care of her amraad.

Salwa began to visit with her doctors at the government-subsidized hospital regularly for kidney treatments. She reflects on her compliance with doctors' orders:

> My doctor says to eat a spoon full of fava beans with no oil or salt on an empty stomach first thing in the morning. This helps send protein to my kidneys. But my doctor has forbidden me from eating eggs, milk, meat, chicken. Of course I don't eat a lot of protein. I take one or two spoons of *foul* in the morning. Because I have a bad kidney.

For a while, it seemed, Salwa's life was finally on track to improving. Her marad was under control and treatments, biomedical and otherwise, were strictly adhered to. Just a few years later, however, the family's situation was complicated when Salwa's husband broke both legs in an accident with a horse-drawn fruit cart. Their neighbor, a fruit vendor at the local market, gave his horse steroids at night out of fear it would otherwise be stolen. According to Salwa, he did this so that the horse would become more aggressive and would be able to fight off any attempt at theft. Ibrahim ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Just as the horse became agitated, it kicked its legs up and toppled over onto Ibrahim who was standing nearby, along with the entire fruit cart. He was rushed to al-Khalifa hospital and treated for free. But his wounds were not healing. Salwa explains:

> The wound wasn't healing so he went back to the doctor and they told him he had a calcium deficiency and that's why it wasn't healing. They said "you are malnourished and your body is not healing well." We can't afford to eat well. That affects everything in our body.

Ibrahim's complications demonstrate how individual illnesses and conditions, which I argue are subsumed under marad, are not isolated. Instead, they intersect in the body, producing or complicating other conditions. Salwa felt partially to blame for her husband's inability to heal from his accident. As a wife and mother, Salwa saw herself accountable for her husband's malnourished condition. In spite of her own afflictions, she dedicated herself to being a better wife and caretaker. One way she did this was through intentional acts of intimacy with her

husband. Salwa explains:

> When my husband's legs were in casts and he had a calcium deficiency, when I would take off my clothes for him, I would do it as a kind of treatment so he could have the motivation to get up and wash himself and take care of himself, and so that he would know I was ok and he wasn't failing me. And thank Allah, god didn't forget us. My husband is now able to walk and move around."

Another way Salwa attempted to be a better caretaker for her family, especially given her husband was unable to work and money was tight, was to withhold her costly trips to the hospital and to disrupt treatments for her amraad. I asked Salwa why she did not return to her work selling corn or lupine seeds, or even to seek out work in the formal sector. She answered, "I am sick or I would work. I tried to sell grilled corn but the smoke makes me sick and causes me to vomit blood. It's bad for the lungs…Even if I tried to find a job cleaning houses, my boss would humiliate me and tell me 'why are you here? You are sick. Why would you come to work if you are sick?'"

Not surprisingly, Salwa's health began to rapidly deteriorate. But Salwa is not ignorant. Neither is she "noncompliant." Instead, she is a wife and mother who must weigh the management of a dying body against the needs of her family and their socioeconomic constraints. At the same time Salwa is able to make meaning of these experiences by framing them as selfless and meaningful sacrifices for the good of her family. Selflessness and sacrificing for others have become especially relevant to notions of morality in the cemetery and in Egypt more broadly as activists and protestors expose greed and corruption. In the context of her earlier statement that she "dies a little everyday" and that the effects of 'amal continue to break down the body, Salwa's death is also given meaning through the framework of sacrifice in the face of a collapsing world.

Though Salwa's life in the cemeteries has been marked by strife, and while she did not

marry her husband out of love, she has learned to support and respect him as a spouse, a father to her children, and the family's head of household, even as he is unable to fulfill these duties due to his injury. In spite of her own marad, it was during this time that Salwa became responsible for managing her family's affairs. Her husband's status as *saby*, especially when he was unable to carry out the necessary work due to injury, gave her access to zuwaar who came to her with questions. After convening with her husband, or following a quick cell phone chat with the turaby, she offered them solutions in exchange for a small handout.

These encounters opened up further opportunities for Salwa. While selling goods by the roadside had brought in some limited cash, it had become unhealthy given her illnesses, and was forced to seek other income-generating avenues. At first, she adjusted her cooking techniques so as to save on sugar, oil, rice, and other subsidized goods. She began to sell what she saved to her extended family, friends, neighbors, and zuwaar at a cheaper price than they could find at the market. Seeing the success of this early business venture, she spoke with her father in Fayyum and together, they created a small business. He would send her basic goods, which he could obtain at a cheaper cost in the village. Salwa would sell these to city and cemetery residents. She would then send money with friends or neighbors travelling to Fayyum to repay her father for the costs, along with his share of the profits. When I returned in 2013 I found Salwa had developed a sizeable stock of items, which she sells out of one of the vacant rooms in her tombhome. As she grows more visible in the cemetery and finds ways to provide for her nuclear family, other women attribute her upward mobility to vices like selfishness and greed.

The Uprisings: Fears and Opportunities

The events of the uprisings have complicated Salwa's struggles to care for her family and tend to her ailing body while opening up new possibilities for moral formation at the same time.

Although many of the cemetery squatters avoided the crowded squares and political movements of the 25 January uprisings, the chaos soon came to their streets. Amidst the chaos, residents were left alone to defend themselves, their families, their homes, and subsequently, the property of tomb owners. Salwa explains:

> During the revolution the *baltagiyya*, scary looking…used to come here. They used to jump on the *khishan* and wanted to stay here. They used to break the locks on the tombs and wanted to stay here. They remove the metal door. They had come and even brought *hareem* with them and were planning on staying here. They were armed. If you stood up to them they would shoot you with their guns. We, the people who live here, we stood up to them and defended this place. We were fatigued because of how hard we fought to protect this place. We stood up and told them 'these places belong to people. We are here taking care of their property. What are you doing here? And we forced them to leave. When the *sha'biyya* (populace) would stand there in the street, we would go out and stand too. Even when it was freezing outside, we would light a fire and stay in the streets guarding the tombs. But God stood by us until they left.

In the introduction I mentioned the way the image of the "thug" is taken up by state security forces to justify violent intervention in informal and low-income neighborhoods. Casting squatters as thugs that threatened the social fabric was also central to projects of mass eviction and foreign investment. But in Salwa's narrative, the baltagiyya are identified as those outside the cemeteries who threatened the wellbeing of its residents and the property of its owners. But at the same time the uprisings have led to increased risks for violence, violation, and heightened fears, they have also opened a space for the cemetery community to negotiate their place in society by transforming their public perceptions as thugs (*baltagiyya*) to guardians (*ghufara*). Salwa's follow-up supplication, which she repeated in variations, demonstrates another way cemetery squatters attempt to do this:

> Oh Allah you know that there are thugs out there and that if they find this tomb empty they will take over this place and destroy it. They won't leave. There are baltagiyya of needles and drugs and pills. They come at night, and if they take over this clean place they will stay here and guard it with their guns. No one, not even the tomb owner, will be able to remove them. There's no government now

that could do anything about it.

This rhetorical supplication explicitly addresses God, but also, society and the state implicitly. Combined with the previous narrative example, the utterance shows how the political turmoil has been incorporated into the lives and narratives of cemetery squatters, and interjected itself into their claims to belonging and place. The chaos of the Arab Spring has created an opportunity for residents (*sukaan*) to renegotiate their place in the cemeteries, and in the power systems that operate within them and beyond in greater Cairo.

Salwa's appeal to God, more than a prayer, is a statement of legitimation and defense. By conjuring the controversial political image of the *baltagy* (Ghannam 2013), she draws on the political turmoil to reveal the potential dangers and threats eviction poses to the sanctity of the cemetery space, Egypt's dead, and more importantly in a liberal ecomomy, to the wellbeing and private property of tomb owners. At the time, she distances herself from a label most often used to profile poor men and women who grow up poor and develop a sense of animosity or rage as a result. In the context of the Thawra and its aftermath, Salwa and others transition from the role as *ghufara* over the dead, to *ghufara* over the private property of Egyptians. In this post-Arab Spring formulation, she asserts, her place in the cemetery gets beyond an act of criminality or even of accepting charity or kindness. Instead, it is framed as a voluntary sacrifice built on a sense of responsibility for the highest good, the good of those who cannot help themselves (the dead) and the good of the nation.

This environment has also opened up opportunities for turaby and their assistants to bring in a little extra income. Under direct orders from the turaby, Salwa and Ibrahim are required to lock up the unoccupied tombs throughout the cemetery. Each day, they alternate these locks from tomb to tomb, in no particular order. When *zuwaar* arrive to visit the dead, they must call upon

the turaby or his assistant, in this case Ibrahim, to unlock it. In exchange, many offer a small tip for the trouble. But this method of coping with the financial pressures produced through heightened insecurities and the subsequent dwindling of visitations has its drawbacks.

During my time with Salwa and her family, I often witnessed angry *zuwaar* accusing Salwa and her husband of colluding with the turaby in the scheme to purposely remove the locks purchased by tomb owners, and replace them different ones in order to earn an income for their services of retrieving the key and unlocking the gate. One woman I met after a confrontation with Salwa and her husband after just such an occasion referred to them as con artists (nasabeen), an attitude towards the people of the 'Arafa that is prevalent in Egypt.

The insecurity and violence have enhanced the place of fear in Salwa's life has become magnified since the uprisings. The escalating threats of violence against women impacts Salwa's life in different ways. First, it has limited her physical mobility and in this instance, her economic potentials. As I noted in the introduction, the stifling of potentials are associated with structural violence. Salwa recounted how the uprisings have made her life less secure overall:

> Egypt, this place...I used to love walking around here. I used to love walking through her streets. Now we are walking around afraid....Things have changed now. The world is not safe...Of course now I'm scared to go sit in that place I used to. I stopped selling. If I stay out late selling things like I used to, I would get attacked. There are thugs everywhere. They would bother me and harass me or attack my husband. My daughter would run away from me and I wouldn't be able to find her. So now I sit at home and lock myself in.

While the uprisings enabled the opening up of certain avenues for renegotiating identity, they also heavily impacted the everyday lives and ordinary behaviors of cemetery residents. Rather than materializing the democratic aspirations of the protestors, the violent efforts to stifle the uprisings have rendered Salwa's world unsafe. Some of Salwa's fears surround the violation of her own body. Others include concern over her young, autistic daughter. Tending to her daughter's care has been a nearly all-consuming experience since the events of the 25th January

uprisings:

> Whenever I open the tomb door she (Shuruuq) runs away. If my daughter goes out, I am scared for her. She is 11 years old. If someone took her by the hand she would go with them. She doesn't know any better. A lot of people come and tell me you need to watch her and guard her because someone could come and do something bad to her. But her dad's legs are hurt. If I could only move somewhere that is a normal house I wouldn't have to worry about this. She is supposed to get disability payments and everything, but there is nothing. There is nothing. She can't speak, she can't complain. I am her guardian and I can speak for her. She wakes up at 5 am and runs around. We have to run after her and looked after her until we have become so tired. We can't do it anymore. The door has to be closed all the time. Even when someone tells me there is someone distributing food or goods I don't go. How can I go and leave her? She runs away from her dad and from me. Once she went out with us. We passed a man who was selling dolls on the street. Shuruuq grabbed one of the dolls and ripped its hair out. The man got mad and started demanding that we pay him for the doll. He wanted 30 pounds. A nice young man was standing nearby and he said "don't you see that she is not well? Have some mercy". He said, that's not my business, I want money for my damaged goods. He yelled at us in the street and humiliated us.

Concern (*'ala'*) over her daughter's wellbeing further limits Salwa's mobility because it forces her to remain in her tomb with the gate locked. She is unable to use her time collecting food and other items for her family and therefore the struggle to constitute herself morally as a mother and caretaker are compromised. Adding to her stress is the recent discovery that her only other child, Samer, 12, suffers with asthma and daght. While sons constitute important sources of social and financial capital, he is largely unable to help support his family. Salwa explains:

> My son has high blood pressure. He has respiratory infections and he has asthma (she counts on her fingers as she speaks). I would ask him to go find work. He would tell me "my legs are hurting and I can't walk, I can't walk." When I saw him sick like that I took him to the hospital and ran blood tests on him. He has high blood pressure and the doctor said not to let him lift anything heavy. Because he has high blood pressure. And why would a young boy have high blood pressure? Because no one feels for us or cares for us that we don't eat and that we don't eat well when we do. We can't afford to eat well. That affects everything in our body…Potatoes cost 5 LE, cucumbers are 3 LEs, bread is getting more expensive and you get less now than what you used to. You take 100 pounds to the market (*suuq*). By the time you buy some potatoes and vegetables and other items, your money is all gone.

Salwa's political etiology of her son's affliction is also a moral one. It draws on the financial stresses surrounding maintaining her family and the subsequent gender expectations that women feed families even with limited access to resources. It also shows how the networks they normally depend on are being affected by the proliferation of incurable affliction across households. Her rhetorical question, "why would a young boy have blood pressure," makes meaning of illness and injustice in important ways. By making reference to his young age, Salwa situates her argument in normative chronicities of illness. This narrative move allows her to frame her son's affliction as an abnormality, as the outcome of a dysfunctional system, and therefore, as a meaningful sacrifice. At the same time, she it is an accusation against the social order. But at whom are her statements directed? The answer is difficult to know. It is possible her appeals are directed at the government in some gesture of resistance. But I believe this is unlikely given her reliance on social networks for support, rather than on the state.

Salwa's Sorrow

About a year before I returned to the field in 2013, Salwa's father and major supporter died of complications relating to al-'alb. Reflecting on the toll of his death, and the deaths of her brother and uncle, she notes:

> I am so tired, so very tired. My father died last year. And four months later, my brother died. And two months later my uncle died. I get a feeling now that the world has become empty. Even when I eat, I have no appetite. I do not reject Allah's will. I pray that God has mercy on them and on us.

The absence of Salwa's father from her life, cuts especially deep. When Salwa loses her father she loses her major source of support. "I used to call my father and complain to him about my situation," Salwa recalls sadly, still clearly coping with what it means to live without him. "I would tell him I am sad and upset." Salwa's father listened to her, and he acknowledged her

suffering and perhaps even his role in occasioning it. Through his death, Salwa has lost her defender, arbiter, and primary support system. She also lost the only other person who bore witness to her suffering and acted to alleviate it.

Salwa's reference to feeling tired connects with episodes of low daght, which brings on the sense that blood is being drained from the body. "I always have low daght" As discussed in the introduction, low daght is usualy associated with sadness, or, za'al. Her reference to the loss of appetite and to an empty world allow her to frame his death as significant and meaningful in myriad ways and shows the intersubjectivities that bond them together. His death is also her death. The world and its sustaining qualities, like food, are no longer attractive or even desirable.

This mode of mourning, along with withholding medication at the instance of the death of a relative or loved one is common in Egypt. While his death narrative and the moral constellation that surround it will be discussed in chapter 7, here I emphasize how this moment uprooted Salwa's local moral world. "My brother's kids are lost without him. They can't find food to eat or water to drink." Her world has become "empty" by the absences produced through death. What is in Salwa's heart, what she has taken into her body, is knowledge of a betrayal that has cut so deeply that its effects have continued to unfold in the manifestation of various illnesses over the course of her life.

The 'Arafa: A Problematic Solution

During discussions with Salwa's husband, the cemeteries emerged as the source of all his problems. Even though he was born, raised, and had spent his entire life in the tombs of the 'Arafa, he desired to live in a formal apartment where he could find "dignified" work and where he would be able to support his family. "No one should be forced to live like this. It's not right," he told me one day while he worked on repairing a broken chair leg. "We live with the dead, and

we live like we are dead," he continued. For Ibrahim, living in the cemeteries was acceptable until he found himself unable to fulfill the hegemonic gendered standards for men and masculinity, which depend on providing for one's family in material, emotional, and spiritual ways. These qualities are complicated by life in the cemetery, where he finds himself at increased risk for accidents, nutrition deficiencies, and daght. Moving to the formal sector would normalize the relationship between family members, putting him in his rightful place as head of household and earning him the respect of his wife and children. This shift would address the stresses that have contributed to his condition.

For Salwa, on the other hand, the cemetery has opened up new possibilities, limited as they may be. Her opinion on the cemetery has shifted considerably since she first moved in:

> I would rather live here in the cemetery than to live in a formal apartment. Don't be upset with me, but I can wear anything. If I lived in an apartment my neighbor would say, look at what she's wearing. And they say it. They say it a lot. But here, everyone minds their own business. I am for myself, and they are for themselves. We say good morning and we understand that we should each mind our own business.

The myriad difficulties that surround life in contemporary Cairo force Salwa to reexamine the meaning and place of the cemetery in her own life. The fear of eviction that comes with change drives her to frame cemetery habitation as a preference that she is at risk of losing. Minding one's own business, or remaining silent about the lives and deeds of others are qualities she highly values, especially given the ways too much involvement has led to her embodied conditions. She draws on these particular aspects of cemetery squatting as advantageous when compared to housing available in the formal sector. Furthermore, unlike her husband, her life in the cemeteries has allowed her access to both privacy and upward social mobility, limited though it may be, that she would not otherwise have access to. But the decision is also rooted in an earlier statement she made reality that "there is nothing left for me in Fayyum." The death of her

father no longer ties her to Fayyum as a material or geographical space. Home is the ‘Arafa, where her husband and children are.

Given these realities, she comments, “I still feel that Egypt has some good because of her people. Why? Because there are people who leave us to stay here and live here. Because they know Allah and they fear him.” The reality of failed interventions and harsh policies towards informal communities has led her to believe that no intervention is the best intervention. She explains:

> Imagine the owners of this tomb come here and want their place back one day. What do I do? Where do I go when the money and things intended for us are being stolen by the people running the country and those entrusted to deliver them to us? What do I do when we were betrayed by the people who were supposed to take care of us?

What signifies the existence of “good people” in Egypt is not their desire to intervene on behalf of the poor, but rather, to allow them to remain in place. For Salwa, the lack of intervention in the cemetery constitutes a good act because it enables her to continue to function in a familiar way even as her local moral world shifts in the face of betrayals, displacements, and deaths. It also keeps frightening possibility of “unplacement,” a prevalent source of fear discussed in the introduction, at bay. By contrast, those who are not good are those who may “come here and want their place back one day.” More importantly, bad people are those who have made it so that, in the case of such an eviction from their informal tombhome by tomb-owners, Salwa and others in her situation have no recourse to action. Thus bad people are also the ones who have constructed a mythicoreality that has landed her in the cemetery and makes her afraid to speak out. She is careful with her words. She does not describe these as “bad people,” the way I have here. Instead, and once again, she frames their vices through references to acts of betrayal.

Discussion

This chapter presents one narrative from the cemetery to explore the different ways

individuals and families understand and tend to their afflictions and bodily experiences in the broader context of their lives. Despite local efforts to convert the cemeteries into a place for families to call home, heaviness overhangs life here. The slow and agonizing movements and gestures of *sukaan* even in mundane acts like walking, standing, sitting, or speaking communicates a sense that living is an almost unbearable burden.

For salwa, narrating the story of her illness gives her condition meaning. Her afflictions are not the outcome of biology alone, but are shaped by a breakdown of her local moral world. Her statement that the cause of her daily death is *fitnah* is a way to speak to how social and moral fractures give way to broken bodies and lives. It allows her to move through her narrative, which recalls her own encounters with fitnah and its effects. In so doing she connects her bodily condition to her social world and beyond.

In Fayyum, as in many other rural areas, unmarried men and women adhere to a high degree of gender segregation with non-relatives. In her community, chastity is not only a virtue, but also an absolute expectation. With the threats posed by large farms, impossible crop quotas, fines, and taxes, the survival of families depends on the development of strong social bonds. Thus trust is integral to daily life. Marriage plays a central role in trust building through the creation of social alliances between families, and the pooling of resources and assets. The consequences that follow accusations of sexual promiscuity, especially for unwed women, therefore, extend far beyond questions of honor and sexual purity, to issues of land ownership, rights to property, and the communal distribution of resources.

From an early age, Salwa is aware of the ways her body intersects with the social and political bodies in which her life unfolds. She is also conscious of her role in maintaining the social fabric of her household and village, as well of Egypt more broadly. Although she was only

a child at the time of the event and likely had no say in the procedure, she takes narrative ownership of it in the present. Doing so allows her to establish a sense of agency through which the painful experiences of her body are cast as honorable, moral sacrifices; a belief I would continue to encounter in the narratives of cemetery *sukaan*.

The confrontation over prospective suitors shows how men and women struggle to negotiate their places in their natal and extended family networks, and how they attempt to assert themselves in local relations of power. Salwa's father's comments about Fatin's motivations highlight this point. She attempts to find an ally amongst a tight-knit patrilocal family structure. Arranging a marriage between Salwa and a member of her own family increases her brother's ability to intervene on her behalf in the family's private affairs. By marrying Salwa, he could transition from being Fatin's brother, to the husband of her sister-in-law. This would challenge the distribution of power within the family and force Salwa's brother to consider her wellbeing in all interactions with his wife Fatin. Salwa seems to relate to these motivations and even understands Fatin's desire to seek an ally in the family, especially in retrospect, after experiencing her own transition from a daughter in the home of her parents to a wife living in the tombhome of her husband and his family.

The narrative emphasizes the centrality of the family unit in individual, social, and political life. In her community, as in many parts of Egypt, the bodies of women are often entangled in decisions and disputes that unfold within patriarchal systems of power and organization. The father or eldest and genetically closest surviving male relative wields a considerable amount of control over domestic and social issues as a *waly 'amr* (overseer of affairs; guardian). This is demonstrated by the power of the fathers to negotiate a settlement between the families without the contributions or voices of any of those involved in the

altercation. While Salwa often appears to go along with the patriarchal system of which she is a part, it is a "patriarchal bargain" that ensures she maintains the relationship to her father. Beyond sentimental reasons, the notion of waly 'amr not only gives men power over important decisions on behalf of their women, but conversely, works to protect women in the patriarchal system. Furthermore, by agreeing to her father's marriage prospect, and accepting his decision to dismiss the case against Medhat unilaterally, Salwa ensures her father's intervention on her behalf in her future married life.

Two examples clearly demonstrate the ways by which men and women attempt to gain power and influence within extended family networks. First, Salwa's father seeks to circumvent the costly gihaaz by arranging a marriage to his nephew. At the same time, turning down the marriage ascertains that family assets stay within the family. Turning down marriages is therefore a way by which relations of power, and distributions of wealth, are secured and maintained. Her father's fears about adding another member of Abu Sayyed's family to his own is based on the implications such an alliance might have on the escalation of marital discord and familial tension. But it is also, perhaps, out of fear of the shame that would accompany his failure to meet the socioeconomic expectations of fathers in Egyptian society.

Agreeing to the marriage brings the issue of sacrifice to the fore. This is because it is primarily Salwa's life that will change through this marriage. On the one hand, it is she alone who will carry the burden of its consequences. It is Salwa who must leave her family and home, travel to an unfamiliar place, and live her life amongst the tombs of the 'Arafa with an extended family she barely knows. It is Salwa who must abandon her own hopes for a better life and upward social mobility through marriage. Even more difficult than losing the potential material comforts such a future could bring, is losing the aspiration to one day live a life less burdened by

strife.

Though her father's choice of partner and future lifestyle conjure feelings of dismay instead of hope, Salwa is a firm believer in destiny, especially in relation to marriage. Referencing Qur'anic scripture, she often told me about how "good people are for good people because God matches them up that way." So when her father asked for her preference, she knew her choice did not revolve around which male suitor to select, since this was *maktoob* ("written"; destiny), but which family bond to uphold; the relationship between father and daughter, or the bond shared between siblings.

Her statement, "when a person walks towards the good…[Allah] will never forget him," testifies to her dedication to the moral sacrifices required of dutiful daughters. As Salwa consents to the marriage her father has arranged for her, she upholds, reaffirms, and realizes her values, and is thus confident that she "walks towards the good." This is determined by the values she believes are essential to her ethical realization as a subject and her eternal salvation, no matter the personal or material costs. Because of the emphasis placed on obedience to, and respect of, parents in her village and in Islam, accepting her father's wishes is a moral act that places her among the "good people" she references. By extension, therefore, her future husband must also be among them.

Salwa, like many women in Egypt, plays a key role in coping with familial problems and initiating reconciliations between males who are too proud to approach one another. Furthermore, the problems between her father and brother are heavy burdens that she feels she is responsible for. Though Salwa was the one who was beaten and had her court case dropped without her consent, it is she who goes out of her way to repair the relationship between the two before her departure for Cairo. The sharing of a meal represents the resolution of the problem

and the reintegration of family members back into the family unit. Certainly, for Salwa's family, this is something to be celebrated.

Physical abuse and domestic violence are prevalent in many Egyptian families. Salwa's body, like many other women I met, is the site on which the tensions between various feuding families and neighbors are played out. Her fiance's social status adds insult to injury and Fatin's family must uphold its honor in the public eye. Salwa is a dedicated daughter who, even one week before her own wedding, works to prepare her mother and family for her departure from the village. She understands what her absence will mean, especially for her mother.

The image of the honorable daughter and ideal wife is juxtaposed with the malicious actions of Abu Sayyed's children. Assaults against her physical body are intended to send a message of humiliation throughout the village by revealing the family's most intimate conflicts to their broader social world, and to realign local geographies of power and blame. But the physical assault constitutes only a portion of Salwa's anxieties. More importantly, it is the way the family discord has been made public that she finds especially difficult to bear.

Following the assault, the family's first instinct is to file official charges against Salwa's aggressors. In the second assault, her initial illness episode, they immediately seek biomedical attention. In both instances, the family's responses are associated with formality and legality. But what becomes clear through Salwa's story is how these formal routes are complicated by the pre existing webs of power relations and modes of social organization that operate at the communal level. As opposed to formal interventions, and though rooted in patriarchy, they often operate with the good of the family and community in mind. They seek compromises that maintain the integrity of families, and also of the community as a functional social unit. Unlike the structured nature of formal routes, these webs and social formations are fluid, as are the solutions they seek

for the various problems and conflicts that arise.

The confrontation between the officer of the court and Salwa's father demonstrates how, in such close-knit communities, local systems of justice and organization often supersede the formalities of the legal system, demonstrating another disadvantage of informal economies that often disproportionately disadvantage to women. While Salwa is initially encouraged by her father to press charges against the men who attacked her, the reality is that the social fabric of community and village life does not always leave room for the irreversible consequences that accompany formal interventions.

Salwa's response to her father's decision is also a show of how women attempt to navigate the patriarchal norms that constrain their lives. Rather than responding with anger at her, she explains his actions as a form of moral capital, and a demonstration of his kindness. Though it may seem ironic for Salwa to support or speak highly of Mubarak's court system in retrospect, given the dismissal of her case absent her permission, it is the very balance between formality and informality, legalities and local systems of authority that constitutes a wide range of solutions for local problems in Salwa's life. This balance is what allows her, and many others, to survive against the world. In a place where the line between formal and informal has become so blurry that they are often quite difficult to discern, neither informal networks nor formal channels alone would suffice.

Salwa's reflections on that fateful evening offer a glimpse into the intersubjective bonds that are so integral to belonging and participation, and to understandings of health and affliction in the ʻArafa. *ʻIshrah* (n. cohabitation) is used popularly to refer to the production of deep intersubjective bonds through the intimacies of lifelong cohabitation with an "other" that, through proximity and private interaction, is symbolically transformed into "self." *ʻIshra* forms

the groundwork of what Csordas (2008) refers to as the "principle of analogy" (Csordas 2008:114) so fundamental to intersubjectivity and "wordless intercorporeality" (Ibid); the ways people come to sense one another, and to imagine the possibility of being in the place of the other.

'Ishra offers Salwa a holistic and comparative lens through which she is able to see past Fatin's words and actions to the plausibility of an irreparable transgression. This is implied in her observation that "something just wasn't right about Fatin that night." When she mentions Fatin's knowledge of Salwa's favorite dish she also indirectly speaks to Fatin's violation of the intimacies one could only know through *'ishrah*. This ability to read the embodied conditions of others, as I will demonstrate later, forms the groundwork for a larger system of moral constellations that informs ethical subjectivities in the community of the 'Arafa.

Like many of the cemetery inhabitants, and others across Egypt, Salwa believes in the capacity of *'amal* to cause serious harm, affliction, and human suffering. *'Amal* refers to a malicious type of witchcraft intended to inflict loss, damage, injury, and even death, on a particular person(s). Because Egypt, as well as the Middle East and North Africa more broadly, is also known for *al-'ayn* (the "evil eye") [INSERT FOOTNOTE CITATIONS], it is important to note that the two are distinguishable in a few key ways.

Suffering caused by *al-'ayn* is usually associated with envious sentiments towards the possessions, skills, lifestyles, professions, abilities, or phenotypical traits of others. Al-'ayn can cause harm against the possessor of one's object of envy even when the intention to harm the subject, or to destroy the object of one's envy, is absent. Al-'ayn therefore is also closely associated with a fear of loss and losing one's material possessions, health, loved ones, or social standing.

Fear of *al-'ayn* motivates secretive behaviors such as hiding good news from others especially those with a reputation for evil eye, who are known for their competitiveness, or who are beneath one in material wealth and status. Beyond these groups, secrecy and ambiguity surrounding life accomplishments like employment, marriage, pregnancy, or other envy-inspiring life events also sometimes extends to friends and kinship networks. Individuals also protect themselves from these attacks by reading specific Qur'anic chapters. For those with the means, its effects may be offset by the sacrificial slaughter of a goat, sheep, or cow, and the distribution of the meat to the poor. Secrecy and silence are therefore important parts of daily life.

'Amal, on the other hand, is usually undertaken as an act of retribution following a sense of personal violation, humiliation, or loss. This act, because of its negative social connotations, is also often conducted in secret between the person(s) seeking the 'amal and the sheikh who performs it. Therefore 'amal differs from *al-'ayn* because it is the intentional outcome of specific actors trained in the dark arts.

It is only when she is able to transcend these diagnostic moments and examine her life and body as an experiential whole that she locates the source of her suffering. Through the framework of *'amal*, she finds nuances that makes sense of her reality. Her statement that she "drank it, and ate it, and took it in" suggests her belief about the body's inability to "unknow," or to truly heal from, such deep violation.

The long-term effects of *'amal* on the body gives her access to a subjectivity, or, a sort of "poisonous knowledge" (Das 2009) about betrayal and the structural forces that drive it. Among these are her repeated references to water as the medium. Salwa's association between water and 'amal in Fayyum conjures important symbolic imagery that gets beyond the act of witchcraft and

Fatin's betrayal to implicate the historical forces that have motivated and enabled such breakdowns of body and family.

In Fayyum, water has a long and complicated relationship to affliction. This rural village is known for its high prevalence of schistosomiasis infection primarily through the species *S haematobium* and *S mansoni*. Hamdy (2012) notes how the high rate of parasitic schistosomiasis infections can cause increased susceptibility for kidney and urological diseases (Hamdy 2012:23), which Salwa suffers with. (X) notes that those most at risk for schistomal-linked renal failure came from the villages of the Delta such as Fayyum. Fayyum presents a classic case of the toll of capitalization on the lives and bodies of the structurally vulnerable. Sadat's economic Infitah (Opening) saw the reversal of Nasser's agrarian reforms and the withdrawal of the state from the public sector. The dwindling quality of public services translated to poor health outcomes for individuals living in low-income areas abandoned by the capitalizing state. Water, the historical source of life in Egypt, became a primary source of sickness, suffering, and death for the country's most vulnerable communities. This uneven distribution of risk is what I call "geographies of suffering" (Ghazali 2012).

Furthermore, Hamdy (2012) has discussed how the outbreak of schistosomiasis was met with faulty public health interventions that led to the spread of hepatitis C infection throughout the Nile delta. A simple procedural oversight—the sterilization of needles between injections—reveals the sense of risk and fear associated with public health interventions in low-income communities. It also demonstrates how manageable afflictions become life-threatening conditions for millions of poor. Finally, it speaks to the complicated intersections between the body-self and the socioeconomic pressures that grow out of privatization and the withdrawal of the state from public life, the breakdown of family and household under this weight, and

etiologies of affliction that emerge in the cemeteries.

When Salwa's father intervenes on her behalf, we witness the reciprocity between fathers and their dutiful daughters. Her decision to accept her father's choice of life partner also allows her to call on his support and intervention in situations of marital discord. This relationship, cultivated over the course of a lifetime and unique in its irreproducibility, provides Salwa with a sense of material and emotional security that cannot be generated even in the closeness and intimacy she feels to her husband and children. Upon the exposure of the daughter to danger and potential suffering, the father is provoked to action. Perhaps this is done out of a sense of responsibility and guilt for his involvement in her predicament. But the two have also always shared a deep bond, which had grown stronger over the years. Willing to break with both religious and legal precedents in order to protect his daughter is a demonstration of how her father also, though perhaps ironically given the violation of sociocultural and religious formalities, "walks towards the good." This shows how what is "good" is defined in the context of kinship relations, rather than strictly within the parameters defined by religious scripture.

Salwa's father uses his leverage as Ibrahim's maternal uncle rather than intervening strictly on behalf of his daughter as a father-in-law. This relationship that is less biased in nature, and communicates that his motives are for the good of the family overall, rather than for the good of his own daughter. But also, the newness of the father-in-law/son-in-law relationship lacks the appropriate authority to effect desired outcomes. Drawing on his role as Ibrahim's uncle allows him to extend his authority further back in time, and entrenches it in the intimacy of extended kinship relations.

The confrontation also shows how households are not contained by geographical boundaries. Though travel and communication were once prohibitive costs to commuting

between the village and the cemetery, today, popular forms of transportation, cellular phones, wifi, and social media have made it possible, even in the cemeteries, to connect families in spite of physical distances.

As Salwa transitions to a wife and mother the reality of her father's failing health forces her to weigh the very difficult options available to her. Even if she were to return to Fayyum, her father's ailing condition would inevitably cause him to pass away. Like so many others, he suffered with daght, al-'alb, and sukkar. As a divorced woman with children her eldest brother Sherif, would become her legal guardian. But Sherif continued to hold a grudge against Salwa for defying the marital union he had arranged for her. This is obvious when he advises his father to "leave her to her decision." Yet Salwa's decision to stay with Ibrahim and her children, rather than returning to the comforts of her familiar home, are framed as a sacrifice, even when the realities of her staying are more advantageous in the long-run, than her returning to Fayyum. First Salwa begins by discussing the dangerous and unstable living situation. Next she mentions the reality that his financial position will likely not improve. But she completes this thought, and responds to her father's attempts to rescue her, by standing by her husband and children nonetheless.

In the account with Ahmed Falawkas, the famous actor is moved to intervene on her behalf and to insert himself, though only briefly, in the informal economy of the cemetery community. But his status as an actor does little to improve Salwa's life in the long run without his consistent presence. His *wasiyya* (the act of entrusting another with something meaningful or valuable; a pact based on a shared sense of responsibility and social standards of good character) falls short of implementation because his inconsistent presence offers little in the way of benefit for the man to whom he entrusts Salwa and her daughter's care. In fact, and adversely, the

intervention creates a visible rift in the relationship between Salwa and the man responsible for charitable donations in the area. This negatively affects the wellbeing of her family by proxy. Without the constant physical or fiduciary presence of Falawkas, Hagg ‘Abdo is free to do as he pleases. His anger towards Salwa’s rejection of his advances, the event, and its instigator Salwa, is made evident in the withholding of valuable resources from her family. But it is also apparent in less noticeable ways, The interactions with Hagg ‘Abdo shows how informal economies operate, the and how people navigate them. It also shows the absence of recourse in informal economies that are defined by significant imbalances of power. While they often have the potential to resolve the everyday problems people face in unpredictable ways, they can also complicate lives. Salwa has the paperwork in her hand, and yet she unable to access the support she needs to raise her daughter.

The interactions with Hagg ‘Abdo also demonstrate how charitable donations operate in the shaping of moralities. On the one hand there is the instance with her husband who l economiescharitable, as in the instance when he calls upon her using socially derogatory labels, or in the middle of the night while her ailing and injured husband lies within earshot. As in the earlier confrontation between Fatin’s brothers and her father, Salwa’s mistreatment extends, through an act of disrespect, to an assault against her husband as well. Her rhetorical response to this violation, especially given the fact that she would have to continue dealing with this man for the provision of basic necessities, is a moral act. The truth is, the decisions she has made in the face of a changing world, and in the face of desperation, have both honored her, and isolated her from the community. She has lost touch with her extended family, though they maintain contact with Ibrahim and the children when he occasionally finds the strength to make his way to their tomb. Following the intervention by the actor, Salwa’s life has not improved. In fact, it has

become more complicated as the man in charge of charitable handouts begins to avoid her. THis is true even as Salwa lacks any official capacity to hold him accountable. She learns a difficult lesson: interventions often come at costs that are too high to bear.

Salwa sees herself as complicit in her husband's inability to heal and return to the work of providing for his family. At the same time, she hold herself accountable by using intimacy to play a vital role in her husband's recovery. These actions, when considering his condition, not only by tend to his injured legs, but also his injured sense of masculinity. She is fiercely protective of him and always tries paint her husband in the best light. It is often believed that women gain prestige through the spouse, but this situation demonstrates how women play a vital role in maintaining the public image of their male heads of household. Male masculinity is not the antithesis of femininity, but rather, it is intrinsically tied to the ways women articulate and express their femininity in particular instances. In this instance, Salwa's desire for her husband in spite of his physical and social disability help him find the motivation to get up and tend to himself and to see past the present to a better future.

Conclusion

Salwa's condition embodies the social, political, and economic dysfunctionalities that operate in her lived reality. This in turn implicates the distribution of resources, and those responsible for them. Salwa also understands that she must place the care of her body and health in the hands of those she does not trust. This includes doctors and nurses in government subsidized hospitals and clinics, but also the sheikh whose immoral choices enabled her sister-in-law to carry out an act of betrayal on Salwa's body.

Health-seeking behaviors engage interventions that range from biomedicine, to home remedies, and local experts on *'amal* (witchcraft). Her gaze, as Mittermaier uses the term,

expands to include death as a lived reality. trust is thus placed in Allah—her ultimate guide in life—rather than in the healers that work to manage her conditions.

A moral constellation may be located in the story of the sheikh who performed the act of ‘amal. When the sheikh dies only twenty days after reversing the ‘amal, Salwa interprets it as a sign of God’s favor upon her. The moral constellation is to be located in the fact that Salwa was able to find him before his death, proving God’s favor, but also, in the timing of the sheikh’s death so soon after the reversal. It is as though God withheld the punishment of death until Salwa is able to locate him. When he has served his purpose his punishment is carried out. These moral constellations affirm for Salwa that she has been violated, but that this violation has been recognized by God as a meaningful sacrifice.

Over the course of her seventeen years in the ‘Arafa, Salwa has managed to grow from a shy sixteen year-old bride living in a small room in the tomb of her in-laws to managing her own nuclear family, and the neighborhood of al-Imam, from the spacious *hawsch* in which she now resides. She has become a central figure in the cemetery community, not only because of her husband’s status as a *saby* (assistant) for the local *turaby* (undertaker), but also because of her dedication to climbing the social ladder of the cemetery. Though many women aspire to be like her, others criticize the means by which she has acquired such a status, and the costs she pays for the stability of her husband and children.

Salwa’s fears are many, layered, and interconnected. In her body they form a palimpsest, the contours and surfaces of which are reflected in and through her amraad. For many families across the cemeteries, the safety of women is a primary source of fear and stress. The issue of women’s safety takes a toll on the family as a whole. These fears have escalated considerably since the 25th January uprisings. Upon my arrival in 2013, I was inundated with stories of women

who had been attacked in the abandoned tombs on the fringes of the cemeteries or those who had been snatched off the street and disappeared indefinitely.

In the post-Mubarak era, fear is also associated with such mundane tasks as being visible. This means trips to the market, going to school (for young men and women), working on the roadside, and other normal tasks become stressful and frightening. Her fears also speak to those of millions of poor who face inflation and unemployment in both formal and informal sectors. Salwa relies on handouts from zuwaar. But fears about venturing to the tombs, especially as these areas are associated with desperate and dangerous thugs, drugs, and weapons in the popular imaginary, impact Salwa's financial wellbeing. These scenarios reveal how fears shapes lives and livelihoods at individual and social levels. For the cemetery communities, living itself becomes unaffordable and an unattainable commodity. The potential of danger necessitates that the hypothetical be always at the forefront of people's thoughts, actions, and words. This way of navigating daily life through fear offer a glimpse into how regimes of terror operate. Through the slow entwining of fear with daily life, terror comes to play a prominent role in shaping people's plans for the present and future, and subsequently, the actions they undertake in order to realize them.

In this context intersubjectivity, which I have discussed previously, forms the basis of everyday life. By witnessing, hearing, and learning about what has happened other women and their families in the cemeteries, and knowing nothing the parallels between her situation and theirs, the potential of what could happen to her or her daughter, or eviction, come squarely into view. The result is a blending of the hypothetical into her perspective on reality. The fear of this potential violation is experienced as real and alters her daily rhythms to account for this. . It becomes an active part of her real life. During our conversations, and even when she prays,

Salwa looks around, making sure to keep an eye on the gate and on her daughter. Yet her comment is a moral one that emphasizes the sanctity of the relationships between the living and the dead.

Silences are often driven by fear. But they are also shaped by notions of what is moral One silence in her narrative is the reality that she and so many others have come to depend on these sacred bonds as a source of financial gain. Salwa's wellbeing and future are intrinsically tied to the relevance of the dead in the lives of survivors, city planners, and state officials. When the sanctity of the relations between the living and the dead is not prioritized, or when it is disrupted through violent social and political upheaval, Salwa and other cemetery inhabitants often pay the literal price. In this example, Salwa's silence is motivated by a moral prerogative to avoid reproducing negative perceptions of cemetery squatters as greedy and desperate. As poor squatters, they hold little negotiating power outside their claims as guardians over the tombs of the dead. By drawing on the events of the uprisings and the threats they posed to the wellbeing of the cemetery residents, both living and deceased, Salwa is able to renegotiate the image of squatter from one of criminal to guardian. These characteristics are tied to a larger discourse about what produces and motivates thugs and criminals in Cairo's informal and low-income neighborhoods, and how her presence in the 'Arafa and as a guardian discourages such behaviors and protects private and spiritual forms of property (See Ghannam 2015, for example).

Top down interventions, whether defined by state-centric development models or the work of philanthropists and humanitarian groups, does not constitute the major source of support. In fact, these interventions are mired in a complex history of inadequacy and worsening conditions. In the withdrawal of the state, the relevance of the household, and of relationships of affect, support, and reciprocity more broadly, are magnified. Lifelong bonds, nurtured over time

and through ‘ishrah, are those that offer the most hope for relief. Therefore the loss of these bonds, through family discord or death, are especially difficult to bear (see for example Ghazali 2014). Her response that her world is “empty” demonstrates how these relationships not only constitute an important part of life, but more significantly, they are life. Dying individuals live for and through their loved ones; for their betterment and improvement.

With limited resources and rising costs of living, many families find themselves facing difficult choices about the value of their own bodies in relation to the well being and value of others. Under financial constraints, a common practice among *sukaan* is to forego the costs of transportation, service fees, medications and treatments, in order to invest in their children's’ futures, and in the futures of their families by proxy. These decisions to sacrifice one's own health for the wellbeing of others is also driven by the doubts and reservations my informants harbor towards public health interventions for the poor in the context of health sector privatization.

Like many women who end up in the cemeteries, Salwa is forced to weigh her own dreams and desires against the realities of her family’s financial position, and the character traits she values above all else. Salwa’s experience and her responses to the situation demonstrate what it means to inhabit relationships (Asad 2015) in the context of low-income, informal communities. It communicates the value she places in family, and how family constitutes an integral part of self. As she occupies the present, she lives with her family’s best interests, and her metaphysical future, at the forefront of her mind.

Many people, like Salwa, triage their own afflictions and manage their eventual deaths. Without a holistic approach that gets beyond treating symptoms, to addressing the structural and systemic inequalities that produce them, illness and treatment are fragmented, and fragmenting,

experiences. From their spatial and subjective positions on the cusp of life and death, the narrative in this chapter demonstrates the reality of this fragmentation in her etiology. It is only by pairing her narrative with sociocultural, political, and economic historical contexts that these fragmented portions appear.

Through all the potentialities and uncertainties that accompany her precarious future, she is able to root herself in a kind of intersubjectivity where she lives honorably for others, and creates meaning for herself in doing so. She is confident that such self-sacrifice can never yield negative outcomes, even when it removes her from her household and the very family her sacrifices are intended to protect. For Salwa, this only adds to the impact of her sacrifice, making it more meaningful through a demonstration of absolute surrender and devotion to Allah, and her trust in His infinite wisdom.

Salwa's spatial and embodied placement between-worlds enables a unique source of spiritual and religious terrain from which she can draw in her moral formation. The figures she sees, and which she associates with the souls (nufoos) of the dead, inspire and direct her towards moral ways of living. They remind her to pray, which as a result, she interprets as a sign of God's favor upon her. She is able to turn the experience of cemetery squatting into a morally enriching and meaningful process.

Chapter 5: Layla's Story

Introduction

It has been nearly five years since I have seen Layla and Mahmoud when I knock on their gate. The couple welcomes me with open arms. Layla, 40, and her husband Mahmoud, 45, have been married for fourteen years. The couple's relationship is loving and amicable. They have never had children. Though Layla has been pregnant twice, she suffered life threatening miscarriages in both cases. Along with infertility, she also suffers with severe chronic asthma and daght. Layla looks exactly as I remember. She is heavy-set, with a round, smiling face and hazel eyes to match her golden tan skin. She wears a bright yellow cotton scarf wrapped in turban style around her head, and a brown galabiyya with faded embroidery on the sleeves and down the front. Her wheezy, boisterous laugh fills the space and lightens the somber tone of the neighborhood, which has only worsened since the uprisings.

Her husband, Mahmoud, is a squat but sturdy fellow who has spent his life working in manual labor. He grew up in the apartments near the 'Arafa and left school to help his father support their family. He has short, dark, black, curly hair. His square jaw and furrowed brow belie his gentle and respectful disposition. He often wears faded black dress pants, a button down t-shirt, and leather sandals. Mahmoud's most prized possession is an old bicycle that he rides to and from his construction job and independent work. When he is not working, he can often be found working on repairs. His arm is wrapped in a cast after an accident at his job a few months earlier. Mahmoud's work has exposed him to a high level of risk that has resulted in several breaks to his wrists, and arms, and one to his back. As a result he struggles with chronic back pain and is currently out of work.

As I enter the hawsch, I am overwhelmed by the strong odor of latrine effluent. Layla

immediately apologizes for her "plumbing" issues. City workers have not come by to empty the septic tank in weeks, so the couple is forced to manually scoop and clean the area. Their tombhome is small compared to others I visited. To the left of the gate is the bathroom shielded from the rest of the hawsch by a shower curtain. Next to the bathroom, a single room with a large wooden door serves as the couple's bedroom. A full size worn mattress is covered with a faded blue and white flower petal sheet is placed directly on the dirt floor. A small end table is used as a nightstand. An old, wooden dresser is the only other furniture in the room. The partially collapsed ceiling is made of decomposing wooden beams overlaid with old, faded tarp. The sun's rays pierce through, casting its sublime patterns across the room. One small window, covered by a tattered cloth, opens the space up to the rest of the hawsch.

Adjacent to their bedroom is the manzal to two shallow underground burial chambers. In adjacent tombs, Layla's father, mother, grandparents, two of her brothers, and several aunts, uncles, and cousins, are laid to rest. Unlike the other squatting families whose stories I have shared, Layla and Mahmoud have occupied Layla's family's tomb for the last nine years.

Tasting Poverty

Layla is the third of seven children, three girls and four boys, born to a couple in the neighborhood of Bulaq in Cairo. Her father was a petty officer in the *gaysh* (military) and had inherited land from his father. Layla describes their life as comfortable and stable. The family often took trips to various summer beach resorts and even owned a beach house of their own at one point. But when Layla was in junior high, her mother tragically passed away from cancer, or, as she calls it, "*al-marad al-wihhish*" ("the bad sickness"). Layla's older sister was married and living, according to patrilocal customs, at their husbands' paternal homes. Being the only unwed daughter in a house otherwise full of young boys, Layla, a good student who excelled in her

studies, left school after 9th grade to care for her family.

When her youngest siblings grew up, she began entertaining the idea of taking on a job. "I wanted to help my family and I wanted to be able to have my own *masroof* (disposable income). I didn't want to always ask my dad for money," she told me. But to Layla's disappointment, her father and brothers refused. "My dad said I couldn't work because he could provide for me, and my brothers were afraid of kalaam al-naas (gossip). I told them I don't care about what people will say. But they refused the idea."

The question of Layla's employment was put on hold indefinitely, however, when her father fell ill. He was diagnosed with uncontrolled sukkar and daght. Layla often fought with her father to keep up with his medications and though she attempted to control his diet, she admits, "he loved his sweets and lots of sugar in his tea." Shortly after his diagnosis he suffered a debilitating stroke and was no longer able to care for himself or his family. He did, however, receive retirement benefits from the military and access to adequate healthcare as well. From that point on, Layla was tied to her father's side, caring for him around the clock.

It was around the same time, at the age of 23, that Layla had her first experience with severe asthma. She elaborates:

> My father was so strong and suddenly I found him almost like a baby. He couldn't even help himself. I was doing everything to make his life easier. I took care of the boys, the chores, the grocery shopping, and his medical needs, you know because he couldn't physically take care of himself or clean himself. I was sad (*hazeenah*) for him. Each night I would lay down and even though I was so tired I couldn't sleep. I was always worried (*'al'ana*) about him. More than once I would feel like my chest was tight and it was hard to breath. I ignored it and kept living my life like I was. But one day, I was cleaning my dad's rugs. I suddenly felt my chest get tight and it was hard to breath. I felt like I was suffocating worse than ever before. I rushed to the hospital where they gave me oxygen treatments. The doctors told me I had asthma and I got treatment for it right away.

The onset of Layla's asthma is associated with bearing witness the rapid deterioration of her

father's health, and the feelings of 'ala' (worry) and huzn (sadness) the experience produces. The symptoms begin with tightening of the chest and difficulty breathing and worsen to a sense of suffocation. Her diagnosis of asthma only comes into view at the end of her recollection, almost in passing. What she remains focused on is her father's condition, and the experience of illness.

By age twenty-six she had grown into a woman ready to begin her own life. Her brothers were old enough to care for themselves and each had their own friends and social lives. But she was single and still caring for her ailing father. One day, her sister called and asked her to come over and keep her company while the painter worked on her apartment. Layla agreed. She recalls the events that took place soon after:

> I went and that's when my husband first saw me. He was the man working on my sister's apartment! I had received many proposals from people who were very financially well-off (*mabsooteen*; "happy") like a soldier and an engineer. But subhanallah, the heart wants what it wants. He talked to his family and spoke with my sister's husband. He told my brother-in-law he wanted to marry me. My sister and brother-in-law asked me what I thought and I said it didn't make a difference to me. I didn't want them to think I was attached to the idea. My father was old and sick by this time. So my husband went to my older brother to ask for my hand in marriage. My brother refused. He asked me what I wanted with a *basmagy* (illiterate male, a reference to the use of the *basamah*, "fingerprint," to sign official documents instead of a written signature).

Layla refused to take no for an answer. She argued that while he lacked formal education, his life experiences offered him a breadth of knowledge of the city and its workings that he would find ways to support her. She told them that for many people in Egypt, "school does not equal a better life, a good job, or even a steady income." She reasoned, therefore, that it should no longer be used as grounds for rejecting a suitor. "I reminded them that in our deen (religion), Allah and the prophet tell us to look at the manners of the person before his wealth or social class," Layla recalls. But Layla's family was resolved. "They kept telling me he was too poor and he would lower the family's mustawa (social class)," Layla reflects, "but I told them I wanted to taste

poverty." She continued:

> They couldn't believe me. I left it to Allah. I didn't understand what *faqr* (poverty) was. I didn't know what it really meant. How could I when I always lived a life of luxury? Anyways, They kept nagging me. One day I finally said, "you know what? I'm marrying him." They told me they would not support me if I went forward with my decision. But I knew he had a good heart and I didn't care that he was poor. I sat with my dad and spoke to him calmly. I explained my reasons and he listened. May Allah have mercy on him. My dad loved me the most because we went through hardship together. He wanted me to be happy and he wanted the best for me so he finally agreed, even though my brothers were against it.

After a small engagement party, Layla and Mahmoud soon celebrated their wedding. But starting out as a new couple in Cairo was challenging. They struggled with how to define the parameters of their relationship and to merge their aspirations into one:

> We lived with my father for a few months before we found our own apartment in Imbaba. My husband was working construction, and as a handyman in people's homes when he found the chance. He worked days and nights to make enough money. He didn't want me to work. I told him I wanted to work and see the world, and that I wanted to do something useful to help improve our lives. He said no. He asked me if I needed anything. I told him "no, of course not." So he said there was no need for me to work. He gets very jealous over me. He never lets me go anywhere alone. He worries so much. I tell him I'm just going to run down the street to get milk or bread and he says he's coming with me. Once he woke up from a nightmare because he was worried something happened to me. What can I say, this is the kind of relationship that grows out of 14 years of *'ishra* (cohabitation). By the way, that's when I loved him. Not before marriage, but, after. I loved him after *al-mu'ashrah* (long-term cohabitation; connotes a sense of intimacy). I loved him for his treatment of me and his calmness and his kindness.

At first, money from wedding gifts and her husband's odd-end jobs around the city was enough to support the couple. "I would pay the rent, 150 LE/month, and buy the groceries. I bought the good stuff too, chicken, red meat, whatever I wanted. My allowance was 5 LE/day. That was my own to spend outside of money for groceries and expenses. And with my own 5 LE in those days, you wouldn't believe how much I could do" Layla tells me proudly. But soon they found

themselves facing rapidly deteriorating socioeconomic circumstances. Layla explains:

> We kept living our lives like we always did, the only way we could, paying rent and paying for food and for my treatments. But now even 50 LE wasn't enough. We didn't do anything different but life just kept getting more and more expensive. We were spending 100 LE here, 150 LE there, and before I knew it, we were broke. We were struggling to pay our bills and to put food on the table. I started paying our landlord 10 LE a day for rent because that's all we could afford. I used to clean his apartment when we were late with rent so we wouldn't get kicked out. Eventually we started avoiding our landlord all the time until we finally had to move.

But where would they go, Layla wondered. Her brother had moved his family into her father's home. "They wanted to make sure they had control of the apartment right after my father died," Layla explains e. Layla turned to her sisters. They stayed with one and then the other. But with a dozen children between the two of them and one more on the way, Layla began to sense tensions between her sisters and their husbands. "I felt like we were a burden. Exactly like what they told me I'd be. It was a low, low point in my life" Layla confides to me.

Things only grew worse for Layla when her father, an important pillar of strength and support, passed away a few months later. Layla reflects on the aftermath:

> When my father died, may Allah have mercy on his soul, I felt like I couldn't breathe anymore. I began to have an asthma attack. It was maybe the worst one I ever experienced. The night he died I was at my sister's apartment. I remember my sister woke me up and told me "your father has passed away." We held each other and cried and screamed. Suddenly I began to cough and I knew what was happening. My sister tried to force me to take my inhaler but I didn't want it. I can't explain it to you. It was as if I didn't care to even breath. My sister told me I had to be strong and take care of the family like I always did. So I did and I took the inhaler. We went to my dad's house where he was. I saw him on the bed. My brothers moved him there because when his heart stopped he fell on the floor in the bathroom. After that they took his body and washed it. And we buried him. I came and visited him a few times when my husband could come with me. It's a long way from Bulaq. My father is buried here in this tomb, may Allah have mercy on him. I talk to him and pray for him everyday. Every day I tell them [her parents] good morning and every evening I tell them goodnight. I water the plants and sweep the floor around the entrance to the burial rooms (manzal). I try to keep

the place cool and clean for them.

At the news of her father's death, Layla experiences an acute episode of marad. Her asthma takes hold of her, in a way testifying to the impact of the sadness she feels at his loss on her body-self. Layla's decision to withhold taking her inhaler further demonstrates the weight of sadness is also a testament to the intersubjectivity she shared with her father. Her sense of self is intrinsically tied up with the role she played as his caretaker and the role he played as her supporter and protector in turn. Many Egyptians I met in the cemeteries and beyond withheld medication and food at moments of death. These acts demonstrate the way life and living is defined by and tied up with relationships. The loss of these bonds also signals a loss of the self. But death does not end the obligations between Layla and her father. Rather, death transforms the relationship. She continues to engage in the affective economy they created together, tending to his grave, praying for him, and expressing intimate words such as "good morning" and "good night.

Soon after their father's death, the eldest of Layla's four younger brothers, who had been sharing the apartment with his father since Layla's marriage, became legal executor to his father's estate. As the eldest surviving adult male, he was responsible for overseeing the distribution of inheritance among his siblings according to the religiously inspired mandates of the country's family court system. But he began to stir up old grievances instead. Layla explains:

> Right after he passed away, my brothers sold my father's apartment and some land he owned. We all signed the papers. When I asked for my share my brothers and I had a big fight about the problems we had years before that when my father was still alive. They said I disrespected them when I married my husband against their will and I brought down the family name. And now we were poor just like they said we would be. They reminded me of my words when I said I wanted to taste poverty. They told me that's what I asked for and that's what I got. They didn't help me at all. Just the opposite, they cut me off from my inheritance. They were using my marriage as an excuse for their greed. Yes, maybe they were embarrassed when my father listened to me over them, and maybe my husband was from a lower class (*mustawa*), but that wasn't the only reason they cut me

> off. I went to court with them over this. I swear, every day I was running back and forth from one office to the next, from the courthouse to the lawyers in the middle of the heat and dust. If I was wrong or lying, I wouldn't do all of that. I would not put in the effort and time and money. But no matter what I did, the system was not working. They had money and knew people I didn't know. They backed each other up and said I owed them money in front of the judge so I couldn't get my share unless I paid them. And it was more than my share was even worth.

Layla's experiences with her brothers is, unfortunately, not uncommon. Many families I encountered were embroiled in disputes with extended or direct family members over property, deeds, money, debts, to name just a few. The situation demonstrates how informal networks can impede formal recourses for individuals, especially women, who are at a disadvantage. She has no network after the death of her father. Her brothers stand together to impede her wellbeing even through the very court system meant to protect her.

Infertility

Layla's father's death, along with the malicious actions of her brothers, took a heavy toll on her health. She explains:

> I had a lot of energy and good health back then, before all of that happened. Now there's no vitality (*'afya*) and no health (*sihha*). I walk down the street and I'm practically bleeding out. My health is done…Losing my dad, and the whole problem with my brothers after that was very difficult on me. Very difficult. I got pregnant twice but I didn't reach full term. The flaw is mine. Pregnancy needs good health, and I have poor health. You see how I am. I'm not doing well. For one thing, I have asthma. But after my dad died and I had the fight with my brothers my asthma has gotten worse and worn me out. I got very sick from running around breathing in all the dirt and dust in the city. I started to feel tired and had fatigue/dizziness (*huboot*) all the time.
>
> With my illness and all of these problems I could never rest or relax so I never reached the full energy I needed to carry pregnancies to full term. I almost died during both miscarriages because I lost so much blood. The medication for the treatment of my illness and the treatment for my reproductive problems did not mix well. After some time passed, I had to make a decision about which one to take and which one to stop. After my second miscarriage, and when I saw how dangerous pregnancy was for my body, because my body is not prepared for it, I decided to quit the pregnancy treatments. I decided to stop trying to get pregnant and *Kabbart dimaghi*. Besides, we can't have children in this situation. Things

> may have changed for people outside of here, but for the people in the ‘Arafa, nothing will ever change. *Al-Faqr* (poverty) is too hard for children.

Layla retraces her miscarriages back through her asthma, which she places in the context of sacrificing herself for her father and brothers, and especially the events following her father’s death. These include being exposed to an unhealthy environment while attempting to deal with the duplicitous actions of her brothers. These forces combine in her body as marad, which, for Layla is not simply sickness, but a complete depletion of health and wellbeing.

According to Layla, her already fragile body requires rest and relaxation to carry a pregnancy to term. But for Layla and so many others who find themselves caught in the grips of poverty and marginality, rest and relaxation are rare commodities and so is good health. Layla’s infertility issues lend credibility to this reality while dismissing the individualization of her condition. She implicates her family and the forces and entities that have placed her body at an increased risk for suffering in multiple forms. Emphasizing her near-death experiences and tying them to broader political etiologies that implicate society and the state bring the issue of marad as sacrifice squarely into view. She draws on the cemetery space and poverty to frame the couple’s infertility and childlessness as not just a choice, but as a moral sacrifice. However, finding such moral meanings does not stop Layla from feeling sad or from mourning her life. “I can't enjoy things the way I used to,” she reflected. Sadness, in turn, further destroys her health.

Cemetery Life

With their housing situation on the rocks, and Layla’s inheritance unavailable, the couple began to brainstorm ideas about where to live. It was a conversation that changed the course of Layla’s life in myriad ways. She elaborates:

> One day we were up late talking about our future and worrying what we were going to do. Things at my sister’s place were getting stressful and we couldn’t stay there forever. My father was gone and so was everything he left for me. My

> husband suggested that we move into my family's tomb. I was shocked. My husband grew up around here and knew people who lived here. It wasn't a strange idea for him. But even though I had heard of people living in the 'Arafa, I never, ever imagined I would live like them. We argued about it for a while and then he he told me, "there are no bills there. There is electricity already installed." Even till now I honestly don't know who installed it. Anyways, I was very attached to my father and after he died I used to come here a lot to visit him and my mother. But I didn't even know if I still had my key to the hawsch or if I left it with my brothers. When I found the spare key in the things I packed after my father's death, I knew it was a sign from Allah. Why would I have packed it? There was no other reason for it. I left it to Allah. I agreed. We took our things and moved in the next day.

For Layla, the cemetery is a sign of Allah's favor on her precisely because it is a last resort and therefore, only could have come from God. Moral constellations surrounding the incident of finding the key lead Layla to renarrate the event as a blessing rather than a curse. While she is thankful, she also admits she struggled with adjusting to her new life in her family's tomb, which according to Layla, filled with the smell of her father's recently buried, decaying corpse. As she began her new life in her family's tomb, Layla admits, she was afraid:

> Moving here…I was scared. I was very scared. It wasn't my place (*makaani*) or my comfort zone. It's hard to go from living in a nice apartment with security and safety to living in a strange place that's not *your* place. It's always scary to change places. It's a bad feeling. But it was my last resort.

Layla's fears are less centered on living with the dead than they are on changing places. Having once lived in a formal apartment Layla's fears surround the reality of attempting to reroot herself in a space of death where roots cannot possibly grow. "I don't want to be in this situation," Layla told me repeatedly during our conversations. "I want better and cleaner and neater. All I want is a bedroom and living room and a bathroom. I wish I could move. I wish I could live in an apartment like you. I want to go back to the way things used to be before."

Further complicating the matter, her brothers began to visit the tomb more frequently as soon as they heard Layla and Mahmoud had moved in. Layla reflects on the situation, their

intentions:

> They said they wanted to visit their parents but they just wanted to humiliate us. They would open the gate and barge in with no announcement. Besides saying salaam, my husband and I had no other interaction with them. We would stay in our bedroom with the door closed until they left. Sometimes they would stay from morning until night just to humiliate us even more.

The ongoing fracture in the relationship drives her brothers to seek further vengeance against her by humiliating her. In essence, Layla has ended up exacly where they warned her: at a dead end. It is the broken relationship that leads Layla to these conclusions. She had learned through experience that her brothers lacked compassion for her and in fact wanted to harm her in any and all ways.

Given these difficult circumstances of moving to her family's tomb, Layla found it difficult to cope. The stress and sadness surrounding her situation soon manifested in her already compromised body. She elaborates:

> The first year we moved here I used to get very sad and that's when my *daght* started to wear me down. It's been with me ever since. I always have low blood pressure. It drops because of sadness. Wouldn't this house and this kind of life make you depressed? It causes *huboot* (lethargy/loss of energy) and I get dizzy and then I am useless. Specifically, it's the life we're living and the place we are spending our lives in, and my husband's injuries, and the lack of money to fix our own problems that makes me sick. Living here is cutting off my husband's ability to make an income. When we lived in an apartment, he could come home late. He would get home around 11 or 12. I could lock the door and fall asleep feeling safe without him there. He would get to take on a second shift of work after maghrib because he didn't worry about leaving me alone at night. But now, he worries about me because the tomb is not as secure as an apartment and the neighborhood is scary at night. So to protect me he has to cut his workday shorter than he normally would. That's why we ended up in this situation where we are having trouble supporting ourselves.

Layla's political etiology of marad demonstrates how sadness, or za'al, expands to include both affective and physiological states. Layla constructs a political etiology that draws primarily from her experiences with sadness. Because Layla does not distinguish between mind and body in her

illness narrative, but rather regards the two as intrinsically intertwined, sadness is a force with the capacity to produce illness in and on the body. But it is not just the sadness that is implicated here. Layla cites the lack of employment, the difficulty of supporting themselves as a couple, and of finding stable ways to make ends meet as primary factors in her marad. Thus an important component of her political etiology is the intimate connection between the habitation of a cemetery tomb and her body-self. Like so many others, she associates the onset of her marad with particular instances of loss, misfortune, and *za'al* that have brought her to a space where she feels painfully out of place. Sadness originates from outside the body in the forces that have placed her at increased risk for suffering and incurable affliction. Her marad, and the political etiology she draws upon to explain it is, therefore, an act of bearing witness

The close-knit structure of the cemetery community became an important source of support for Layla while she transitioned to the sad and frightening realities of living in the tomb of her own dead kin. She explains:

> At first I spent all my time at my neighbor's tomb next door. I would stay with them all day till my husband came home from work. Her daughter was only about 3 years old at the time. I never wanted to be alone in there [her tomb]. But sometimes families want to be alone. I couldn't always be barging in on their family time. I wanted to be in a situation where I didn't have to rely on other people to feel safe. I've been here for years now and we are still good to each other. It is a good friendship. We don't have anyone but each other. If we don't ask about each other, no one asks about us. We all care about each other here and we take care of each other. We are family. Now I spend my time sitting outside this tomb. I splash the ground with water and sit out front until the sun sets, drinking tea with my neighbors. Some days I sit in here all day, then I pray asr and sit outside until the sun sets before I come back inside.

Without her brothers, Layla has managed to build another family for herself, one that offers her acceptance and support. They even offer solutions to problems, including bringing a new lock for her tomb so that her brothers would be unable to barge in unannounced.

Over the years that she has lived in the ‘Arafa, two of her brothers have died, one from a heart attack and the other from diabetes complications. Salwa reflects on her feelings, especially now that they are buried under her living room floor:

> It made me very sad. Even though they did so many things to hurt me, what made me sad was that they didn't care enough to reconcile with their older sister before they died. I lived a life deprived from my family and from the support of strong brothers who could stand by me like I stood by them. But I won't speak ill of the dead. They are in Allah’s hands now and they have to deal with their reckoning (*hisaab*).

Layla takes the moral high road when talking about her deceased brothers. What is most painful for her, what makes her most sad, what continues to impact her health and wellbeing, is that they failed to recognize the sacrifices she has made for them and to initiate reconciliation. The fractured relationship has always been a source of suffering for Layla. But things changed after the death of her second brother. She explains:

> After the second one died the family came again for the burial (*dafnah*). They weren’t coming to say sorry. They were coming to carry out the rights of the dead. At that time I stayed inside the room with the door closed. I could hear them because there was a window from the bedroom to the hawsch. They put him in the ground and prayed for him and closed the doors. That was it, his life was over and he didn't get to take anything with him. After they were done, my other two brothers knocked on my door. I don’t know why this time was different. They apologized and I’m not the type of person to harbor anger or resentment. I get mad and then when someone comes to me to apologize I forgive them. I forgive them because I need to rest my mind (arayyah dimaghi).

The Search for a “Real Place”

Like many young women who come to the cemeteries from the formal sector, Layla was optimistic about getting out of the tombs. Having at least some educational background and experience with the legal system following the fallout with her brothers, Layla was confident she

would be able to maneuver through the process of applying for government subsidized housing. But also like the other women who have been living in the cemeteries for much longer than they initially anticipated, Layla's early optimism has turned to dismay. She explains:

> We have tried so hard to get a real place. We [cemetery residents] all did. They [housing officials] told us they would get us apartments but they lied to us every time. You see, the first time we filed they lit our papers on fire. The second time they threw them in the Nile. Who knows what they'll do a third time.

By 2011 when the revolution began, the peole of the 'Arafa were a little hopeful that positive change would come that would enable them to leave the tombs behind in exchange for formal apartments in the city. Layla describes the optimism of those early revolutionary days among cemetery residents.

> When the revolution started…everyone got together to file for apartments. My neighbor told me to do it. At first, I laughed and told her they were tricking us again. Anyways we all went and reapplied after the 25th of January. We filed papers and got them stamped and everything. They gave us a receipt. I gave papers to my cousin too so she could file. I've been back several times since then and inquired about our status. They say we have to wait a little longer before they can tell us about the status of our application. Then June 30th happened and now Morsy is gone. Who knows what will happen to us. We don't know if there are apartments ready or what's going on. Only Allah knows. We heard that there were apartments and that they were going to do a raffle last April to figure out who gets to move and who has to stay. But that didn't happen. Everything is from Allah. The reprieve (*farag*) is from Allah. If we get it, it's from Allah. It's all a blessing. If we don't get it, it's ok, we applied anyway. Alhamdulillah for everything. *Rida*. We are walking the path that God has set for us.

For Layla, the aftermath of the uprisings, and the underlying forces that gave it rise, have produced more bad than good. "Before the revolution life was better than it is now," she tells me with a hint of sad irony. "Since the days of the revolution, our world has collapsed around us." Even though Layla and her husband did not participate in the revolutionary activity, the fallout has negatively impacted their lives. Layla explains:

> Before the revolution people cared about things like friendship and family and sharing their good news with you. They cared about showing you pictures of their kids and updating you on what was going on with them…the good old days. The days of love, when people feared for each other's well being and protected their secrets. But that's not how things are anymore. Everyone is trying to survive and to protect their families. Now, you tell someone your secret and either they expose you or you expose them. No one carries your pain for you like the friend of yesterday. Friendships aren't what they used to be.

Layla's comments reveal the human costs of capitalization and political unrest. What has been lost through these combined forces is the intimacy and closeness of human relationships. The intimacy of these relationships is defined through references to mundane, everyday exchanges such as telephone inquiries and sharing news and life events with one another. In contrast, according to Layla's comments, the outcomes of the uprisings have cut ties between large extended kin networks as nuclear families struggle to stay alive. In the absence of these human bonds, immoral behaviors run rampant. For Layla, the most damaging of these are the exposure of secrets, or the violation of intimacy, and the absence of people on whom one can depend in the absence of the state.

Since moving to the cemeteries Layla has experienced the pain of estrangement (*al-ghurbah*) and feeling out of place. But more importantly, unemployment and the effects it has on the body and health through the *'a'dah* (immobility). She elaborates:

> Sitting around (al-'a'dah) is what has me handicapped now. This week I can barely get up and move around. It's from not working for so long. That's why there are a lot of accidents around here. Everywhere you look you see people in casts. Young, healthy people. People's situations are bad and it affects the way they work and everything they do. How can they be careful when they are tired and sick from trying to stay alive and make a living? Last year I was going for a doctor's appointment to check on my colon because it was inflamed. I slipped and fell on my leg and broke it. I had to wear a cast for 15 days.

Layla's assertions demonstrate the central point of this research in that she connects how people navigate life, whether they do so in healthy, sick, or dying bodies, with their broader contexts.

The uprisings have also introduced new fears into her life. Layla notes sadly, "This is what our country is turning into. Life is not good. You have to deal with crime and theft and you're always afraid. Everyone is out of control."

> No one from the government ever came here to see how to improve our situation. And there are people worse off than us. There are people living in the streets. You see them wandering looking lost and they don't have a place to go. I feel sorry for them, we really are better off than other people. No one is completely fine. And presidents come and fill the presidential seat and do nothing for the people. Life is exactly the same. We are the way you left us: the world is still shoving us, and we are still shoving it back.

Even after nine years in the 'Arafa, Layla admits she does not feel at home. "I'm always uncomfortable. I feel like I'm staying in a stranger's place," She tells me one day as we chat. "Let's be honest, this isn't a real place anyway," Layla added. As she awaits changes she believes are unlikely to ever materialize, she tells me, "I live the same way everyone does, *'a'dah* (sitting), *mistaniyah* (waiting), and *sabrah* (patient). I close my eyes and pretend when I open them I'll be in a real place.

Conclusion

Dekoning's work on class in Cairo reveals that with Nasser's reforms and subsidies on health care, housing, and education came the rise of a new middle class that signaled an end to the old feudal system and the potential for upwards social mobility. Doctors, pharmacists, and engineers, among other professions, emerged as a new, educated, and largely secular class of individuals with the power to speak for the "common" people. Though De Koning notes that today, this former middle-upper class has become the lower-middle class, in contemporary Cairo, the emphasis on education has continued despite the dwindling association between education and class status.

The historical connection between education and class status has shaped the couple's life

together in profound ways. His illiteracy–and the social connotations attached to such a status in Egypt–have served as the essence of her lower-middle class family's opposition to the union. It has contributed to their isolation from her larger kinship, limiting the couple's support networks in real ways. It has served as the justification that has factored into the stripping of her inheritance, and subsequent ostracization from the household.

Although Layla acknowledges that she fell for her husband almost immediately, she hides her excitement from her family, appearing detached and uninterested instead. This behavior fits with notions of an honorable or good aanisah (the term used to refer to the marital/virginal status of a single woman and which stands in contrast to the title of "madam" which addresses not only the elderly, but also women who are married in general). This title holds that a good woman is one who shies away from expressing sexual interest in public at least until she is married. In fact, Layla does not voice her interest until she is met with severe resistance from her brothers. Her brothers are empowered by her father's disempowered state. In Layla's opinion, they have not earned the right to control the decision of who she will marry. She further adds to her moral worth by rejecting the very prejudiced class premises on which their protestations rest:

This story highlights the class and gender gap that permeates processes of marriage and which contribute to notions of proper man and womanhood in contemporary Cairo. It is not abnormal for fathers and older as well as younger brothers to become involved in the negotiation of marriages for their daughters and sisters. This is especially true when the patriarch is sick or his faculties are somehow comprised. Furthermore, this pattern is prevalent not only among the poor or rural populations with which I had contact, but also among middle and upper-middle class Egyptians.

Layla casts class as negligible, which is a moral act because she does not see the differences even while she has grown up in "luxury." It is not that she is desperate or lacks suitors. In fact, she raises the important point that she had the power and moral bearings to reject suitors of high status but low moral value, or simply on the grounds that they lacked a "connection." But more importantly, Layla is defensive of her husband and the way he is perceived because of his lack of schooling even now. She often emphasized his intelligence in our conversations, stating for example, "look at me now, as educated as I am, he is smarter than me. I used to use my mind all the time back when I was younger, but the older I've gotten the less I've kept up with reading and learning."

The word used to describe these more affluent suitors is "mabsooteen," a reference that stands for both happiness, and high socioeconomic status, demonstrating the way emotional states and wealth in post-Infitah Egypt have become intertwined. the suitor is an unsuitable candidate not only because he is poor, but also because he is uneducated. Considering the value of education and literacy in the formation of the new middle class following Nasser's reforms, Layla's family–a military family–stands opposed to the union.

When Layla pushes back against her brothers and insists on marrying Mahmoud, what is happening is about more than Class status. By choosing someone they do not approve of Layla is choosing herself. This maneuver disrupts the familiar distribution of power within the family as she actively works to renegotiate and rearrange them. The perception of her brothers abuse of the inheritance supports this argument because their actions are framed by Layla as revenge. But coincidentally, their revenge left them wealthier and therefore, in the socioeconomically striated context of a patriarchal and capitalist-driven society, restores their power and place in the family by while also putting Layla back in hers.

While Layla's ability to squat in her family's funerary tomb lends her a sense of autonomy and spatial permanence, her narrative demonstrates its serious drawbacks. Besides that the idea of permanence in such a place frightens Layla and sends her into a panic, it also has its advantages when compared to their days of dodging landlords and depending on relatives for shelter. Thus though she does not fear eviction, there is also no hope that the condition of her tombhome will be renovated or improved. Because her brothers are angry at her defiance of their authority, they withhold renovations, repairs, etc. associated with the tomb as a punishment for her gendered transgression. This means that Layla's tomb conditions continue to worsen without any sign of impending improvements. Other squatters, depending on the tomb owning family's affluence, or lack thereof, can at least look forward to the day the owners decide to renovate or improve the tomb. For many families, even though resources are tight, the upkeep of the tomb is considered a duty that living family members must tend to. Thus many families factor in tomb upkeep in their annual expenditures.

The habitation of relationships (Asad 2003) connects the body-self to those of others in myriad ways, and subsequently, disruptions in these relationships take a toll on the condition of the body-self. In the case of Layla, the weight of unresolved fractures in her relationship with her brothers, which began with her marriage, has had material and symbolic consequences that have affected Layla's health in very real ways. Their infringements extend beyond their legal battles against an impoverished sister, to assaults on her body and health. The burden of her illnesses necessitate that she forgive them, even when she feels their wrongs have not been adequately acknowledged or addressed.

The pain of leaving the fractured relationship unattended was more painful to Layla than the potential blow to her ego that would ensue from forgiving brothers who she felt had not

earned such a sacrifice. From a Eurocentric view of the individual, Layla's actions may be seen as disempowering, as the compromise it takes to forgive her brothers also compromises the very notion of individuality and freedom as limitless potential opportunity. But this view misses how her body is intrinsically connected to theirs, and to the relationship that binds them. The "choice" to forgive her brothers is not a choice at all, but an outcome of the kind of habitation of in choosing her brothers, she also chooses her body-self, the site of individuality and freedom. It was the state of in-betweenness that had come to define her relationship with them over the years that caused her the most pain. It is not just that she was angry with her brothers at their hurtful actions and words, but the weight of an unresolved familial fracture tured without resolution and this fracture remains unresolved. The lack of closure extended her suffering indefinitely. It was because the problems that separated them remained unresolved, not that they existed in the first place, that had become a major source of her pain. Having experienced the pain of betrayal, and the futility and costs of holding on to her anger, she decides, "I forgive them because I need to rest my mind (raya7 dimaghi).

Through her narrative, Layla is able to frame her illnesses as the outcomes of sacrifices she has endured for the wellbeing of others. Thus her narrative helps frame her marad as an embodiment of her moral virtue. It also demonstrates what happens to bodies when sacrifice is unreciprocated. While sacrifice is often framed as a social process that requires communal agreement even if only informally, Layla's narrative reveals how sacrifice is made not only in spite of communal agreement, but because of its the absence is rooted in the inequalities and immoralities that place women and others in the disadvantaged position of having to sacrifice themselves and their health in the first place.

At the same time, the cemetery is the space that offered her refuge in her most desperate

times. It also allows her to justify the absence of children, an important form of social capital for married couples. "Who would have kids here," is a statement that ties these compounding realities together. In Layla's view she is not simply an infertile poor woman who lives in a cemetery tomb. She is a woman who is mareedah because of the immoral choices of others. Her body has been made incapable of carrying her pregnancy to completion through a series of sacrifices and injustices that she has both chosen and been forced to undergo. Drawing on the social meanings of marad and their association with inequality, Layla converts her predicament into a sacrifice. She is not sad or remorseful. Rather, she is defiant. The inability to have kids is not her biological flaw, but rather, the outcome of the dysfunctional environment she lives in, which goes back to the care she took of her father and brothers that led to her asthma, and the later gender norms and power differences involved in the processes of marriage and inheritance that led to her displacement and occupation of her own family's tomb.

To be forced to live in the cemetery offers her a way to explain why her infertility is not a sign of her own weakness, but the byproduct of the forces that have driven her to the place, spatially and embodied, where she finds herself today. The story of her illness begins before her relocation to the cemetery. In her narrative the cemetery emerges as a space of refuge and protection on the one hand, and a source of the exacerbation of her marad on the other.

The 'a'dah ("sitting"/unemployment) keeps Layla from being active and engaging in the kinds of physical and social behaviors associated with the formal sector such as employment and an active social network on which one can depend for support and companionship. Without using her body in these physical and social ways, it falls into disrepair; much like the condition of her small hawsch. The 'a'dah is not due to laziness or lack of awareness or education about living a healthy lifestyle. Rather, it is associated with her husbands wishes, which are in turn

connected to the dangers and security issues associated with women navigating the area in of the 'Arafa in the absence of men and a lapse in official oversight.

While Layla admits she fears going out on her own, she draws on this narrative even though her husband's request that she not work began during their time in the apartments of the formal sector. The focus on following her husband's wishes, which she goes to lengths to prove are rational, allows her to present her 'Adah as a sacrifice made by a good wife without sacrificing the reputation of her husband as a caring and loving man. In the narrative, her husband is not controlling because the behaviors he exhibits that are typically associated with conteol and dominance are interpreted by Layla as loving because they come from a place of concern for her wellbeing. In reality, this has led to a relationship that is not tense, but affectionate and close. I wondered if this would have been the case had the couple experienced upward, rather than downward, social mobility.

Chapter 6: Death Narratives and Moral Constellations

Introduction

Moments of death and the narratives that recall them are imbued with moral meaning. The deaths of others activate movements, gestures, exchanges, rituals, utterances, and silences among survivors. While much of anthropology has tended to focus on the funereal aspects of these activities, or on their eschatological readings, there is ample room for studies that attend to the ways living communities work to shape the destinies of the deceased, and in turn, their own.

Farha Ghannam's (2015) study on technologies of immortality demonstrates how individuals and communities attend to the performance of good endings (*husn al-khitam*) through death narratives. Ghannam depoliticizes martyrdom by exploring its construction and performance among survivors. Extending Michelle Foucault's work on "technologies of the self" to the sphere of death and immortality, the author shows how discourses of martyrdom are negotiated, performed, and constructed in the context of everyday life. In their aspirations for good endings, she argues, death narratives from urban Egyptians offer technologies of immortality that point to the fate of the deceased. Ghannam describes the significance of death narratives as follows:

> "While stories of good endings are usually anchored in concrete events and highlight specific qualities, they are not bound by the truthfulness of an empirical reality. Rather, their social and religious values are derived primarily from their ability to performatively constitute a moral reality that produces positive effects. They are imaginatively constructed in a present context that draws on past events to produce a desired future. Narratives of good endings not only commemorate, console, and reproduce social systems but they are also expected to have a profound impact on the departed and their status in the afterlife. As such, they articulate the important interplay between the deceased and their deeds, the individual and society, and the community and God." (Ghannam 2015:632).

While Ghannam argues these moments are performative, I add that they are also reflexive

in regards to how survivors come to understand their own fates through death narratives of others that point towards good endings. Using social suffering as a basis for intersubjectivity, I show how these intersubjective bonds extend to the dead, whose lifestyles, instances of death, and material corpses offer a point of critical reflection among the living.

In this chapter I show how technologies of immortality offer a reading of the fate of the deceased, while also revealing how individuals living with marad in the cemetery draw on these narratives to reflect critically on their own moral lifestyles and fates. This process of piecing together the path to one's own "good ending" by drawing on the deaths of others is what I call "moral constellations." It is a way of orienting individuals towards moral lifestyles through the identification and interpretation of manifest and hidden signs that are located in the life story of the deceased, in his or her instance of death, and on the material corpse.

The Corpse as Sensible Materiality

In his work on constitutions of the self in the Islamic Revival movement in Egypt, Charles Hirschkind (2006) argues sensory perception is constituted by the "relationship between a perceiving subject and a world of sensible, material objects" (Hirschkind 2006:28). Such a view necessitates a consideration of objects as "endowed with histories of sensory experience," and "stratified with a plurality of perceptual possibilities" (Ibid). I take up this notion of "sensible materials" in my treatment of the corpse. I use the concept of "moral constellations" to speak to the manifest and hidden meanings, as well as the ethical possibilities, that pervade instances of death and dying in relation to the "sensible" materiality of the corpse.

Drawing on Charles Hirschkind's work on constitutions of the self in the Islamic Revival in Egypt, and death narratives from my fieldwork and the death of a popular revolutionary figure covered in the popular press, I argue that corpses are endowed with "histories of sensory

experience." They are attached to meanings that are not only composed of their actions in life, but that continue to unfold as communities make meaning of marad and death. Corpses therefore offer a "plurality of perceptual possibilities" (Hirschkind 2006:28) in the way of moral subject formation.

The practice of understanding these constellations and their associated meanings requires a particular disposition based on important intersubjectivities between the living and the recently deceased. In the case of my cemetery subjects, shared experiences of suffering from and through marad form the basis of this intersubjectivity. Because marad is such an integral part of one's sense of self and even one's social identity as mareed it plays a central role in shaping subjectivities and intersubjectivities. The moral constellations offered on and through the bodies of the dead—and the kinds of sensibilities and embodied knowledge necessary for their interpretation—offer alternative discourses of nationhood, honor, and belonging. Thus they shape emergent political and moral formations at a time when violations, transgressions, and moral ambiguities abound.

Moral Constellations

During my time in the cemetery I encountered numerous death narratives about deceased family members and the corpses buried beneath their floors. Stories about how people died were shared frequently and with attention to detail. Making meaning of the details–whether they ultimately reveal good or bad signs about the dead–is a process that is mediated and negotiated by survivors. With access to the embodied knowledge acquired through marad, as well as death narratives and material corpses of others, cemetery residents discover what it means to die a good death or a bad one. They offer examples that residents draw from to formulate moral ways of living. By placing corpses in broader contexts through death narratives, they learn how to live

well in order to die well.

The bodies of the dead that surround cemetery residents reinforce their moral orientations in life by revealing their fates through signs, what I call "moral constellations," on the corpse and in the instance surrounding death. I distinguish between *hidden* signs in the context surrounding the instance of death and in the broader context of what is known about the life of the deceased, and *manifest* signs located on the physical corpse. Much like putting single stars together into connected clusters that form meaningful astronomical constellations, putting these signs together holistically in the cemeteries lends to a constellation that suggests whether the person has died a "good death" or a bad one. Many people reiterated the belief that these modes of death are occasioned most often by how one lived. Ultimately, these categories are framed in relation to Allah, because according to Salwa, "Some people, Allah forgives them and takes them in peace. And some people, Allah takes them when they are intoxicated and in a bad state. You don't ever want to go like that."

In the 'Arafa, locating hidden moral constellations necessitates attention to certain details such as *who* died. The corpse, as I have argued, is not simply a material object. It is handled and treated as a person with a history. Moral constellations therefore always require context. They draw from information available about the person who died. Was he or she known to be a "good" or "bad" person overall by family and the community? Did he or she engage in positive works and acts? To answer these questions survivors recall information about how the deceased individual lived, especially how he or she treated others in their family and community. Moral judgments are also based on whether a person prayed, fasted, made the pilgrimage to Mecca, gave to charity, engaged in fair and honest dealings with others, was trustworthy, etc.

Based on the collective determination of a person's moral history, cemetery residents ask

more questions about the cause of death. Did the person suffer? Was the death painful? If it was painful or if the person suffered the suffering does not necessarily constitute a bad death. Rather, the pain is connected back to the initial question about whether the person is moral or immoral. If he or she is a "good" person, suffering may serve as a form of sacrifice. If it is determined that a person has lived an immoral lifestyle then most often suffering is considered punishment and is a sign of a bad ending. For a good person, deaths resulting from painful amraad, for example, are considered by cemetery residents to be a form of martyrdom. But for a bad person, marad may be a punishment that points to a bad ending. The cause of marad is also in question. Illnesses related to the dysfunction of the state and thus developed out of structural violence are often read as sacrifices that point towards good endings. But deaths that result from behaviors considered to be immoral such as diseases related to alcoholism, drug use, or same sex behaviors are also read as punishments that point towards bad endings.

Timing also plays a role in shaping moral constellations, with specific days of the week, such as Friday, or particular months, like Ramadan, being important indicators of a good or bad ending. But time also comes into view in relation to questions about whether or not the deceased individual had the time to get their affairs in order and to say their goodbyes to loved ones before they passed. Moral constellations also consider *where*, and *with whom* the individual was located at the instant of death. Research participants raise questions about who surrounded the individual when they passed, or whether he or she died alone. Did he or she have enough time to gather relatives and friends, or was the person with immoral individuals? Did the person die in a profane place, such as a nightclub, or in bed with a person to whom he or she was not married? Additionally, moral constellations draw from the actions in which the person was involved during the time of death or just before it. Was the person behaving morally or immorally at the

time of death? Other questions emerge in the consideration of these constellations including in a

Answering these questions requires a treatment of the corpse as a sensible materiality with a layered history of experiences from which to draw. Moral constellations therefore also necessitate attention to the manifest signs, or the physical conditions, of the corpse and its constituent parts: through facial expressions; the coloration of the body, especially the face; the arrangement of limbs including hands, fingers, and joints; and whether the eyes remain opened or closed. Many individuals distinguishing between "bright" and "dark" faces after death. They also gave attention to the facial expression. Any hint of a smile is interpreted as a good sign, while a grimace or contorted expression is a bad sign. If the person closed his or her own eyes at the moment of death this is a sign of a good ending, although not closing one's own eyes does not necessarily constitute a sign of a bad death. The condition of the hands, feet, and joints reveals if the soul of the deceased departed peacefully or in agony. Survivors often interpret a raised index finger as a sign that the deceased said the *Shahada* (Islamic testament of the faith) before death. This is a sign of Allah's favor and a good omen. It is through these bodily joints that many of my informants believed the soul was removed from the body. In cases where bodies are mangled with no viable reason, or where fingers and toes are abnormally arranged, twisted, or clenched, these signs suggest a bad death. Khalid, 40, described this to me as follows: "for bad people, taking the soul out is like picking cotton. It is ripped out in pieces and the hands and feet show it. You cannot hide in death." These are a few of the constellations that I encountered in the 'Arafa.

Together, these moral constellations communicate meanings through intersubjective bonds formed on the basis of a shared experience of social suffering that grows out of exposure to injustice. This intersubjectivity is what renders it possible to uncover the holistic meanings of

these constellations. These processes that draw on the materiality of the corpse as a "sensible" object with layered histories and meanings, and which attempt their interpretation are what I call "moral constellations." Furthermore, I argue these constellations offer meanings that work to orient survivors and witnesses towards moral ways of living.

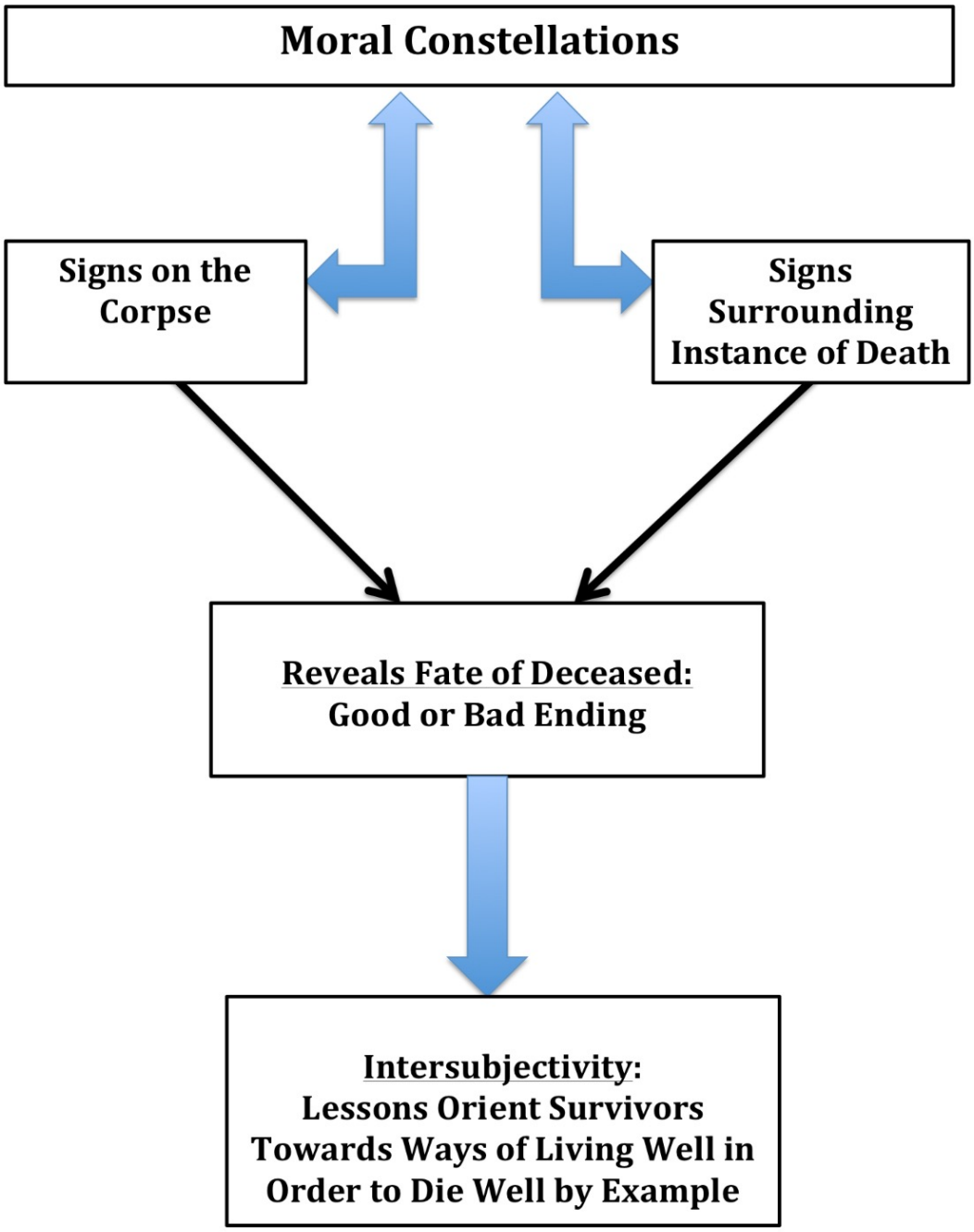

Figure 12: Moral Constellations. Ghazali, 2017.

I met Khadra in 2008. She is 45 years old and is married with two children. She has been

living in the cemeteries for twenty years. Her father works out of a tomb reupholstering old furniture for locals around the area. Khadra grew up in the apartments nearby. Eventually she married a local man who grew up in the tombs of the ‘Arafa. The following excerpt from Khadra’s narrative demonstrates how these intersubjectivities bonds develop between the living squatters and the corpses that are laid to rest beneath their living room floors. While sharing living quarters with the dead is a difficult adjustment to make according to many of my informants, it was often through bearing witness to this sensible materiality, and the meanings of its moral constellations, that their fears are finally overcome. Khadra explains:

> I’ll tell you something, when I first moved here I didn’t fully understand where I was living or what it meant because there were rarely any burials. Then there came a time when I saw someone being buried in these tombs every day. I had a vision of my future. And I was severely depressed because of the realization that it was going to be my turn next…these people weren’t dying because of a disaster or an accident. It was from things they can’t control like fatigue, a heart attack, a stroke…I didn’t want anything at all from the world anymore. I started praying and asking Allah to forgive me. I changed course. I still think about it from time to time. Like when I am overcome with pressure of the self/soul (*daght nafsi*). Like when I had my accident with my leg I thought a lot about dying because of the pain that I was in. I prayed for god to take me. I used to talk to God a lot. I would tell God, “take me now, I’m tired. Take me or heal me.” Then one day a lady who was so poor she didn’t have money or anything for burial and she struggled her whole, she died and the owners of this hawsch who are very generous brought her here to be buried. That was a long time ago. When we had to open the burial chamber for another funeral years later I saw her body in the *kafan*. God preserved her! He did not let her body be shamed by decay and bad smells. He preserved her body after all these years. Now I don’t fear it anymore.

In the influx of corpses Khadra saw herself through them and even witnessed her own vicarious death. Though she turns to religion in her narrative, she continues to live in fear of her own mortality. It is only when she learns of some of the hidden constellations, such as the woman’s poverty and suffering, that she begins to develop the intersubjectivity that allows her to move from fearing the unknown, to seeing herself and her own future possibilities in the sensible materiality of the corpse. The constellations surrounding the corpse, especially its preservation—

an "unnatural" and therefore spiritually significant sign—lend to a moral constellations that points to a good ending. Lastly, it also offers Khadra a sense of reassurance about the choices she has made in her life, which she associates with the constellations of the corpse and the moral implications she uncovers through her reading of them.

The Bad Death

Much of cemetery squatters' energies are devoted to avoiding a bad ending. A woman, Magda, 37, who along with her husband and children shared a tombhome with another occupant, related a death narrative that revealed constellations of a bad death. The death narrative reveals both how the meanings of moral constellations are discursively produced through contrasting notions of what it means to live a good life, and how they operate reflexively to inform and remind narrators and audiences about what it takes to avoid a bad death, and arrive at a good ending. Magda related the death narrative of her tomb-mate as follows:

> We used to have a man living here in this tomb with us. He wasn't a good man. He was related to that older lady that was here the other day. He used to drink and smoke and do drugs and take pills. I have my husband here he doesn't do these things at all. I mean he smokes cigarettes but that's it. I told him, on Uncle 'Abdo, what you're doing is wrong. What you're doing is forbidden by Allah. You have to live a better life. Go get some fruit and some healthy food and eat. I used to tell him, you're older than me, you're like my father. You should be the one telling me to get up and pray. You should be the one guiding me spiritually and giving me advice on how to be a better person. Not the other way around. I told him, there are people here in this place that you're staying and sleeping in. And they will punish you if you don't pray. He was smoking and drinking before bed. He smoked his bong and made istiba7a before bed. I told him, ya 3am 3abdu when a person comes to sleep, he must be thinking of God and taken with God. When you sleep when your mouth is not pure, it is haram. You will be punished. I told you there are people here in this space that, if you are good, they will be good to you. And if you are bad, they will punish you and kick you out of this place. He said, come on, leave me alone. He didn't listen. The next day he came to me and told me, "someone came to me wearing all white with a full beard and holding a rosary (*sibhah*). He slapped me in the face so hard it felt like my eye sparked with fire." I told him…"there are people here who will harm you and get rid of you from this place if you are a bad person…" He said, "I swear to God, he really gave me a slap in the face that made my eye feel like it was on fire." After that he

> left this place. He never came back. The angels kicked him out of the room. Him and his wife. He moved to a place down the street. After that incident, he got kidney disease and other things from his drugs and drinking and he died a bad death. May Allah bless us with a good ending (*husn al-khitam*).

Magda's reflection "May Allah bless us with a good ending" is a reflection of the reflexivity of death narratives and therefore demonstrates the intersubjectivity through which moral constellations are formed. In this story, hidden and manifest signs come together to help Magda arrive at the interpretation of his death as a bad ending. In contrast, the deceased man's lifestyle and death set an example for her of what to avoid and how not to live if she hopes to arrive at a good ending.

The Good Death

One prominent example of how moral constellations operate in the production of a "good death" as I encountered it in the field came from Salwa, whose story I shared in chapter 3. The death narrative of her father provides a more detailed glimpse into how these moral constellations operate in the reading of a good death. As a poor farmer, Salwa's father struggled against aggressive and corrupt agrarian reform every day in order to provide for his family. In spite of these pressures, Salwa notes, "he never complained once about his life." Her father's sacrifice—of his health and ultimately his life for the good of the family—mirrors Salwa's own sacrifice. Through the shared experience of silent suffering an important intersubjectivity is born that carries on after her father's death. In fact, this sense of shared silent suffering is what constitute his corpse as a "sensible" one for Salwa. They also allow her to access the manifest and hidden meanings of the moral constellations surrounding his death. To understand these moral constellations better, I turn to Salwa's death narrative about her father and his final moments:

> My father, he only suffered for two days before his death. He called me the day he

> died just six hours before. He told me he wanted to see me and told me to take me back to Fayyoum so I went. He couldn't catch his breath so the doctors gave him oxygen. I told him I also have respiratory problems and I have to take oxygen too, don't be afraid my love and I would kiss him and hug him…He had a respiratory infection from his breathing in dirt and dust all day long working…around 2:30 AM he took out his IVs and went to pray extra prayers. My father saw a group of angels standing waiting to pray with him. God sent him these clean angels wearing all white. He told my brother, "look Abu Ayman at those beautiful people standing there wearing white waiting to pray with us. My brother didn't see them. Only my father did. While he was praying my brother noticed my father's legs starting to buckle under his own weight and he started to lose his balance but he continued with the final *rakaa* of his prayer. My brother went to help him up after my father was in prostration (*sugood*) for a while and he realized he wasn't getting up. His soul left his body while he was prostrating in prayer to Allah. My brother called for the doctors and they came. They found him prostrated on the hospital prayer rug. They told my brother my father's soul had left his body and he left to be with his creator. The doctors said it was the first time they had seen a death like this. At 2 am while he was praying night prayers (*qiyamul layl*)! Oh my father, my love, you died while you were praying the night prayer! See how Allah let his ending be of the best endings? At the same time my daughter woke me up calling for her grandfather. I thought she wanted water so I gave it to her but I had a bad feeling, Suddenly my brother opened the door carrying my father's body. And if you saw his face, his face was so bright with light and he was smiling from ear to ear. It was the light of faith. I thanked Allah so much when I saw him. See how Allah treats the "good" people? Is it possible for me to die like my father? I hope so. I hope I pass away the way Allah allowed my father to pass.

In the recollection of her father's death, Salwa emphasizes manifest signs on his corpse that point towards a good ending. She notes the brightness of his face, which she interprets as the "light of Iman;" an embodied expression of his strong faith in Allah. His smile suggests that his final moment, which according to Islamic eschatology involves an encounter the angels of death, signals that his soul was taken peacefully and willingly. The smile and his glow therefore come together to reaffirm her conclusion because they demonstrate that her father was not afraid of what he saw at his moment of death. The position of his body during the instance of death, which was one of devout and humble prostration, imply the way he lived; humbly and dedicated to the worship of Allah.

Salwa also draws on hidden constellations to compose the moral constellation of her father's death. These include the short duration of his pain, which she notes lasted only two hours, suggesting Allah's mercy on him. Her father was also able to reunite his family in their childhood home shortly before his death. For Salwa, this is interpreted as another hidden sign that contributes to the moral constellation of a good death. Another sign she mentions is her father's visions of shrouded figures that encourage him to participate in pious acts at his final moment. The position of his physical body at the moment of death, in prostration to Allah during prayer communicate a sign of God's favor. Furthermore, she draws on the response of biomedical professionals, which she describes as shocked or baffled, to suggest her father died a miraculous, and therefore, a good death. Dying while he was not only in prayer as a sick man (who may have been excused from the obligation of physically praying), but while he was in his final *rakaa* in prostration, along with the "bearded angels dressed all in white" that he saw, and the response of those who witnessed his death shows how preferred and loved he is by his creator.

At his moment of death, though Salwa and her daughter were not present, they sensed something was wrong with him. The erratic and unusual behavior of her daughter reveals the kind of intersubjectivity I have explored throughout this work. This was a very common experience that many individuals expressed in their own experiences with the deaths of close family members. Ultimately for Salwa, together these signs reveal a moral constellation that confirms her father died a good death and suggest he will achieve eternal salvation in Heaven (*Jannah*) where his suffering and sacrifices will be compensated. At the same time the process is reflexive, as Salwa becomes more aware of her own death and adjusts her aspirations and lifestyle accordingly. Because she shares the same amraad from which her father died, because

she is also poor, because she is also dedicated to her family, she receives confirmation that she is living a moral life that will lead her to a good ending.

Moral Constellations of the State

In his work on the politics of "making the nation" in Egypt, Timothy Mitchell asks, "through what forms of politics, expertise, violence, and resistance does the identity of a nation get made?" (Mitchell 2002:13). As the unmade police state attempts to remake itself as ethical, moral constellations surrounding instances of death are increasingly drawn upon to label the bodies of those it kills as immoral; as the bodies of dissidents, terrorists, and others who pose a threat to the well-being of the nation-state. By occasioning their deaths, and undertaking "cultural revitalization efforts" that slowly paint over the murals of martyrs on Mohammed Mahmoud and other streets, it erases the memory of the revolution, and the ongoing challenges to its authority, that go along with them.

But in the wake of rising body counts and allegations of rampant human rights violations domestically and internationally, the question of whether or not the state has changed; whether it has reconstituted itself as ethical, abounds. Increasingly, then, and in order to manufacture an ethical orientation, the state draws on these same bodies that it renders dead to re-narrate not only how they died, but how they *lived*. How their families and friends lived. How its neighborhood and community lived. In the process of manufacturing this ethical reformation, and instead of real reform, it simultaneously imposes fear, silence, and sadness—all of which are cited by the people of the ʻArafa as a primary cause of their bodily decay.

This reorientation or re-narration of the moral constellations of the corpse is illustrated by the discourse surrounding the death of peace activist, mother, poet, and leading figure of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, 32, in January 2015. The entire instance of

death is captured on film and occurred during a peaceful march to place a wreath at Tahrir to honor those killed in the 2011 uprisings. Without warning, police open fire, killing al-Sabbagh. Her cause of death was described by Hisham Abdelhamid of the Medical Forensic Authority as follows:

> "Shaimaa el-Sabbagh, according to science, should not have died…Her body was like skin over bone, as they say…She was very thin. She did not have any percentage of fat. So the small pellets penetrated very easily, and four or five out of all the pellets that penetrated her body — these four or five pellets were able to penetrate her heart and lungs, and these are the ones that caused her death." (New York Times, March 22, 2015).

In other words, according to the Egyptian Medical Forensic Authority, Shaimaa al-Sabbagh died because she was too skinny. Her own biological condition predisposed her towards death. Abelhamid's statements that Shaimaa's body was "like skin over bone" describe someone who, even in life, seemed more dead than alive. The account attempts to turn an act of murder into a natural outcome of biology. In his examination of Shaimaa's death, the medical examiner extends his scope beyond the injuries sustained. which caused the death, to extrapolate from this an equation that implicated Shaimaa's body and life as the cause of her own death: it was her choices, her decisions to violate the protest law, and most importantly her decision to be involved in bringing down a state, for the second time, that rendered her dead. Like the medical reductionism many low-income individuals and families face in Egypt's subsidized hospitals and clinics, Shaimaa's bodily condition is divorced from its context, individualized, and pathologized. Yet the instance of her death, captured entirely on film, implicates not her body or biology, but a state whose own security forces open fire on unarmed civilians; a state that has failed to reconstitute itself as ethical. Shaimaa, in many ways, symbolizes what the once promising Arab Spring has become: a revolution that has done little more than devour its own children (du Pan).

Discussion:

Amira Mittermaier's work on martyrdom in Egyptian reveals how deaths and corpses of Martyrs "carried weight' as embodied evidence of state violence, as tools for holding the state accountable" (mittermaier 2015:586). Furthermore she argues, to be a martyr does not mean one must welcome death. Rather, martyrdom is expanded to include those who die in ways perceived to be unjust regardless of individual intentionality. To better understand the "meaning, significance, and direction of the uprisings," Mittermaier argues, we must attend to the ways they "are closely tied to how...martyrs are remembered – to whether and how they are kept alive; who is honoured and who erased, and by whom" (Mittermaier 2015:588). Furthermore, she notes, the question of "who is a martyr and who is merely dead (or worse: who committed suicide) is often ambiguous" (Mittermaeir 2015:288).

Because moral constellations of the body in death and states of near death hold the capacity to implicate the persons, entities, and forces that are to blame for Egypt's ailing condition, they are becoming increasingly relevant to the state. The state draws on the moral constellations of these dead bodies as a tool in its exercise of power and discipline, and in the construction of a familiar and exclusive narrative of state and nationhood. It is not that Shaimaa was *meant* to die, as Hamid's comments seem to suggest, but rather I argue, that she, and thousands of others, *had* to die in order for the state to remake itself. In this process, the state attempts to "move Egyptians forward" from the tumultuous past and present through a process of selective "historical erasure" (Farmer 1996). This centers on rendering the memory of death obsolete.

However, through this familiar and uneven process the state attempts to reconstitute itself as "ethical" by coercing its people to forget their revolutionary aspirations and hopes for change so that they may remember fear and silence. It is not simply that death must be forgotten so that

life can advance, but more importantly, that the deaths of *many* must be rendered, rewritten as immoral, and erased, so that the lives of a very few can be made meaningful and secure once again. The struggle, which was so central to the Islamic Revival of the 1970s and 80s, no longer centers on "remembering death against the world," (Hirschkind 2006:98), but on remembering how to live, and stay *alive*, when dying is more likely than living. The reality is that many of the same fears that kept my informants from speaking out in 2007 and 2008 are the same forces that unevenly shape opportunities and risks, and therefore the contours of human suffering today.

The policies and prerogatives of the neoliberal state, and the dangerous consequences that emerge in the absence of its protections, provisions, and resources, but also from speaking out, have led to a breakdown of their environments, households and resources, and therefore also their bodies and health. In the silent spaces produced through the fear of a vengeful, unethical state, the body speaks to the violations that have rendered its accelerated death. The condition of living-death is therefore a phenomenologically embodied sense of this breakdown and the awareness of how it is occasioned through the failure of state and society to constitute themselves as ethical in the face of *fitnah*.

To achieve its ethical reformulation while simultaneously engaging in unethical acts such as the killing of peaceful protestors, the restitution of Emergency Law, and the detention of anyone who opposes its hegemonic narrative, among others, the state works to reformulate and renarrate death narrative. Furthermore, I argue, it does so in order to justify or even erase the state's use of violence against peaceful demonstrators. The techniques central to this process range from altering death certificates by changing the scope and positioning of wounds on corpses, and presenting official death narratives that contradict local and eyewitness accounts. Through this process the state extends the experience of being-in-between-worlds to include the

way reality has blended with fiction to produce a mythico-reality, which is a central feature of the death space, as discussed in Chapter Two.

By occasioning their deaths and then altering their meanings in this way, the state attempts to erase the memory of the revolution and revolutionary aspirations, while also ironically rewriting its role in the deaths of protests, and the failure of the uprisings to materialize the aspirations of protestors more broadly.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have challenged the categorization of marad in strictly biomedical terms. The research shows, instead, the need for a shift in terminology from marad as biomedical disease to marad as social suffering. This move opens a space for phenomenological perspectives about health and sickness. These readings bring into focus the forces of symbolic and structural violence that continue to push people into the cemeteries, and which drive the reproduction of marad across families and communities.

Through the narratives, the body emerges as a the site of multifarious contestations; it is where communal and family tensions are enacted, at which economic and political projects of modernization are aimed, and through which the temporal and scattered experiences of peoples' everyday lives are given lasting meaning. To be written out of the narrative of nationhood means also being written out of the protections, provisions, and resources offered by society and the state; a process that reproduces inequality and conditions of "wasted life" (Bauman 2004), "bare life" (Agamben 1998), "half-life", or "half-death" (De Boeck 2008) across time and space. In their absence the relevance of the household, and of relationships of affect, support, and reciprocity more broadly, are magnified.

The withdrawal of the nation-state following economic liberalism renders a triple vulnerability for affliction and suffering within the body; first through its withdrawal of support in the form of protections, provisions, and resources vital to survival and wellbeing; second, through the breakdown of important relationships that cannot withstand mounting social, political, and economic pressures; third, through the emergence and proliferation of harmful affective states including fear, stress, and sadness that destroy health and wellbeing. These experiences, produced across time and space through the threat and proliferation of violence and

death, go beyond their capacity to inflict physical pain. Nations and their composite parts—individuals, families, households, neighborhoods, and communities—are made, unmade, and remade by fear, sectarianism, and violence. It is the way the state challenges the very ability of families to reproduce themselves biologically, and to access upward social mobility across time and space that is especially traumatic for cemetery residents

Therapeutic Trajectories

Structures of power and inequality extend to processes of health and healing. According to Mohammed Tabishat, "Egypt has been directly colonized by western powers and then ruled by national elites who depended on foreign forces…the entire country has been subject to massive modernizing projects that led to privileging European knowledge systems over local ones" (Tabishat 2014:25). This includes health systems created and managed by the state. According to Tabishat, therapeutic trajectories are about more than "purely technical means to overcome discrete ailments." Instead, he argues, they are "an index to read the way political, economic, and social conditions are experienced by those who use, embody, or live them and cope with their outcomes" (Tabishat 2014:2). According to Tabishat, therefore, therapeutic trajectories are about more than a means by which individuals see to alleviate discrete afflictions. Health care practices speak to the "far more complex social effort to sustain and promote life in general" (Tabishat 2014:2).

Navigating therapeutic intervention therefore draws on dynamic "therapeutic activities" that "always involve mobilizing and using available medical resources to overcome pressing health conditions" (Tabishat 2000:205). Mohammed Tabishat elaborates on this point:

> "Physicians' observations and statements are but one among many statements in the larger debate of interpreting and treating al-daght. For many individuals the visit to a clinic is only one episode within a series of consultations, trials and

> home remedies which reduces physicians' advice to just one element within a vast field of practices, experiences, and inherited wisdom" (Tabishat 2000:206).

In each case where therapeutic activities are initiated, "different medical knowledges take different positions and different meanings depending on the unique circumstances of individual cases" (Tabishat 2000:205). Furthermore, the ranking of these medical knowledges, and the resources allocated to their pursuit, regularly fluctuate so as to accommodate for changing circumstances, and particular dimensions of the affliction experience. Material realities play a role in these therapeutic processes. Based on his research Tabishat notes, "Economic exclusion is a central theme in the context of access to healthcare services." Expanding on this point he writes:

> "The question for a majority of Cairenes is not one of free choice among available possibilities, which they would choose according to cultural preferences, but is often a much more complex process of making the best of the available resources under economic and social structural constraints. Throughout this process people choose certain ways for interpreting, explaining, contextualizing and treating their states of health and sickness" (Tabishat 2000:205-206).

Given the structural origins of marad uncovered through political etiologies, biomedical encounters are often disqualifying of individual and communal knowledge about the body in states of health and illness. As a result, cemetery residents often find themselves navigating between diagnoses, etiologies, and appropriate therapies. Mahmoud's story demonstrates this point:

> I lost my balance while working on a beam at work. I fell from the second floor. I picked myself up and took myself to the hospital…Turns out I broke my wrist. At the hospital I found doctors taking control of me and taking advantage of my situation. All they want is to keep selling people things they don't need so they can keep their hands in people's pockets. I hit the doctor in the operating room because he was being rude. I mean, I was about to go into surgery when and I looked over and I saw how many unnecessary things they were doing and how many things they would charge me for. It was just a broken wrist. I tried to talk to the doctor and he talked down to me like I was nobody. I hit him and cursed at him and I left the hospital. That was at Ahmed Maher. He told us we couldn't go

> back for a week. He was punishing me by making me suffer with my broken wrist for a week before he would operate on it.

Mahmoud's experiences demonstrate how the power differentials between doctors and patients who come from the 'Arafa operate in real life. His descriptions of the doctor's treatment as rude and mean do not seem to justify a physical assault against the physician. But when placed in broader context, Mahmoud's distrust and disdain for health workers at the government-subsidized hospital is entrenched in a longer and troubling history.

In Cairo, notes Tabishat, "the general sense…is that medical care has become a business sought mainly for profit." This has led many people to mistrust public health sector services "because they use dated and cheaply maintained equipment that are run by poorly paid personnel who also may also be under-qualified" (Tabishat 2014:5-6). His findings resonate with the cemetery community. Individuals regularly refused or altered prescription medication dosages because they were critical of the intentions and effectiveness of government-subsidized healthcare. They believed their low social status and lack of access to recourse served as incentive for doctors at the free hospital to prescribe medications both carelessly and unnecessarily.

Additionally, cemetery inhabitants informed me of their belief in the dilution of medications at free hospitals and clinics around the city. According to my informants, this dilution was intentional. The government found ways to cut spending by scaling back and literally "watering down" on public health for the poor. The following statement by Um Ali regarding her suspicion of, and encounters with, biomedical practitioners in the public health sector demonstrates these points clearly:

> They (doctors) give me treatments that are so far from what I want and need. They give me whatever they see in front of them to get rid of me. They just want me to leave. I'm telling you the hospitals here don't give you the treatment you

> want because they're state funded…the medication at the free hospitals and clinics is *maghshoosh* (cheated, diluted). When the doctor tells me I should take two of my pills, I take four. Some people don't know and they take whatever the doctor said then get more sick and die.

Um Ali's statement speaks to awareness of her place in a wider web of power relations. But with no options outside of government-subsidized hospitals, she is forced to depend on a system she knows is dysfunctional and which does not hold her best health interests at heart. But this broader knowledge of her place in the power matrix, along with her awareness of economic liberalization and its slashing of subsidies for the poor informs Um Ali's decisions about which medications, and what dosages, she should take.

Similarly, Rabab, 53, shared her perspective:

> He [the doctor] told me I did have daght after he measured my blood pressure. He prescribed a medication for me. He told me to take two a day, one in the morning and one at night. But I would double the dose. Because I knew what he wasn't telling me…that the drugs in the hospital are less powerful. They are half as effective as drugs that you can buy from an outside [private] pharmacy. So he said take two and I would take 4. I have no faith in the doctors at the hospital. They don't care about me or what's happening to me. They just want me to leave so they can take their break or do something else. I still get headaches all the time. I go to the pharmacy nearby to measure my blood pressure from time to time.

While proving or disproving these allegations is beyond the scope of this research project, it is the belief in these stories by my subjects that makes them relevant and interesting. Their distrust of medical professionals points to a larger rift between "lay" persons and those in positions of authority. The hierarchy within Cairene society factors in individual and family decisions about whether or not, and in what ways, they should to comply with doctor's orders. But it also carries over into their decisions about taking formal versus informal routes to acquiring government-subsidized housing and basic necessities. Squatters were very aware of the corruption that permeated the formal sector. One woman, Layla, whose story I present in chapter

five, told me, "they [government officials] don't actually read the applications or do anything with them. They just throw our papers in the Nile after they take the stamps off to reuse them." They navigate their social worlds with careful consideration to how their place in wider networks of power relations.

Drawing on long-term, situated knowledge of their body-selves, my informants cultivated an awareness of their own personal biosocial balance. For example, Hayaat told me:

> "I can't change what happens around me so I'm constantly worried ('al'aanah; from 'ala') and my daght is always high…When I got to the hospital, my blood pressure is always higher than what doctors want. I see a different doctor each time I go in and they get worried (*'ala'*). It's always around 150/90 or higher. What can I do? I take the medicine and try to avoid the situations that upset me."

Another woman, Hanaa, who believes she suffers from low blood pressure (*daght watee*) but has never been to a doctor told me, "of course there's a connection between the way we live, how it makes us feel, and daght. If your life is stressful your body will be stressed too. But I can't walk around feeling sorry for myself. I have to keep on going."

Individuals are aware of what is expected of a healthy body, and understand why their bodies are sick. But these phenomenological etiologies do not always align with doctor's interpretations and subsequent treatment plans. Many of my research subjects voiced their respect for doctors and their acquired knowledge of the human body, but pointed out that these encounters often leave them with a sense of dissatisfaction and humiliation. For cemetery residents, therefore, biomedical approaches to lifelong illness are episodic in their diagnostic framework and treatment programs, making illness an often fragmented and fragmenting experience.

But the people of the 'Arafa are not discouraged by the failure of Egypt's convoluted public health system. Rather, they recognize its shortcomings and attempt to compensate for

them in various ways. In addition to biomedical therapies, the narratives also demonstrate that the people of the cemetery community pursue alternative therapeutic trajectories based on their divergent etiologies. Their etiologies differ from biomedical ones in two important ways. First, they reject the duality of mind and body, converging these into one experiential and integrated body-self. This approach opens a space for a consideration of forces that get beyond biology and genetics to incorporate one's place in broader webs of social power relations. Second, their etiologies also reject the binary of life and death, as I have argued throughout this work. Instead, they find their convergence in spatial and embodied ways.

My subjects thus attend to the biomedical realities of their *amraad* through medication, changes in diet, visits to the doctor, and a reliance on biomedical therapies and interventions when they can afford them. But to explain their various states of sickness my subjects, like many Egyptians, connected their bodily afflictions to their environments and life contexts more broadly (Sholkamy and Ghannam 2004). Thus therapeutic trajectories went beyond biomedical care to include

Individuals in the 'Arafa view the condition of their bodies as entangled in broader systems of social relations and power differentials. This perspective reveals how individual bodies are connected to the social, economic, and political conditions of both family and nation. With the awareness of these forces, individuals and families are better able to make informed decisions about their health. The balance serves as a basis, or, standard from which to make judgments not only about what constitutes sickness and health in the present, but also about the underlying causes and tensions that contribute to its production. This balance speaks to the way

Because illness etiologies are not limited to biological or physiological explanations, individuals often pursue alternate therapies ranging from herbal remedies to witchcraft (*'amal*).

At the same time that they pursue these divergent therapies to slow down the process of dying, and in the face of disappointing odds, they work to cultivate moral ways of living well in order to achieve a good ending.

Living-Death

The taken for granted binary of life and death that we so often invoke in our rendering of chronological time, and which increasingly draws the focus to biological senescence, is complicated by the reality of the growing space that lies between these two poles. This space is where the ailing bodies and "half-lives" (De Boeck) of millions of poor, disenfranchised, and abandoned populations spend their lives in a perpetual gesture of death. The habitation of a space of death in a dying body, the meager living it offers, and the affective states of fear, sadness, and stress combine to bring death squarely into life.

What is perhaps ironic is that while processes of economic liberalization and associated materialistic and individualistic ideologies have led to the very proliferation of squatters in Cairo, they emerge in squatter narratives as ideals for which they strive. In every tomb I entered, while I found divergent needs, I always heard the statement, "all I want is a small room in an apartment like normal people." These aspirations for privacy, formality, and their association with "normality" and good health, as I have discussed earlier, are entrenched in this deeper underlying neoliberal logic (Mitchell).

This experience, and the way it is narrated and expressed in and through the body, therefore, is a testament—an act of "bearing witness" to the forces that have given this dismal context its shape and scope. The policies and prerogatives of the neoliberal state, and the dangerous consequences that emerge in the absence of its protections, provisions, and resources, has led to a breakdown of the very environments in which they live: the air they breath, the food

they eat, the pathogens to which they are exposed.

The use of death is at once an embodied experience and an idiom that speaks to these violations of everyday life and the very ability of cemetery residents to lay claims to the right to life. The habitation of a space of death, and the meager living it offers, along with the kinesthetic and visceral engagements with processes of death, dying, and decay are compounded in the body as incurable marad, thereby bringing death to life.

The descent of death into everyday spaces of life since the 2011 uprisings has extended this experience beyond the confines of the cemetery. Outside the cemetery, the proliferation of death has led to its use as an idiom to speak to not only the death of bodies, but also to the death of revolutionary dreams and aspirations for political, social, and economic change. It is important to note that these are not simply linguistic metaphors. In very real ways, the revolution itself slowly dies as the bodies of its activists, defenders, and reporters, show up among the corpses at Zeinhom morgue, or in the prisons of Scorpion and Torah. "All of Egypt is a cemetery now" an active protestor who lives in one of Egypt's most high-income neighborhoods reflected.

Social Suffering and Intersubjectivity

Living-death is a moral mode of being that enables the people of the cemetery to navigate their limited lives in a way that produces good endings while protecting their loved ones and the nation more broadly. Research subjects acknowledged that the state, in its uneven distribution and neglect of vital resources, has caused, and continues to cause, affliction and accelerated death. But they shared their fears that speaking out would do more harm than good. During our conversations Salwa and others often reminded me, "if you want to live in Egypt you have to care for it." For the people of the 'Arafa taking care of Egypt means living *around* the state and many of its formal spaces while maintaining silence about these conditions at the same time.

Many of the people I met in the cemeteries were therefore wary about drawing on political activism as a form of acquiring the formal recognition and resources they desired and needed. Their silences about the harsh realities that accompany "bare life" (Agamben 1998) or "half-life" (De Boeck 2008) was rooted in a fear that these revelations would cause the displacement and dissolution of families and therefore of the nation writ large. Thus the silence that many feel they must keep, and which constitutes a bodily sacrifice, is not about poor health in particular. As I have noted, these ailments are made known to family, friends, loved, ones, and neighbors. In fact, one of the first questions to follow "how are you?" in conversations is "how is your health?" Rather, it is in the long narrative responses to this question that I discovered coded way by which cemetery residents inquired and expressed their overall psychosocial wellbeing while avoiding government reprisals. This experience—of bodily decay, silence, and sacrifice—is what their statements and references to living-death speak to.

Five years after I began my fieldwork, when the initial euphoria of the uprisings had become engulfed by the explosive frustrations and violent entanglements that emerged in the complex context of democracy-building under a post-colonial, neo-military regime, the people of the ʻArafa bore witness to the daily influx of corpses, most of them young, and many unclaimed. "No one even wants to claim them now because people are afraid, can you imagine our own sha'b ("people" or "populace") does not want to claim its own dead children?" Hayaat, a 53-year-old mother of two who has been living in the cemeteries most of her life exclaimed.

The community witnesses the costs of speaking out and insists it is too high to bear, with too little return. "The revolution changed nothing for us except for bringing us pain and insecurity," Wael, a twenty-three year old man who was born and raised in the cemeteries, told me. Continuing, he added, "this means we have no people coming around here like they used to.

How are we supposed to live when people are too scared to leave their homes? Everyone needs to stop and get back to life. Nothing changes here. Nothing ever changes."

For the people I met in the 'Arafa, maintaining social order through silence forms the bedrock of their communities and of the informal networks on which they depend for the provision of basic necessities for survival. Their perception of state-sponsored change as reckless and dangerous shapes their decisions to maintain silence and pursue housing, therapies, and interventions through informal channels. Based on their experiences, many concluded that to speak out is to unmake the state at the expense of these important local connections and relationships that are integral to sustaining everyday life. In this community, which has always occupied the margins of Cairo's informal cities, speaking out is thus often considered an immoral act because it privileges the individual at the expense of the collective. To maintain silence, even at the cost of oneself, is the moral choice. Silence, therefore, becomes an important part of cultivating a moral disposition and operates through the framework of sacrifice.

Reflections on the Moral Meanings of Marad in a Cemetery

Sacrifice plays an important part in the production of good endings. But sacrifice brings the issue of martyrdom, especially in a Muslim community, to the fore. Marad offers a unique perspective on meanings of martyrdom that extend beyond conventional associations with holy wars. Rather, a form of everyday martyrdom is brought into view that is produced through the subversive symbolic and structural forms of violence that place certain bodies at increased risk for death by incurable marad than others. Most often in the cemeteries, everyday martyrdom is therefore tied to narratives of marad in the way they speak to knowledge of the historical production of inequality in Egypt, and how the bodies of the poor and displaced have become the terrain on which such inequality is enacted. Dying of marad at the hands of an entity entrusted

with their care enables the people of the 'Arafa to frame their the deaths as sacrifices; as everyday acts of martyrdom. In this way they make lasting meanings of their living-deaths and work to secure a good ending and a good place in the afterlife.

However, as I have demonstrated, this process of constructing death narratives around moral constellations on and surrounding dead bodies do not go uncontested. The role of death narratives and moral formations has led to their coopting by the state. Egyptians witness the officialization and formalization of death narratives through state processes of determining "cause of death" to renarrate their moral meanings. Social and political fractures give way to moral questions about insiders and outsiders, allies and enemies, those who deserve to live, and those who have to die. These moral geographies of death are a tool taken up by the state in its exercise of power and discipline, and also in the construction of a narrative of state and nationhood. This process has unearthed new potentials of the body, even in death, to reveal what words and language cannot.

Theoretical Contributions

As direct and structural forms of violence grow increasingly entwined with the expansion of neoliberal processes of capitalization, conventional boundaries between life and death are disrupted and experiences of social suffering abound. One such mode of social suffering, which has been at the center of this ethnographic work, is the experience of incurable, irreversible marad in the cemeteries. Political etiologies of marad offer perspectives on how long-term exposure to structurally and symbolically violent environments transforms the meaning of life to include dying as an integral part. Given these findings this dissertation calls for an amending of the limiting language of embodiment as subjective "being-in-the-world". In response, I have suggested an expansion of the theoretical terminology to include "being-in-between-worlds."

I have argued that such embodied conditions are given rise in and through the death space, which is produced by the use of spectacular and banal forms of state terror intended to maintain power through the implementation of disciplinary mechanisms based on fear, silence, and control. As the narratives demonstrate, these are also contributing factors to the production of marad. Across the Middle East and North Africa, the violent outcomes of the "Arab Spring" have contributed to the proliferation of death, widespread displacements, and enhanced feelings of fear, stress, and sadness. Thus a shift in terminology is increasingly necessary to capture the embodied realities of cemetery squatters dying with marad, and also, for the millions of people across the region who experience the violent convergence of life and death in myriad ways.

Because the space of death is one in which conventional distinctions and boundaries are lost or obscured, they are therefore spaces of transformation where emergent political subjectivities can be located. As I have argued, from this space between-worlds, cemetery residents work to cultivate moral dispositions that shape and inform priorities, frame preparations for the future, and guide choices in day-to-day living. This active work on the dying self figures centrally in the struggle to convert violence and subjugation into meaningful sacrifice, and to produce good endings for themselves and their loved ones.

The findings in this research therefore also challenge resistance-centric approaches to agency. Instead, they offer room for consideration and appreciation of the everyday ways people engage with their material and embodied conditions from the situated positions in broader webs of power relations, weighing their chances of living against the prospects of dying, and focusing and investing their efforts towards the pursuit of good endings in this community of living-dead.

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