‘THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS REVOLUTIONARY PURITY. OR IS THERE?’

EXPLORING THE MEANING OF REVOLUTIONARY PURITY TO THE JANUARY 25TH REVOLUTION AND ITS REVOLUTIONARIES IN EGYPT

By

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ABSTRACT

In January 2011, a concentration of events and affects in Egypt and the Arab world led to the call for demonstrations on the 25th of January, demanding "bread, freedom, and social justice". The response to the call for the demonstration was overwhelming and launched an 18-day sit-in within Tahrir Square in Cairo, as well as other sit-ins and demonstrations throughout Egypt and solidarity demonstrations in front of Egyptian embassies abroad, ultimately leading to deposing the former president Muhammad Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Between February 2011 and August 2013, a lifetime's worth of violent and polarizing clashes and confrontations took place. The end result of these clashes and confrontations is the reinstatement of a military-led authoritarian regime that is cracking down on individual and collective liberties, enforcing harsh austerity measures under the guise of neo-liberal reform, and an increased sense of embitterment concerning living in Egypt.

Within the experience of the Revolution, I investigate 'revolutionary purity' as a simultaneously powerful and ambiguous force, born out of an Arabic tradition of linking 'Revolution' and 'Purity' that influenced the trajectory of the Revolution in Egypt. By bringing together the life stories of active participants in the Revolution and my autoethnography as a witness of the Revolution from a distance, I argue that revolutionary purity came into being between the personal and the political; the revolutionaries' personal aspirations and frustrations, and their unfolding modes of politicization throughout the lifetime of the Revolution. I also claim that revolutionary purity didn't exist solely within the realm of the Revolution and its time. Its inception can be traced back to the everyday lives of people before the Revolution, as well as today through the experiences of revolutionaries living through the despair of the defeat of the Revolution.

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Arundhati Roy was one of my companions when I began my journey with revolutionary purity eighteen months ago. She lingers to this day with her gut-wrenching question in her devastatingly beautiful novel 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness':

'How do you tell a shattered story?
By slowly becoming everybody
No.
By slowly becoming everything.'

This thesis unraveled me. Despite clearly having my own voice within the thesis, I constantly lost my sense of self while listening to and working with my friends' stories. I frequently got lost in the experiences and emotions of my friends, fluttering between their hope and despair, their traumas and joys. And then there was my life: raw and exposed from the intensity of the past 10 months, laid bare before me. How to write a thesis while every person I ever was, and all my decisions and experiences rushed to the forefront of my consciousness?
With an unparalleled network of support.

This thesis would not have come into being without the generosity and courage of my friends who helped me by sharing their stories and entrusting me with bits and pieces of who they are.

This thesis was guided to paper and MS Word through the patience of my supervisors Prem Kumar Rajaram, Vlad Naumescu, and Alina-Sandra Cucu whenever I obsessively asked them if I'm making sense or not. Much more important and valued than me making sense to them, was their understanding and attunement to the weight of revolutionary purity on me, and their guidance through the pressure of it all.

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Introduction

What is Revolutionary Purity?

> **"**All these things happened, and we didn't feel that something in particular was very important, because our lives were changing but we didn't notice that they were changing, starting from friends losing their eyes to getting married. But everything was still happening, things were happening and there's no chance to think about anything**"**

These reflections came from Amr, a friend and former coworker when we were discussing his experience with the January 25th Revolution in Egypt. He was narrating how he and his wife decided to get married during the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes in November 2011, amidst the teargas, rubber bullets, live ammunition, motorcycles driving the injured and martyred to nearby field hospitals, and young adolescents pranking each other just outside the line of clashes between demonstrators and police forces. These reflections and their sliver of context offer a glimpse of how the Revolution was a larger than life experience that forever changed the lives of those who participated in it, believed it and supported it.

In January 2011, a concentration of events and affects in Egypt and the Arab world led to the call for demonstrations on the 25th of January, demanding "bread, freedom, and social justice". The most prominent events and affects were the torture and killing of Khaled Said by the Egyptian police and ubiquitous police brutality, anger arising from the results of the sham parliamentary elections of 2010, deteriorating living conditions despite high scores on various economic and developmental indices, disillusionment with efforts by Gamal Mubarak to inherit the rule of Egypt from his father, and the euphoria of the ouster of Ben Ali in the wake of the Tunisian revolution.

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The response to the call for the demonstration was overwhelming and launched an 18-day sit-in within Tahrir Square in Cairo, as well as other sit-ins and demonstrations throughout Egypt and solidarity demonstrations in front of Egyptian embassies abroad. The protest efforts within Egypt were marred with violence by the state against the peaceful demonstrators, ultimately leading to deposing the former president Muhammad Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

Between February 2011 and August 2013, a lifetime's worth of violent and polarizing events took place, beginning in March 2011 with the referendum on constitutional amendments sanctioned by then-ruling Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) that effectively cleaved the Egyptian people into two factions and generated further fragmentations and ending in August 2013 with the Rabe'a massacre that claimed the lives of over 1000 demonstrators. In between these events, Egypt experienced parliamentary and presidential elections that brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power, as well as numerous violent clashes and confrontations between demonstrators and the state, whether run by SCAF or the Muslim Brotherhood. The end result is the reinstatement of a military-led authoritarian regime that is implementing horrifying ways of cracking down on individual and collective liberties, enforcing harsh austerity measures under the guise of neo-liberal reforms that rendered millions of Egyptians even more impoverished than before 2011, and an increased sense of embitterment concerning living in Egypt. It is worth noting that I identify the event as a revolution even though technically it might not be a revolution to safeguard past notions of agency.

The Revolution galvanized people into action differently; two modes of politicization were prevalent: politicization through the streets and politicization through participation in the quest for representation in the unfolding political process. Politicization through the streets meant becoming politically aware and active through participation in demonstrations and clashes, usually guided by abstract notions such as fighting injustice, or material ones such avenging the blood of

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the martyrs and responding to actual instances of violence. Politicization through participation in the quest for representation in the unfolding political process meant becoming politically aware and active through membership in political parties and organizations, as well as presidential campaigns. Depending on their age, ideological leanings and past lived experiences, people were differentially politicized throughout the course of the Revolution. They also moved between these two modes and sometimes brought them together.

These modes of politicization, along with existing political parties and currents, ambiguous state institutions, and successive, rapid-fire clashes and confrontations led to the emergence of a rich, complex and constantly shifting revolutionary landscape. This landscape housed the Islamist current and at its forefront were the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis. Focusing on the Muslim Brotherhood within this research project, it is important to state that even within the highly organized and disciplined Muslim Brotherhood, differential attunements to the Revolution occurred and there was - and still is - a sharp distinction between the stances of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership and those of the Muslim Brotherhood youth. Another ambiguous blend was that of the 'revolutionaries'. 'Revolutionaries' as a concept doesn't represent a single faction or political party; it refers to anyone and everyone who participated in the 18-day sit in regardless of their political/ideological/religious/socioeconomic backgrounds and affiliations. Before February 2011, there were different political movements that worked (with varying degrees of success that usually took the forms of minor disruptions to everyday life) for political reforms within Mubarak's regime, such as Kefaya Movement, 6th of April Movement, and the National Society for Change. Leaders of said movements continued to play a prominent role after February 2011. The label of 'revolutionaries' was associated with liberals, leftists, anarchists, political and human rights activists, academics, and individuals with no former political experiences. It is worth noting that the distinction I make between the Islamist current or the Muslim Brotherhood leadership and the 'revolutionaries' is a reflection of the extreme state of polarization present

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before the July 3rd coup d'etat and that during and after the 18 days the Islamists were considered revolutionaries.

This revolutionary landscape, with its distinct modes of politicization yielded two main interpretations of revolutionary purity: 'the Revolution belongs to the streets' and 'the Revolution must be institutionalized'. These interpretations, along with their variations, were adopted by different revolutionary factions at different moments in time and space. The intensification of these interpretations occurred in the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes in November 2011 which lasted for a week and erupted after the police forces, backed up by the military, attacked a sit-in demanding the unfulfilled rights of/for the martyrs and the injured of the January 25th Revolution. The second instance is Rabe'a sit-in and subsequent violent dispersal in July-August 2013, following the July 3rd coup d'etat that culminated in a massacre that claimed the lives of nearly 1000 demonstrators, the majority of which belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes, different revolutionaries affirmed and implored that the 'Revolution belongs in/to the street' because the injustices carried out by the police apparatus must be stopped and the blood of the fallen martyrs and the injured of the Revolution must be avenged. This was evident in the fact that the clashes lasted for a whole week until the provisional government at the time resigned and that some factions within the 'revolutionaries' spectrum' who were engaged in forming political organizations and parties suspended their efforts to support and participate in the clashes. However, the Muslim Brotherhood leadership insisted that the 'Revolution should be institutionalized', asserted that the only way the Revolution will be victorious if it is embedded in the different state institutions, and collaborated with SCAF to ensure that the parliamentary elections will proceed uninterrupted. However, during the Rabe'a sit-in and its subsequent violent dispersal, the Muslim Brotherhood leadership affirmed and implored that the 'Revolution belongs in/to the street' because the revolutionary legitimacy secured by the

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Muslim Brotherhood after winning the presidential elections in May 2012 must be protected at all costs, otherwise the Revolution will be lost. This was evident in the fact that the sit-in lasted 6 weeks in two squares in Cairo and Giza. However, the different revolutionaries assured themselves and others that the coup wasn't really a coup because the interim president was a civilian and that the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood was a necessity to reclaim the Revolution once more. This was perceptible in the active support for the coup expressed by some 'revolutionary' factions and the complacent silence of others.

Six years onward, within the chaos and complexity of the event of the Revolution, I find myself concerned with naming 'revolutionary purity' as a powerful and ambiguous force that was one of the many contributing factors to the defeat of the Revolution. The naming occurs through making sense of the lived experiences and feeling the affects of people who were in the epicenter of the Revolution, as well as at its margins. It is worth noting that these distances to and from the Revolution changed over time, affected by age, ideology, and personal life trajectories. Through these lived experiences, I question what a 'pure' revolutionary act is and how it is defined/determined/decided because what was deemed to be impure or untrue to the Revolution was radically branded as treason, and because the revolutionaries were differentially attuned to the Revolution, that meant that we had a multiplicity of interpretations of 'pure' revolutionary acts, as well as treasonous ones.

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Entangling with Revolutionary Purity

Revolutionary purity doesn't belong solely to the realm of the Revolution and its time. While revolutionary purity manifested in different ebbs and flows that accompanied the events of the Revolution, its inception can be found in people's lives before the Revolution, specifically within their personal aspirations, frustrations and injustices. People yearned for purpose, a sense of belonging, and/or a fruition of their activism. The Revolution came and responded to these desires

in the most beautiful way: offering a world of possibilities, beginning with the unimaginable act of deposing former president Mubarak. The Revolution created and reinforced a new sense of belonging to hope and the promise of a more beautiful and just future. It makes sense and feels right then to say and do whatever one deems necessary to protect and nurture the Revolution. However, with numerous and often discordant views on how to protect and nurture the Revolution that are on display in a volatile context that is charged by the counter-revolution and strong remnants of the old regime, these discordant views became increasingly polarized and denounced each other until the counter-revolution prevailed in the form of the July 3rd coup d'etat.

The promise and possibilities offered by the Revolution, coupled with its devastating and horrifying defeat left an indelible mark on the revolutionaries and their lives. The defeat was synonymous with loss of purpose and emergence of strangerhood[1] (Schielke 2019), as well as a surge in survivor's guilt and shame. These affects and emotions manifested themselves in different forms of engagement with the remnants of the political and public spheres. Some opted to withdraw completely from these spheres and focus on their personal lives, others are on the borders of these spheres, stepping inside and outside them depending on their personal capacities, and some are actively reflecting, learning, and working, for a future revolution. Revolutionary purity takes on a different, quieter form today; it gently nudges people into remembering the Revolution and keeping its memory alive, even if just on Facebook and aspiring once more for a more beautiful and just future, even if in a more guarded and mature manner.

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[1] Strangerhood is Samuli Schielke's translation of the Arabic word 'Ghorba', which brings together several meanings such as home-sickness, loneliness, and becoming a stranger. 'Ghorba' was an often repeated sentiment in reference to some of my friends' sense of belonging after the defeat of the Revolution

Questioning and arguing for/against Revolutionary Purity

The main question driving this research project is: What did 'revolutionary purity' mean to the January 25th Revolution and its revolutionaries?

This question can be problematized as follows: What are the origins of revolutionary purity and what does tracing these origins mean for making sense of the event of the Revolution? How did revolutionary purity come into being within the context of the January 25th Revolution? How was revolutionary purity performed/practised/utilized? What did "Revolutionary Purity" mean in different revolutionary moments between January 2011 and January 2013? How was "Revolutionary Purity" mobilized by different ideological factions against "other" ideological factions? What are the consequences of experiencing "Revolutionary Purity" on the personal lives of those who participated in, believed in, and supported the Revolution?

The main argument I want to make is that revolutionary purity was a simultaneously ambiguous and powerful force that influenced the trajectory of the Revolution and the life of those who participated in it. This argument is built on the notion that the origins on revolutionary purity preceded the Revolution due to the intermeshing of personal frustrations and aspirations with the political and social reality preceding the Revolution and accordingly, the Revolution was a response of sorts to said aspirations and frustrations. The extent of the impact of the Revolution as a formative, live-changing event varied according to the age, ideological leanings, and range of lived experiences of the participants. Because the Revolution was a 'pure' response to personal frustrations and aspirations, it needed to be protected and nurtured at all costs. Consequently, revolutionary purity manifested in actions, decisions, and condemnations that opposed each other because the revolutionaries were differentially attuned to the Revolution , participating in it with different backgrounds, ideological outlooks, and lived experiences. Revolutionary purity was embodied and practiced by different revolutionary factions at different moments holding opposing views concerning the trajectory of the Revolution, summarized in presence in the streets or seeking

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representation in the unfolding political process. This meant that there was a multiplicity of 'pure' revolutionary actions and perspectives, shrouded in ambiguity, discordant in nature, and mutually exclusive and this fragmentation and polarization ultimately contributed to the triumph of the counter-revolution.

The impact of the Revolution and revolutionary purity extend beyond the 'end/pause/defeat' of the Revolution and manifest in depoliticization and disengaging completely from the political and public spheres, as well as living with the despair of defeat through learning, reflecting and working for a future revolution.

A supporting argument is that revolutionary purity has two manifestations (positive and negative, with nuance). The negative connotation of revolutionary purity is as a process of inclusion and exclusion was practiced in a sense by everyone I talked to, with varying degrees of generosity and severity. The positive connotation of revolutionary purity is as an ideal state of being, without which the Revolution would not have seen the light of day.

How to trace Revolutionary Purity

The Revolution and the revolutionaries are mutually constitutive; the Revolution wouldn't have emerged if it weren't for the bodily contact between the demonstrators, and the revolutionaries wouldn't have acquired this new dimension to their individual identities and be part of a new collective identity had it not been for the Revolution. In order to ground this research project in the personal, I conducted ten semi-structured exploratory interviews with friends and personal acquaintances during the winter break to ensure that my assumptions and arguments concerning revolutionary purity are relevant and useful for reflecting on the experience(s) of the Revolution. These interviews proved instrumental in honing my research question and arguments. They also informed the decision to conduct six life history interviews to avoid reducing the Revolution to a container and to look before and beyond the Revolution to understand the strength and ambiguity of revolutionary purity. Additionally, my positionality as a supporter of the Revolution from the

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margin further complicates how people affected and were affected by the Revolution, so my autoethnography will be weaved into the thesis. The life history interviews will be at the heart of the narrative and the analysis, and the autoethnography will complicate and contradict the narrative and the analysis, to mirror the fragmented nature of the experience of the Revolution and to understand revolutionary purity through these fragments.

Revolutionary Purity by the people, through the people

I conducted my interviews with friends and personal acquaintances to minimize security risks and to facilitate the exchange of comfort and trust between us. When deciding to choose who to interview, I relied on four parameters. The first parameter was **age**, targeting individuals who were between the ages of 18 and 35 in 2011 to contrast the impact of the Revolution and "Revolutionary Purity" on those who barely stepped outside adolescence and those with relatively established lives, careers and studies. The second parameter was **ideology**, targeting individuals with different ideological leanings such as conservatives, liberals, leftists, as well as those who didn't conform to these denominations. The third parameter was **distance**, targeting individuals who were actively present in Tahrir square during the 18 days, who were actively present in revolutionary events outside the center, who were in the diaspora and expressed their solidarity online and through organizing demonstrations before Egyptian embassies, and those who supported the Revolution but couldn't be physically present in the unfolding events. The final parameter was **education**, targeting individuals who were in the process or have already acquired their university degrees. This parameter resonates with class, and interviewing people from this socioeconomic background will offer a somewhat bounded perspective of the Revolution and Revolutionary Purity, that will likely focus on the political aspirations of the Revolution and expectations pertaining to Egypt's future with regard to state-making institutions and practices, closely followed by economic and social aspirations towards the Revolution. It is worth noting that these parameters are fluid in nature and will indicate that the interviewees subscribed to these categories at one point in time.

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It doesn't necessarily reflect where they are in life now. Over time, the interviewees may have decided to abandon their field of studies and pursue different interests or forgoing the acquisition of a higher degree. Their ideologies and distances towards the Revolution may also have changed throughout the lifetime of the Revolution and afterward. Even age, the arbitrariness of the number doesn't negate the occurrence of a hyper-aging and maturing process that might render the interviewees feeling like they're a different, potentially older age.

I conducted the life history interviews with 3 men and 3 women between March and May of 2019. Five of the interviews were conducted in Cairo and the sixth was conducted in a European city. All of the interviewees are friends of mine, with varying degrees of closeness. The snowball exception was the wife because the husband recommended that I talk to her, asserting that she would be very interested in my topic and would have a lot to say about revolutionary purity.

As for me, I was 20 years old in 2011. I studied Mass Communication but never worked in the field, having begun to explore civil society work in Egypt in 2010 and cementing my decision in 2011 to have a career in Egyptian civil society to 'benefit the country' and capitalize on the possibilities offered by the Revolution to explore new ideas and modes of community engagement and development. I was an ardent supporter of the Revolution and what it called for 'bread, freedom, and social justice', but I had to live with a dichotomous position of proximity and distance towards the Revolution because my mother prohibited me from participating in the demonstrations, fearing for my safety and I was watching these events unfold from afar, even though I live 30 minutes away from Tahrir Square. And so, a rupture occurred, between my physical being that was confined at home and my emotional/spiritual being that was calling for bread, freedom, social justice. This distance reduced me to a witness of the Revolution. I felt like an "other" to all the revolutionaries who were laying down their lives for the revolution and I hated that feeling. I've been trying to make peace with it for eight years now, with varying degrees

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of success. Even though I wasn't an active participant in the Revolution, it guided a lot of my actions and decisions, every blow the Revolution received winded me, and its defeat in 2013 mutedly devastated me. I still negotiate my existence and purpose in relation to what happened in the Revolution and its aftermath today.

Centering and grounding Revolutionary Purity

The main concept grounding and centering this research project is 'revolutionary purity'. This concept is identified and understood though the lives and practices of a handful of revolutionaries. I treat it as a powerful and ambiguous force with its own ebbs and flows. Its origins are traced through the personal aspirations, frustrations and injustices experienced by the revolutionaries in their individual lives before the eruption of the Revolution. Its manifestations are elucidated through critical events such as the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes and the Rabe'a sit-in and subsequent massacre, as well as through the different modes of participation in the Revolution, focusing specifically on participation in demonstrations and clashes, and participation in the quest for representation in the unfolding political process. Its consequences and life beyond the Revolution are examined through the spectrum of engagement after the Revolution, defined at one end by complete depoliticization and refusal to engage with the political and public spheres, while the other end is characterized by living through the despair of defeat and reflecting, learning, and working for a future revolution.

Revolutionary purity as force is reified through the concept of politicization. Within the framework of the January 25th Revolution, two forms of politicization emerge; politicization through the street, occurring as a response to abstract notions such as seeking/delivering justice or material ones like avenging the blood of the martyrs and responding to actual instances of violence. The second form of politicization was through the participation in the quest for representation in the

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unfolding democratic process, with the aspiration of institutionalizing the Revolution and bringing about a new state and rule. These forms of politicization aren't necessarily mutually exclusive and tend to overlap, thus contributing to the ambiguity surrounding 'pure revolutionary acts'.

I will also adopt an affective lens to mobilize a constellation of concept to elucidate the intersections between the Revolution, revolutionary purity, and the lives of the revolutionaries who shaped and were shaped by the Revolution. Seeing as this research is located in the temporal, I will engage with the concept of memory and explore how individual and collective memories intersect to remember and shape the Revolution today. I will also map the temporalities within the Revolution to understand how the past, present and future interacted within the realm of the Revolution and how these interactions influenced making sense of what happened. The Revolution opened up the future for us and trapped us in the present (because of our instantaneous ideas/actions/reactions), while wrestling/confronting/reinforcing/abandoning our personal pasts. Furthermore, I will trace how the concept of belonging carried different meanings before, during and beyond the Revolution; starting with feeling out of place and yearning for belonging, followed by actually belonging to an event - the Revolution - and its people, reaching today's renewed sense of strangerhood, as well as how the notion of belonging influenced perceptions and actions pertaining to the Revolution. Finally, I will engage with conceptions of violence to see if and how revolutionary purity and violence are constitutive of one another.

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The tradition of 'Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri'

"Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" has been used far and wide in Arabic. In the introduction to "The State of the Secret Organization", Mamdouh ElSheikh claims that the notion of "thawra" (revolution) in Arabic culture is often linked to "naqaa"' (purity), and they come together in the common and frequently deceiving term "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" that is used to describe different revolutionary leaders, even when they don't deserve it. Beyond this framing of the tradition of linking 'revolution' and 'purity', we find different and often contradictory usages of 'Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri' in opinion

articles from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon. For instance, it was used by the Lebanese Communist Party website to describe Khaled El Haber, a Lebanese singer known for his leftist and revolutionary leanings ("خالد الهبر : صوت النقاء الثوري" n.d.). Within the Palestinian context, "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" was deployed by the Palestinian Dialogue Forum – a website affiliated with Hamas organization – as a myth that should be abandoned and advocated to stop waiting for consensus and popular approval and to just lead the struggle ((عز الدين n.d.). "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" was used in another article by Dr. Aql Salah, a Palestinian researcher, creating a triangle of revolutionary purity comprised of the Front's most prominent leaders and how exceptional these three leaders were in their dedication to the Palestinian cause and how the Popular Front, as well as the Palestinian cause, will never witness such heroism and patriotism again (صلاح n.d.). Ibrahim Al-Ajlouni, a Jordanian journalist, viewed "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" through the lens of morality and ethics, asserting that revolutions lose their "purity" once they attain power and are institutionalized as states or regimes because power inevitably corrupts and "the end justifies the means" (العجلوني 2009).

In Egypt, "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" is described by Safeyya Serry as a circle that includes and excludes people according to a highly arbitrary "checklist", and the consequences of this circle is that the enemy of the January 25th Revolution – the state – was able to suppress the Revolution and its demands (سري n.d.). Amr Adel called for the clear distinction between the revolutionary vanguard and the revolutionary masses because blurring the divide between the vanguard and the masses is harmful for the revolution. He also claimed that the vanguard must be ideologically pure to be able to withstand counter-revolutionary attacks, and accordingly, there's no room for a plurality of ideologies within the vanguard ("المد الثوري بين النقاء والاصطفاف" 2015) . In his book "The Spectres of Stalin and Hitler Float in the Sky of Cairo", Ahmed AbdelHalim reflects on the problematic boycott of the political process by some revolutionaries under the guise of "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" (عبد العليم 2018). He believes that the narrative of "we revolted, and nothing changed,

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so we should continue revolting, without attempting to engage in politics will cost us any gains acquired by the Revolution and retreating to where we were before the Revolution".

The aforementioned works shed light on the omnipresence of "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" in Arabic interpretation and sense-making of revolutions and revolutionaries. They embed "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" in private as well as public spheres, by associating clothing, morality and ethics, meager salaries, and family lives shaped by revolutionary struggles with Revolutionary Purity, in addition to participation in political processes and acts on inclusion and exclusion of people according to Revolutionary Purity. The consumption of the term carries positive connotations such as glorifying heroes, and negative connotations such as being an illusion that should be abandoned, antonymy against morality and ethics, naiveté of rejecting politics, and inaccurate deification. The term was used by a diverse range of people ascribing to different nationalities and ideologies. However, the term was not defined once in any of these contexts and there's always an implicit assumption that the reader will understand what it meant by "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri", even though it's used by radically different people who assign it radically different meanings.

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Chapter 1 – Revolutionary Purity *before* the Revolution (1981 – 2010)

Growing up in the eighties, nineties, and the early 2000s in Egypt was a peculiar experience. We - my friends and myself - were raised within the confines of an authoritarian state, with a limited political sphere that was controlled by the National Democratic Party (NDP), presided by former president Mubarak. The Party controlled the legislative and executive branches of the state and allowed the existence of sham parties with their opposition newspapers that legitimized the regime with the guise of democracy. Mubarak also started his rule with an inherited economic vision from former president El-Sadat, which was centered on creating a capitalist regime that was fueled by a weak production system and a government budget that always ran a deficit and was propped by foreign aid and funding or collecting debts internally. To cement his rule, Mubarak prioritized public spending on security apparatuses (specifically the police and the State Security Investigation Services) and ideological apparatuses, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments), which was responsible for assigning and monitoring mosque preachers all over Egypt. Military spending decreased during the eighties, but the military complex was given the space to establish its own economic industries (Hussein 2018, 22–23)[2]. The state's interactions with different members of the Islamist current varied at the time. The Muslim Brotherhood benefited from the absence of a direct confrontation with the state and built their bases in universities, syndicates and other social spheres, as well as worked on their social presence through firmly establishing their charitable services networks all over Egypt, especially in small towns and villages that were out of the reach of state services (Hussein 2018, 30–31). The Salafis and Jihadis were in open conflict with the state, carrying arms against it during the eighties until they were eradicated in the nineties (Hussein 2018, 30). This political and economic reality influenced, at varying stages of our lives, how we viewed and interacted with our surroundings and very local

[2] My translation

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contexts, as indicated below. Additionally, the intersection of said political and economic reality with our personal trajectories has primed us for the Revolution in a way, because in our different ways and for our different reasons, we were all longing for a disturbance in the status quo that was defining us and bounding us.

Introducing my friends and myself

As previously mentioned, I chose to interview friends and personal acquaintances for the sake of safety and security. I also chose to interview them as each one of has both a unique, yet familiar experience with the Revolution. I believe that these interviews give a micro-analysis to the experiences of young active Egyptians with the Revolution and the influence of revolutionary purity, which I am trying to examine here. My friends are living examples of people who were active in the Revolution, their lives were shaped by it, and its defeat broke them in different ways. My friends' childhood and early adulthood experiences shaped how they interacted with the Revolution and gave them early encounters with values like social justice. There is a lot of literature about the Revolution covering different angles, however very little showcase the complexity of those who lived it on a daily basis and the notions that shaped their experiences like revolutionary purity and violence. I want to put these stories in the frontline, make their voices heard, and feature the multi-layered existence of processes like participating in a Revolution and assessing biases based on an individual or collective definition of Revolutionary purity.

Amr[3] is a 42-year-old civil society practitioner whose work is concerned with technology and its intersections with the different facets of life. He is married to Thoraya (identified below) and together they have a daughter and a son. He is not affiliated with any political parties or organization. Politically, he belongs to the ideals of freedom and social justice, and he's biased to

[3] All names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

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the less fortunate. He believes that 'our society' should care for them more and that the accumulation of opportunities and resources in favor of the more powerful must be stopped.

Amr has a younger brother. Their family spent the first fourteen years of their lives in a Gulf country due to the father's work and has been living in Cairo ever since they came back. He studied administration at a private university in Alexandria and completed his master's degree in Business Information technology in England. He didn't really care for his studies, it was part of a foggy phase in his life, driven by general anger against the country, the system, the people, everything. In retrospect, he appreciates what he studied and learned in the past. After years of experimenting, two years ago he discovered what he is willing to dedicate his life for. He wants to work with people who have critical and analytical outlooks on society and employ his capacities pertaining to knowledge organization and dissemination to develop alternative political theses and ways of organizing communities so that we, as a society, can be better prepared whenever an opportunity for political or social change arises.

Amr and I worked together for over a year in an organization that promotes the consumption of digital, open-source tools of expression among children and teenagers.

He was 34 when the Revolution erupted.

Thoraya is a 38-year-old historical sociologist whose current work focuses on studying the history of the anarchist movement in Egypt and its intersections with the nationalist movement at the beginning of the 20th century. She is married to Amr and together they have a daughter and a son. She translates comics with her husband and is interested in working with academia outside the confines of academia. She's transforming her post-doctoral research into comics and teaches humanities and social sciences at independent educational initiatives and institutes to teenagers and adults. She identifies as a leftist, cares deeply about social justice, and is against political dogma, even within the left.

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Thoraya has an older brother. She grew up in Cairene nun schools, and even though she doesn't like the 'pure' and 'chaste' aspect of their pedagogical approaches, these nuns dedicated their life to serving the community. she was deeply affected by the nuns' awareness of the reality within which they exist and tried to emulate them by participating in community service activities in Cairo. Her awareness of the plight of Egyptian societies was also ingrained by her father, who always shared with her and her brother the stories of extreme poverty and injustice he witnessed growing up in Upper Egypt.

She was deeply religious and included God and Jesus Christ in all aspects of her life. She grew up in Sunday Schools, visited Catholic churches and attended camps with the Protestants. However, she struggled with reconciling her personal beliefs such as helping the less fortunate in this life, and the teachings on praying for the less fortunate to help them in the next life. She began to doubt the existence of God at the age of 15.

I only met Thoraya once before the interview. Amr recommended that I talk to her after we concluded our interview.

She was 31 when the Revolution erupted.

I am a 29-year-old civil society practitioner and my work was always centered on working with/for young people in different capacities. Before I started my university studies, I lived a rather sheltered life in Giza. I primarily moved between home, school, the sports club, and friends. My mobility was facilitated solely through my parents. I knew little of Egypt and even less of the world, perhaps only thinking about how we need to protect the environment. The significance of my time at the university stems from how it familiarized me with Cairo and Giza through the extensive use of public transportation, and with Egypt at large through participation in a summer school on sustainable development called Namaa'. Namaa' introduced me to the political, economic, and social reality of Egypt in 2009, and acquainted me with civil society work in Egypt. I knew then

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that this is what I wanted to do; to engage with Egypt more and discover how we can address the problems we face as a society, or so I naively thought.

I was 20 when the Revolution erupted.

Ragaa' is a 28-year-old civil society practitioner whose work is concerned with the intersection of arts, education, and social change. She completed her undergraduate degree in Journalism from Cairo University in 2012. She doesn't define herself with political or ideological leanings. She has always lived in Cairo.

Her interview intersected with a time of self-reflection and accountability in her life. She grew up with a sense of guilt towards life as far as she could remember and directing her anger inwards. As the eldest, she was the responsible, dutiful daughter who wasn't allowed to make mistakes and doesn't object or even speak up, to the extent that a classmate in kindergarten asked her if she was mute. She led a rigorous life shaped by discipline and lack of enjoyment, whether at school or while playing volleyball. She was on track to becoming a member of the national team and began to envision her life accordingly, until a combination of a verbally and emotionally abusive coach and an arm injury that became chronic shattered her world and traumatized her. Ever since her experience with volleyball, she has been in 'flight mode', trying to escape her heartbreak and finding new communities to belong to, without ever truly succeeding. She always felt something was missing, whether with her Islamist friends or socialist ones, whether in her studies or student activities she participated, she always experienced a sense of strangerhood. Lately, her efforts to recover from her personal wars through dance therapy and psychotherapy engaged her in new communities where she's beginning to feel more at home.

I know Ragaa' through Namaa'.

She was 19 when the Revolution erupted.

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Yehia is a 26 year-old-graduate student of architecture, currently based in Europe, formerly living in Giza. He is the youngest of four (he has two brothers and a sister), His father worked full-time and his mother was the home-maker. His upbringing was deeply religious; his parents encouraged him and his siblings to study the Quran, and even help others study in the charitable organization he founded. He was on the threshold of joining the Muslim Brotherhood, having started to attend their preparatory courses. At the same time in school, he enrolled in an extracurricular activity that exposed him to different people with different mentalities and showed him that there alternatives to learning and being without having to blindly follow someone, which was one of his problems with the Muslim Brotherhood. Another thing he did not care for regarding the Muslim Brotherhood was the lack of grasping complexity in their argumentation; he was already aware that life is more complex than the assertion that if they pray, study the Quran and treat people, everything will be okay. He chose to study architecture because he thought it would let him interact with people more than civil engineering. He also didn't want to follow in his father's footsteps in civil engineering because 'he is a difficult person', but to be fair, he is not overbearing, never forcing him or his siblings to do anything against their will.

I know Yehia through Namaa'.

He turned 18, 10 days before the Revolution erupted.

Fatma is a 26-year-old anthropologist with multiple research interests and projects. The ideological framework closest to her is Communism. She is also affiliated with a Sufi order. She has two younger brothers. Most of her family members in the Muslim Brotherhood and she was familiar with the notions of arrest and imprisonment from a young age. She grew up with politics in her Cairene home. Her parents decided not to have a television in their home as part of their wish to raise their children differently. This meant that she relied primarily on reading and her parents to sate her desire for knowledge, feed her imagination and to entertain herself. Additionally, she reflected on how Muslim Brotherhood schools, friends, and social institutions bounded her

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existence, so she could not imagine a life beyond the Muslim Brotherhood way of life. Retrospectively, she identified feeling like a minority because she lived within the confines of the Muslim Brotherhood, which taught her things that no one (outside the organization knew) and these confines were imbued with a cult-like attitude.

I know Fatma through Namaa'.

She was 18 when the Revolution erupted.

Assi is a 25-year-old Alexandrian visual artist, facilitator and content developer. He's also studying sociology at the University of Alexandria. He was formerly affiliated with the Revolutionary Socialists but still retains his belief in their ideology. He's trying to reconcile socialism and anarchy because they're not contradictory to him. He also ascribes to the ethos of 'peace and love'.

He is the middle child and has two sisters. He loved sports and spent a lot of time playing handball and football. He was very good, but he fell into the cliché argument with his parents about leaving sports and focusing on his high school studies. After he completed his high school studies, he became lost. He didn't know what was expected or required of him by the higher education system. He was enrolled in the Faculty of Commerce but was expelled due to his political activism on and off campus and started his degree in sociology.

He started smoking and using drugs recreationally during his early adolescent years. He believes that drugs were a catalyst that helped him shape his worldview today. Drugs stimulated his mind and influenced his processing capacities, making them smooth and out of the box. They also offered him different lenses from which he viewed the world. His experience with drugs started in rejection of the extreme of addiction constantly advertised by state and social institutions, and he found no discourse on the recreational, moderate consumption of drugs. So he wasn't convinced that drugs were bad and consumed them to challenge this assertion.

Assi and I worked together for over a year in an organization that promotes the consumption of digital, open-source tools of expression among children and teenagers.

He was 16 when the Revolution erupted and turned 17 in March 2011.

"The first cause": The second Palestinian Intifada and beyond

The second Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in 2000 was a pivotal event in contemporary Arab history. The iconic image of Muhammad Al-Durrah's murder electrified the Arab people into action, with solidarity demonstrations taking place in the different Arab countries. Egypt was no exception, and my friends shed light on the various responses to the Intifada. My friends and I were differentially attuned to the experience of the solidarity demonstration. In some cases, it was the first interaction with the political sphere in Egypt. Its momentum was not necessarily sustained due to age. In other cases, the demonstrations were part of a larger process of friction with the political sphere in Egypt and attempting to gain greater access to said sphere. It is worth noting that movements protesting the violations of the Israeli governments are usually seen as anti-semitic, however, those young Arabs situated themselves beyond this dilemma. Their movement was a clear bias to the struggle against colonialism. Such a bias wasn't as clear during their young demonstrations inside their schoolyards. However, it manifested as they kept being active through their adult years, as part of their revolutionary aspirations.

At the young age of 6, Assi participated in his first demonstration at school and remembers chanting "Ya Lamouna Ya Lamouna, Ya Sharon Ya Ibn El-Magnouna"[4]. Yehia was 7 when he and his friends would bring matches specifically to burn the Israeli flags they painted at school. I vividly remember the blue color I used to paint the flag, and I remember my resentment towards having to use my favorite color to paint *that* flag. Fatma recounts participating in the solidarity demonstrations organized by the Muslim Brotherhood. Thoraya participated in the solidarity demonstrations organized at her university, where they began to chant 'Down with Hosny Mubarak', which was a very new incident in the year 2000. She also participated in a large

[4] This chant doesn't lend itself easily to translation because it is a rhyme that uses a strongly Egyptian dialect. The gist of it is children making fun of Sharon because his mother is crazy.

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demonstration organized on a Friday and beginning at Al-Azhar mosque. She entered the mosque and saw a large group of people praying and so she pretended to pray with them. She also saw Radwa Ashour[5] and a large number of prominent leftists joining the Friday prayers. Before the final 'salam' of the prayer, the chant "Bel-Rouh Bel-Dam Nefdiki Ya Flistine" (By Soul, By blood, We Will Reclaim You Palestine) resounded across the mosque. As the demonstration made its way out of the mosque, they were faced with large masses of security forces. When she tried to chant 'Down with Hosny Mubarak', a large woman in a niqab muffled her and told her 'we don't curse Mubarak', following the line of the Muslim Brotherhood of supporting the Palestinian cause and avoiding criticizing Mubarak directly. She also recalled a demonstration in front of the 'Mugamma'[6].

The second Palestinian Intifada was critical in activating the political awareness of young Egyptians, as mentioned by Assi and Thoraya. Ragaa' also reflects on her mother raising her on the ideal of rejecting injustice, always standing with any person or entity suffering from injustice and against any oppressor. She cited the Palestinian cause as the ultimate example of her mother's teachings. Yehia aptly summarized the meaning and significance of the Palestinian cause at the time, asserting that it was 'the first cause'. The first cause to care about, the first cause to fight for.

Between 2000 and 2010 we cared about different things. Our caring was determined by our age and the social circles we belonged to over the years. Some of us moved through our schools, as in the cases of Assi and Yehia. The former participated in his school's alumni organization's efforts to organize science and engineering fairs. The latter enrolled in an extracurricular activity at his school. Ragaa' sought new circles to belong to after retiring from volleyball. During high school

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[5] Celebrated Egyptian author, scholar, and activist. For more information see: https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/50930/Radwa-Ashour-A-writer-of-stance
[6] For more information on the Mugamma' see: https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2016/07/14/a-movable-beast

and her early university years, she volunteered with a religious charity organization and was a member of a religious preacher's organizing team. Thoraya discovered the resonance between her ideas and Karl Marx and the socialist movement while completing her high school studies. The location of her university at Downtown Cairo brought her closer to the Downtown street cafes, a stronghold of the leftist movement in Egypt. She also blurred the boundary created by the fences and inaccessibility of her university through working with the street children in the surrounding area and organizing activities for them within the university. She organized a booth for International Women's Day at the university with the help of her leftist friends. Her graduate studies in France and the United States allowed her to contrast perceptions of the police and notions of law and order; in France, she felt the animosity between the police and the people, in the United States she felt the esteem 'law and order' carried among the people. Her graduate studies also familiarized her with Iran; its local politics and activism scene. In 2003, Amr quit his job and dedicated himself to the budding blogosphere in Egypt. He shared and exchanged opinions concerning how Egypt can be better and managed to connect with like-minded people and make a living out of working locally and regionally on/for Arabic blogging and internet-based activism and security. I participated in extracurricular activities during my time as a university student, specifically activities pertaining to community development.

Street demonstrations were frequent during these times. Fatma participated in the demonstrations organized against the Iraq war in 2003 and Yehia was deeply affected by the violence his father had experienced upon participation in the demonstrations. Yehia participated in the 2006 solidarity demonstrations with the Lebanon War at the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University on his way back from school and Al-Azhar demonstrations as well. Amr was an active participant in the different demonstrations, campaigns, and sit-ins between 2003 and 2011.

These actions and movements coincided with the shifts in the political landscape in Egypt, such as Gamal Mubarak and his businessmen associates paving the way through National Democratic Party's Policies Committee for him to 'inherit' the presidency from his father. Another shift was

the transition from a traditional capitalist system - market driven with state intervention, a public sector, and a welfare structure in place - to a free market system with minimal state intervention and minimal retention of welfare benefits to avoid dissent (Hussein, 25). The Intifada, followed by the Iraq war in 2003, breathed life into the political movement - specifically its radical components - and a series of oppositional and protest frameworks the most prominent of which was 'Kefaya' (Enough). Founded in 2004, it brought together different leftist and Islamist actors under the slogan "La Lel-Tamdid… La Lel-Tawrith" (No to the Extending, No to Inheriting) and it greatly influenced the political sphere at the time (Hussein, 37).

2010: The beginnings of microshocks

The aforementioned stories indicate that the political sphere between 2000 and 2010 wasn't entirely out of reach, but not particularly accessible. Consistent access to the sphere required belonging to circles that were already part of the political sphere, as in the cases of Fatma's affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and Amr's connections with prominent political activists at the time. In response to the inaccessibility of the political sphere, we - Thoraya, Ragaa', Yehia, Assi and myself - tried to access the larger social sphere and meet people we wouldn't ordinarily meet and engage in new learning and social experiences.

The aforementioned stories also elucidate the multiplicity of affects, aspirations, and frustrations that we grew up with during that period. Anger and pessimistic thinking that Egypt would never change, the longing to belong and finding home amongst people, seeking a purpose, experiencing the injustice and cruelty of the state, and living the rebellious phase of adolescence brewed over the years and pushed people to discover, experiment and attempting to know the world a little bit better. These affects would later contribute to our decisions to participate in, support and protect the Revolution. The desire or need to protect the Revolution in particular will be the stimulant of revolutionary purity as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion.

In 2010, these micropolitical affects, aspirations, and frustrations began to intensify with other 'micropolitical and macropolitical flourishings that eventually produced the singularity of the Revolution, in the sense of a macrosystemic tipping point' (McKim and Massumi 2008, 82).

On June 6th, Khaled Said[7] was brutally murdered by two policemen in Alexandria. His death sparked outrage and numerous demonstrations were held in Cairo and Alexandria, demanding justice and accountability for his death and a Facebook page was created 'We Are All Khaled Said' to support these demands and confront us all with the fact that under the current regime, our lives are worth little to nothing. I witnessed a fierce three-hour debate after a field visit to NGOs working in an informal area on whether change comes from above or below, and whether do we need civil disobedience (not revolution) to make development work meaningful/worthwhile. Among the participants in that debate was one of the 'We are all Khaled Said' page that hosted the call for demonstrations on January 25th. Seven months later, the Revolution erupted.

On November 30th, the first round of the Egyptian parliamentary elections took place and it was so obscenely fraudulent that it only exacerbated the cumulative resentment against the regime[8]. Ragaa' listened to her father when he told her that they had to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood candidates in the elections. She wasn't politically aware; she only knew that the state and its people are bad and didn't really want to know more at that point. Thoraya became depressed over the results of the elections while in Iran and began to think that she doesn't belong in Egypt and perhaps she should live in Iran since Egypt is politically hopeless. I also cast my vote, but there's a strong chance that I nullified my vote without meaning to.

On December 17th, Tarek El-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia because his produce cart was confiscated by a police officer who also humiliated him by spitting on him and

[7] For more information see: https://arabist.net/blog/2010/6/14/the-murder-of-khaled-said.html
[8] For more information see: https://carnegieendowment.org/2010/11/30/opaque-and-messy-elections/25uz

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slapping him[9]. On December 18th, in response to this tragedy, solidarity demonstrations and clashes with the police were ignited in towns and villages outside the capital Tunis.

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[9] For more information see: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181217-remembering-mohamed-bouazizi-and-the-start-of-the-arab-spring/

Chapter 2 – Revolutionary Purity *within* the Revolution (2011 – 2013)

Egypt commenced 2011 with a terrorist attack on an Orthodox Coptic Church in Alexandria that killed 21 people[10]. Due to the spatial and temporal proximity of the attack to the murder of Khaled Said, Yehia had to process both events simultaneously and was accordingly depressed. On January 14th, former president Ben Ali fled the country following the nation-wide protests that escalated from the 17th of January. After the unimaginable ouster of Ben Ali, the 'We are all Khaled Said' Facebook page hosted an event, calling for participation in demonstrations on Tuesday, January 25th to demand ending police brutality and political and economic reforms. The days leading up to the first demonstrations on that fateful Tuesday were riddled with doubt concerning what will happen; virtual and in-person conversations wondered whether people will join, whether anything will change as a result or not, and friends deliberated the merits and risks of participating in the demonstrations. On the 20th of January, Amr was in a taxi and the driver asked him if he thought something would happen, and that was at the peak of the resentment and tensions resulting from torture in police stations, terrible economic conditions, the farce of the parliamentary elections, and Tunisia. Amr answered that he was certain that something would happen, but he was uncertain when and what it would like. The Tunisian Revolution erupted while Thoraya was still in Iran. Her Iranian friends around her longed for something similar to happen in Iran and she thought that it would be very difficult for something similar to happen in Egypt.

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The Emergence of the Event of the Revolution

On Tuesday, January 25th[11], different demonstrations converged onto Tahrir Square throughout the day. There were lots of security cordons surrounding Tahrir Square in the morning and Amr

[10] For more information see: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12101748
[11] The significance of the date stems from the fact that it is the National Police Day.

and Thoraya entangled with the security soldiers peppering the streets leading to Tahrir Square to reach Tahrir Square. Yehia and his friend made their way to Tahrir Square with one of the larger marches. He shared a live feed of the march, encouraged onlookers in their balconies to come down and join the march and they enthusiastically responded that they will, and he chanted 'Down with Hosny Mubarak' for the very first time as the demonstrators grew larger in numbers and louder. Thoraya was worried that this demonstration was going to be just like any other demonstration she participated in before, but the sight of people marching, hand in hand and forming a mass mesmerized her, just before the police started attacking them. The preparations for the sit-in felt familiar to Amr, similar to the sit-in organized in 2006 for the independence of the judiciary, however, the police did not want the sit-in to happen and started dispersing the demonstrators using tear gas and bullets - some of which hit Amr in his arm - and activating their sirens. The clashes escalated quickly, and the night of the 25th of January blurred with the days of the 26th and 27th of January when demonstrations were quickly and violently dispersed, and the clashes persisted. A call to demonstrate the following Friday against police brutality and demand 'bread, freedom, social justice' was launched on social media, and the enthusiasm for the call was overwhelming, even with the threats of extreme police violence and nationwide disconnection of the internet and mobile networks.

The Friday of Anger

Earlier in the day

Assi went to the Friday prayers in Mandara (not AlQa'ed Ibrahim, the stronghold of the demonstrations in Alexandria). He did not know that something was happening that day. After the end of the prayers, he heard some noise from afar. He followed the noise to the main street and found a large demonstration, where people were chanting 'The People Demand the Downfall of the Regime' and 'Down with Hosny Mubarak'. He did not really understand what he was supposed to do, so he went back home, turned on the television, and saw the clashes.

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Fatma agreed with a friend of hers to go to the demonstration together but her friend's father did not let her go. Fatma's father was hesitant about letting her go, so she told him that she was going to the gym and set off to participate in the demonstrations. The Revolution was *the* dream of her life and ever since she was a little girl, she had wished that a revolution would happen, and Mubarak would be deposed, so how could she not participate?

Thoraya's brother decided to join her in the demonstrations, after his initial lack of conviction with the demonstrations. She was also accompanied by her friend and her 17-year-old cousin who had never participated in a demonstration in his life. They joined the Mostafa Mahmoud march towards Tahrir Square and early on she lost her brother. He was entranced by the demonstration and succumbed to it.

Yehia had to go to Cairo University after the prayers to sit for a postponed exam. He suspected that the exam was postponed to dissuade students from participating in the demonstrations. While on campus, he began to hear the chants from the nearby mosque and tried to see what was happening. When the tear gas and rubber bullets started, the demonstration converged at a small gate of the campus and began climbing over the wall and the protestors frantically asked around for bathrooms. As things escalated, they broke the gate and the cafeteria fridge to reach the soda drinks and counter the effects of the tear gas. The fifth person to come through the gate was a friend of Yehia, and he told her that they should head to another gate to encircle the police forces. She promised him to relay his instructions but made him attend his exam. The exam's duration was between 4 and 5 hours. He tried to leave halfway through, but the examiners would not let him go. He left the campus with three friends with some difficulty. The university staff advised them to call their parents, but they ignored them and went on their way.

Amr was already downtown, having spent the night at the headquarters of a human rights organization there, buying water and medical supplies, and working frantically to develop protocols for the dissemination of information about the demonstrations, as well as accessing the internet.

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Ragaa' desperately wanted to participate but her mother - even though she wanted to participate too - told her that they cannot go without her father's permission, and he did not give it. She would often go out of her house, down her street, reach its end and then go back home. She was torn between her inner rebellion, her obligation to be a good daughter that does not lie to her parents (even though her friends did), and her guilt towards them in case she goes without telling them and dies in the demonstrations.

My father announced his intention to participate in the demonstration. My mother clearly and loudly objected to his intention, but he did not relent. I was glad that he did not relent because I thought that I could easily go with him and we will take care of each other. However, my mother decided that I was not going with him. We got into an excellent screaming match that ended with her standing in front of the door, unyielding. I slammed my room's door and wept. I followed the events of the day on television and I embodied the contradiction Radwa Ashour explained in her memoir concerning following events on TV:

> The image of an event offers two contradictions simultaneously, it transports a scene to you and engages you in its smallest details, and it clearly lets you know (as if it is agreed upon, written in a contract between both of you) that you are away from it and outside it. Your hand won't burn if you extend it to a scene of a fire burning. The bullet won't hit you and the car rushing toward you won't flatten you, because as you watch the scene as it unfolds, you are outside it, sitting in front of a screen, safe in your home (Ashour 2013, 167–68)[12].

Later in the day

While watching television, Assi, in an attempt to make sense of what he was seeing, asked his parents to explain what was happening and decided that he wanted to see for himself what was

[12] My translation

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happening. His parents would not let him go, and so he told them that he will go and buy some stuff from the market and left for the streets in his pajamas. He walked until he reached an area called The 45. He arrived at the same time as the demonstration, which was getting beaten up. He did not understand the 'white' surrounding them (the tear gas) and why there are lots of explosive sounds. He was briefly part of the melee and then went back home, he resumed watching TV. In the afternoon, Thoraya was experiencing what became the most difficult and important day of her life. On Qasr El-Nil bridge, her cousin was hit with lots of rubber bullets and they saw a lot of people falling down. She thought that they were dying because of the rubber bullets because she could not fathom that the police were using live ammunition. Her Protestant cousin was chanting behind her 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great), and she felt that something different was happening, something that was bigger than them and their religious differences. As the armored vehicles were closing in on her, she was thinking about what she should do, should she jump in the Nile or what? She saw people from all classes, willing to die attacking the Interior[13], the symbol of the state and its oppression. She was becoming a different person because of what she experienced and witnessed. Fatma was on Qasr El-Nil bridge too, experiencing it all. Eventually, the demonstrators overcame and reached Tahrir Square. After sundown, Yehia and his friends made their way through Dokki and found a post-apocalyptic scene before them; cars on fire, broken glass, and burn marks everywhere. When they got to Al-Galaa' Square, they began to see the effects of the Qasr El-Nil bridge battle; people collapsing everywhere, crying, and struggling to breathe. Yehia lost one of his friends there. The smell of the tear-gas was overpowering. This scene unfolded throughout the Opera Street and Saad Zaghloul Square before Qasr El-Nil bridge, with some ambulances driving around. Yehia lost his second friend there. Qasr El-Nil bridge was empty and his path to Tahrir Square was uninterrupted. At the end of the bridge, by the Square's entrance, he was met with a thick cloud of tear gas, but the vision became clearer in the Square. He saw and

[13] The term "Interior" is the translation of 'Dakhliya', a term used by the interviewees to refer to different security apparatuses, such as the police, central security forces, and the State Security Investigations Service

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heard a young man banging the metal fence lining most of the Square's sidewalks. Yehia began protesting this action and asked the young man to stop destroying 'their' public property and asserting that they were peaceful demonstrators. The young man took off his hoodie, revealing his face and upper body, half of which were riddled with rubber bullets. He then proceeded to yell at Yehia 'Peaceful what? Can't you see what they're doing to us?' and Yehia apologized, telling him that he was in an exam and did not know what happened. He then met his sheikh, who helped him study Quran, and asked him where he came from, and he told him from Ramses Square. When he asked what it was like, the sheikh did not respond with anything significant. No one was able to think about whether what they experienced was difficult or not because it was not over yet.

Amr and his friend made their way to Tahrir Square and saw the now-famous two Jeeps. Everything was new to them and they tried to talk to people in the Square to gather their impressions and understand whether the military was with them (the demonstrators) or not.

At the end of the day

The Interior was no more, and so Assi and his father participated in the popular committee in their street to protect their homes from criminals who were supposedly running amok in the streets after the opening of prisons. Everyone in his neighborhood was in the streets, and they were forming committees.

Fatma was very tired and heading home when she heard about the military's arrival at the Square and the imposition of the curfew, she went back to see what was happening, fearing missing anything.

Thoraya witnessed the looting of the National Democratic Party (NDP) headquarters on her way to her friend's house in Garden City (close to Tahrir Square) to spend the night there. She learned that her brother was spending the night at a friend's place in Zamalek.

Having learned that the Square and its entrances were secured by the demonstrators and they started preparing for the sit-in, he decided to go back home because he was hungry and wanted to

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assure his mother that he was okay. He took the metro, which was considerably crowded in a time of curfew, and felt like he stepped onto another planet when he arrived at his neighborhood. The residents there were watching the news, but no one was interacting at all, even though what they were watching was happening in the nearby Tahrir Square.

Amr and his friend strolled on the Nile Corniche under a light drizzle, on their way to their friend's house in Garden City. Feeling perfectly content and safe, they saw the NDP headquarters on fire and people exiting it, someone was carrying a door, another was carrying a fan, and a third person embracing a desk. They passed by the American Embassy and noticed that its street was empty, save for an armored vehicle and an armed military soldier in a raincoat, standing in the middle of the street. They inferred that even though the police apparatus abandoned everything and retreated, the embassies would still be protected. They reached their friend's house after midnight and Thoraya and her cousin were there.

Following the epic events of the 28th of January, the sit-in started and ended with the deposing of Mubarak on February 11th. Between these days, daily, nation-wide demonstrations took place, Mubarak spoke 3 times, alternating between threatening and placating the demonstrators, and the Battle of the Camel[14] took place, with the brunt of the violence borne by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. February 11th was marked with nation-wide celebrations and jubilation that the unimaginable actually had happened.

Tuesday, January 25th, 2011 caused a collective shock to the nation. A multiplicity of microschocks (McKim and Massumi 2008, 53) facilitated the Revolution becoming *the* Revolution; the torture and murder of an innocent young man in the summer of 2010, the forgery of the 2010 parliamentary elections, the terrorist attack on an Orthodox Coptic Church in Alexandria, the

[14] For more information see: https://khaledfahmy.org/en/2011/02/02/the-battle-of-the-camel-february-2-2011/

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everyday economic and social struggles of living in Egypt and the subsequent aspirations for "a better life", and the non-conscious memory of the present (McKim and Massumi 2008, 62) of the success of the Tunisian Revolution and the ouster of former president Ben Ali and the glory associated with other past revolutions.

This intensification of microshocks did not stop by January 25th, it was followed by the microshocks of overwhelming participation in the demonstration, the brutal violence exercised by the police and the state media cover-up of the demonstrations. The demonstrations on the first day shocked a large number of Egyptians and became a collective event that was distributed across the bodies of Egyptians, who despite carrying different tendencies and capacities, have succeeded in acting in unison throughout the 18 days to depose former president Mubarak (McKim and Massumi 2008, 55–56).

The January 25th Revolution belonged to no-body in particular; it held the promise for somewhere else that is unimaginable in the present (Ahmed 2005, 97). The Revolution came into being because the bodies of Egyptians moved towards the promise of a more beautiful and just future and moved away from the objects and bodies that shackled them and made them suffer for years on end (Ahmed 2005, 108). The character of the Revolution was shaped by the movement of the revolutionaries towards one another; these movements meant that Egyptians from different walks of life were meeting each other for the first time, and the beauty of these meetings facilitated aspiring for a more beautiful and just future, as well as inspired courage and strength in the face of the adversity created by police violence. This mystical promise of 'elsewhere' was every revolutionary's dream and the 18 days made that dream closer and more attainable.

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The Personal and the Political beyond the 18 Days

The 18 days carried a lot of meanings and affects for the revolutionaries. They embodied agreements between bodies that allow the power of the individual body to be enhanced through

the forming of relations (McKim and Massumi 2008, 51). These agreements explain why the 18 days were extraordinarily special; the revolutionaries felt that they were so much more than just their individual selves, that they were part of something bigger than themselves and they were actively participating in shaping, that their bodies collectively face death together, that their bodies defeated the enemy together. It is worth noting, however, that these relations were not formed in a vacuum. Massumi's 'affective attunement' is a useful approach to grasp the complexity of the revolutionaries shaping the Revolution; it helps make sense of the affective differences within the same event, specifically regarding the different backgrounds of the revolutionaries and the different articulations of their aspirations (McKim and Massumi 2008, 56). During the 18 days, the inductive nature of affective politics was witnessed in how the revolutionaries were attuned to certain regions of tendency, futurity, and potential; the revolutionaries were inducted into revolutionary spheres and practices with the aim of dismantling the ancient regime, beginning with the removal of former president Mubarak. The 18 days became the Revolution, or at least its beginning because it concentrated the different ways of being interpellated by it (McKim and Massumi 2008, 57). The 18 days and what followed them couldn't be fully predetermined, it was defining itself as it unfolded, and ideological and material predeterminations such as class, geography, political and ideological leanings reasserted themselves and made themselves ingredient to the event of the Revolution after the ousting of Mubarak. We witnessed the emergence of numerous trajectories for the Revolution, now that Mubarak was out of the picture, and these trajectories were not all harmonious; in fact, they generated polarization and hostilities between bodies that once fought together.

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The dissonance among trajectories began appearing on the 11th of February. That day marked the first time Thoraya felt a sense of strangerhood in the Square. Upon entering the Square amidst the celebrations, she was sexually harassed, something that never happened during the 18 days. She did not mind the celebrations, but she did not feel like she had much in common with those who

were celebrating, as opposed to those she struggled with during the 18 days. Also, the feel of Mubarak's ousting as the endgame made her uncomfortable, she was still worried about what will happen with the military since they became in charge. She left the Square full of apprehension. Yehia's sentiments were in the same vein, he was angry because the celebrations were not necessarily linked to the struggle. He strongly objected to cleaning the Square on the following day as well, especially its graffiti because each stroke of color was earned and should not be removed by people who stayed home during the 18 days. Another reason for his agitation was that he felt that the people who did not participate - regardless of the reason - were cleaning to relieve themselves from the burden of no participation and he did not think that the burden should be lifted so easily.

The first major political milestone Egyptians had to contend with in 2011 was the Egyptian Constitutional Referendum, held on the 19th of March[15]. The choice was between wholesale approval or rejection of constitutional amendments to articles concerning the jurisdictions and responsibilities of the president and parliament. The choices were coupled with different political roadmaps; a majority of 'yes' votes meant that the next political milestones would be parliamentary and presidential elections, followed by assembling a new constitution drafting committee. A majority of 'no' votes meant that the process would start by assembling a new constitution drafting committee, followed by parliamentary and presidential elections. The referendum proved to be a highly polarizing event, with the majority of Islamist actors pushing for the 'yes' vote because they were more prepared for elections in terms of organization and resources. Other revolutionary coalitions, liberal and leftist parties and organizations pushed for the 'no' vote because they wanted

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[15] For more information see: https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/03/16/overview-of-egypt-s-constitutional-referendum-pub-43095
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/18/egypt-constitution-vote-divisons

to create a new state on solid democratic foundations and they needed more time and resources to compete in the elections. The ayes had it.

According to Yehia, this was the first instance where we could witness revolutionary purity in action. The term itself was not literally used but the concept was present; both camps accused the other of 'not' being with the Revolution. Yehia further complicates his interpretation of revolutionary purity by distinguishing between acts of idiocy and acts of treason against the Revolution. So when the Muslim Brotherhood leadership pushed for 'yes' because they believed that 'yes' would make the political roadmap shorter and the power in the hands of the people more quickly, for him they were wrong but not traitors, but for example, Morsi's speeches right before the coup can be considered both treason and idiocy.

Prior to the referendum in March, the political landscape in Egypt witnessed the formation of numerous political parties and organizations across the ideological spectrum, keen on engaging in the unfolding political process. Congruent with these formations were the weekly demonstrations in Cairo and other major cities, applying pressure on the government at the time to implement the political and economic reforms demanded by the demonstrators. My friends and I interacted differently with this vibrant political and social scene. Assi participated in urban beautification projects. Amr became involved in several political initiatives, in addition to the project that started during the 18 days to collect and archive audiovisual material created during that period. Fatma struggled after the ousting of Mubarak. She was depressed for two or three months and found an outlet in the demonstrations to step outside the fact that she does not know what to do with her life. The Revolution had been her dream and after its realization, she did not know what she was supposed to do next. Her university studies and extracurricular activities were no longer satisfactory for her. She tried to find meaning and value in the streets, but ultimately the demonstrations did not really help because the happiness she derived from the demonstrations was momentary and fleeting. The demonstrations left her more cynical because she was haunted

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by the question of 'what's next' and she associated the success or failure of the Revolution with her personal success or failure in life. Ragaa' acquired more freedom of movement and actively participated in the demonstrations and offered support to the parents of imprisoned demonstrators and young people. When Mubarak was ousted she was overjoyed because she felt that all the martyrs did not die in vain, however, she did not feel like she was part of the story and where she stood from all what was happening. She knew that people were trying to stop injustice and so she supported them, but the Revolution as an event and experience carried more profound meanings that she did not live. Interestingly, she felt a special affinity with the Syrian Revolution and has been an avid follower of its developments. She was responsible for collecting donations to help besieged Syrians and supporting Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers. Thoraya became part of the Progressive Revolutionary Youth Association, which helped her process the unfolding events and confrontations because she collaborated with her peers on drafting and disseminating statements and leaflets in response to said events. They also participated in the demonstrations together, thus imbuing her with solidarity and support. Yehia was an active participant in all the events and confrontations and became involved with different community initiatives concerned with raising political awareness, earthen architecture, and civic education.

As for me, I ensconced myself in the familiarity of civil society after the Revolution. Even though civil society was also changing due to an influx of ideas and actors thanks to the newly acquired freedom and access to the public sphere, it still was more familiar and seemingly welcoming that the streets.

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The Mohammad Mahmoud Clashes

The political parties, the demonstrations, and the community initiatives were sadly accompanied by violent clashes between the police and demonstrators. Clashes occurred on a monthly basis since February 2011 for a myriad of reasons. Of particular interest here are the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes that took place in the third week of November 2011. These clashes started

because the police dispersed a sit-in at Tahrir Square organized by the families of the martyrs and the injured of the Revolution who were demanding that the murderers and maimers of their family members be brought to justice and held accountable. The dispersal was also followed by the families' arrests.

Saturday, November 19th - Friday, November 25th, 2011

Ragaa' participated in the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes because it was the first time she felt that 'they were taking the Revolution from us'. She found out later through Facebook about the clashes because she was at a henna party. Among the first things she found out about the clashes that all the demonstrators who were at the front lines, particularly the first two, lost their eyes. Her main role was procuring medicines and learning first aid to help the demonstrators. She felt as though she was helping people do what they want to do, but she was not sure where she stood from everything that was happening. It was as if she did not give herself the right to feel that this was her struggle too, even though she participated in every demonstration and event since February 2011 and the Revolution took over her life completely.

Thoraya and Amr got together in March 2011. They spent all their time together and went to the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes together. Amr was mainly an observer because he was a 35-year-old man from an upper-class neighborhood in Cairo. He was not a fighter. He advanced closer to the front lines to observe what was happening and then retreated. Thoraya was harassed closer to the front lines. According to Amr, Thoraya was extremely excited at the time and was a stronger believer than him in revolutionary purity. She had a deep faith that the people would do the right thing. He, on the other hand, was more skeptical and pessimistic about how events would unfold due to what he knows about the predispositions of people. Against the backdrop of the clashes and flaring lights, Thoraya called her father and informed him of her decision to get married to Amr.

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Yehia was present at the clashes since their beginning. He was seething and felt completely helpless because he tried to rescue people who were trapped by the police against a fence but at least five of them were crushed to death. They died because they were not given a chance to escape, not because of live ammunition or suffocation from tear gas. He received two rubber bullets, one above his eyebrow and one in his leg, one in the morning and one in the evening of the same day. His brother accused him of participating in the clashes for the adrenaline rush and Yehia admits that this was partially true. There were instances in the clashes where they pushed back the police forces to the gates of the Ministry of Interior, but then they just turned back towards Tahrir Square. While it was unclear what the purpose of the clashes was, Yehia was euphoric when he listened to Tantawi's[16] speech. He did not care about the apology, he relished the fact that they unsettled SCAF, who were giving commands to the police throughout the week of Mohammad Mahmoud, sustained the clashes, and people kept on coming to Tahrir Square. He felt that if they decided to leave Tahrir Square to storm the Ministry of Defence, no one would be able to do anything to them.

Fatma participated in the clashes, as with every other demonstration or confrontation, because she did not want to miss a thing and she did not want her knowledge and experience with the Revolution to be mediated through anything or anyone. She participated in the clashes behind her parents' back because they were following the Muslim Brotherhood leadership's command to not engage with the clashes. She assumed multiple roles; she was part of the initiative to distribute medicines at the different field hospitals surrounding the Square. She made sandwiches for the protestors. Once the street was very empty, so she and a friend started chanting and were able to help a demonstration access the Square and the street. It was a huge victory for her. These roles reinforced her belief in the power of small acts within the clashes of Mohammad Mahmoud. Something inside her was telling her that 'the street' is definitely correct, but she did not feel the

[16] Head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. For more information see: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12441512

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certainty of the 18 days. She felt that her Muslim Brotherhood-influenced ethical code cracked because of the diverse people she was encountering since February 2011, challenging her imagination and worldview. She was also lacking the guidance that was usually offered by the Muslim Brotherhood. Accordingly, at that moment she decided to learn more and began seeking social sciences-themed reading groups and pursuing religious studies.

Assi participated in the parallel clashes in Alexandria because 'they (the police) are sons of bitches', and he would always engage in a fight with them. He wanted to be in Cairo during the clashes and so on Friday he took a train and headed from Ramses station to Mohammad Mahmoud street. He transported people to the field hospital and often reached the front lines, but people tried to dissuade him from the front lines because he did not know anything in Cairo apart from the street, the Square, and the train station. He did not participate in clashes in Cairo again because he felt that his presence in Alexandria is more important since their numbers are smaller there and everything occurred in Cairo, including decisions that were generalized regardless of their suitability for other contexts.

I spent the week of the clashes at home. I did not go to work that week because of the clashes and my movements were limited and monitored by my mother. My sister, on the other hand, was able to capitalize on her presence at the university and take the metro, meet our mutual friends at the platform so that technically she would not be violating my mother's decree that none of us should go to the Square during the clashes. I had another screaming match with my mother, not about letting me go, but about the purpose of the clashes. I did not really convince her. I realized that I experienced a surge of courage on the 28th of January, but I could never really retain it because I did not fulfill its potential. Coupled with my sense of rupture and subsequent lack of belonging and identification with the Revolution as it unfolded through the streets, I was never able to find myself within the Revolution, only on its margin.

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The Mohammad Mahmoud clashes elucidate the two main interpretations of revolutionary purity: 'the Revolution belongs to the streets' and 'the Revolution must be institutionalized'. The first interpretation resonates with the intensifications of danger, fear, violence, and death experienced by demonstrators and 'revolutionaries' who chose the streets. Depressingly enough, it became common knowledge through past clashes that the more people are present in the clashes, the greater the pressure placed on the police and the military to exercise restraint and the numbers of the dead and injured tend to decrease, relatively speaking. The moral judgment exercised through revolutionary purity carried within it a vulnerable plea: we need your help, please join us, not them (the military). During the Mohammad Mahmoud clashes, the Muslim Brotherhood leadership chose not to respond to the vulnerable plea and did not participate in the clashes. This absence led to the reformulation of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership as the 'revolutionaries' as objects of hate and sticking the Muslim Brotherhood leadership with the label of 'traitors' because they betrayed the Revolution by colluding with SCAF to 'institutionalize' the Revolution. The association of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership with treason indicates the loss of trust and good faith between the 'revolutionaries' and the Muslim Brotherhood leadership. The effect of this association is 'the creation of impressions of others who have invaded the space of the Revolution, threatening its existence' (Ahmed 2014, 46). The hatred aimed at the Muslim Brotherhood leadership emerged from a 'demand of love' as a 'demand of presence' for the sake of saving the Revolution, and frustration was the 'consequence of the necessary failure of that demand' meaning that 'hate and love are intimately tied together, in the intensity or the negotiation between presence and absence' (Ahmed 2014, 50). Consequently, the expulsion of the Muslim Brotherhood from the Revolution became necessary in order to protect the Revolution, retain its purity, and sustain it.

This definition through hatred was internalized by the Muslim Brotherhood leadership and they exercised said definition through hatred when they assumed power in June 2012; despite voicing a rhetoric of inclusion, the Muslim Brotherhood reciprocated the hate and excluded the

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'revolutionaries' and their parties and organizations from critical decision-making processes, deepening the social distance between them and culminating in the refusal of the 'revolutionaries' to respond to the vulnerable plea of the Muslim Brotherhood's interpretation of revolutionary purity: we need your help, please join us, not them (the military). The cruelty of the irony of the whole experience is palpable; both factions wanted to get rid of the military and avoid the return of a military state. Instead, they hated each other, accused each other of treason against the Revolution and that made the task of the military to destroy all dissidents easier.

On June 30th, 2013, on the one year anniversary of president Morsi's inauguration, large scale demonstrations took place demanding the resignation of president Morsi and the organization of early presidential elections. Upon president Morsi's refusal to step down, General AbdelFattah El-Sisi announced on July 3rd that president Morsi had been deposed and that the head of the high constitutional court Adli Mansour had been named the interim president, pending the organization of new presidential elections. In response, the Muslim Brotherhood organized two large-scale sit-ins at Rabe'a Square in Cairo and at El-Nahda Square in Giza. The sit-ins lasted 6 weeks and were violently dispersed on August 14th, 2013, claiming the lives of nearly 1000 (wikithawra 2013) [17] demonstrators.

The Massacre - Wednesday, August 14th, 2013

Assi went to the Library of Alexandria for a meeting, not knowing what happened in Cairo earlier that day. Upon arrival he found barricades and people looking visibly upset. He went inside and called the people he was supposed to meet, and they briefly informed him about what happened. On his way out, he found himself caught within clashes around the Bibliotheca and trying to help and escape with members of the Muslim Brotherhood. He did not register that they were members of the Muslim Brotherhood, he only saw people in civilian and police attires, so he automatically

[17] (wikithawra 2013)

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allied himself with the civilians and eventually managed to disentangle himself from the clashes. He went back home and watched what happened in Rabe'a.

Ragaa' wanted to go to Rabe'a but her father was terrified. Her guilt was more amplified than usual, but she was understanding due to a recent personal bereavement and the risk of not coming back was extremely high. Throughout the day she was on the phone, trying to make sure that her friends were okay. She briefly went out to rescue some people who called her at the entrance of the Rabe'a square. The following day she went to Al-Iman mosque to help with the bodies stored there.

Fatma went to the morgue to help with the bodies. She would go through their belongings to identify them, write their names on stickers, and call their families to inform them of their death. Helping out at the morgue was not a difficult decision to make because it was at the intersection of her certainty that helping the dead was the right thing to do, and her pre-existing passion and fascination with death because it represented another world that she could not see, one that she desperately curious about.

Thoraya and Amr were with their daughter, watching the dispersal unfold on television.

Yehia went to the Nahda sit-in at Giza to check on his uncle who was staying there. The sit-in was already dispersed, and he only saw the remains of the fires. Over the phone, his uncle told him that he managed to escape and that he was hiding at the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University and he would not be able to leave because of his beard. Yehia told him that he will arrange for his father to pick him up in his car. He consciously decided not to go to Rabe'a or Al-Iman mosque because he 'did not want to do this to himself'. He went to the morgue to respond to the calls for help to release the bodies, however, upon arrival he did not really do anything and wandered aimlessly.

I woke up to the news of the dispersal of the sit-ins blaring from one of the statist channels, praising the speed and efficacy of the efforts of the police and the military in clearing up the two squares in Cairo and Giza. I was stunned in silence.

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Chapter 3 – Revolutionary Purity *beyond* the Revolution (2014 – Present)

Following the coup d'etat and subsequent defeat of the Revolution, a lot of hope was riding on the anniversary of the Revolution in January 2014 to protect access to the public sphere. In Alexandria, Assi was designated Field Supervisor for the anniversary demonstration, hosted by a coalition of the Revolutionary Socialists, Strong Egypt, April 6th Movement, and the remnants of Kefaya movement. In a makeshift headquarters, Assi and his peers worked on how they could safely organize the demonstration and they were receiving calls from the field relaying the situation in the streets. After the second call, it was decided that no demonstration would take place because the police were well prepared and arresting people right, left and center. In Cairo, the demonstration started from Mostafa Mahmoud Square (in Giza). The police shot at them, so they dispersed. He met a friend who was shot in the back and could not feel her legs, so he carried her until they found a vehicle that transported her and her friend to a hospital. Yehia and his friends heard of a demonstration at the Journalists' Syndicate downtown and headed there. The pro-regime celebrations were at Tahrir Square, the 'revolutionaries' demonstration was at the Syndicate, and the Muslim Brotherhood was supposed to congregate at the nearby Attaba Square, but the police had been routinely arresting them throughout the day. The police adopted a new technique for dispersing the demonstrations: driving armored vehicles, stopping briefly in front of a demonstration, shooting as many rounds of rubber bullets as possible, and then driving away. They tried to throw rocks at the armored vehicles but realized that the demonstration will not be able to do much, so they went to have lunch.

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Seeping despair

The defeat of the Revolution affected people's lives differently. While having lunch, Yehia got a call that some of his friends were stuck in an apartment building and cannot escape the police. He

and a friend went to help them out and he got arrested in the process and spent a month in jail. He relocated to a European city one year later. Ragaa' fell into a deep depression that lasted almost 3 years, triggered by her personal bereavement and the deaths and arrests of many of her friends. Assi received multiple blows over a short time period. His last demonstration was after Mubarak's acquittal, where he only chanted 'Shit… Acquitted'. He also lost one of his best friends in a dubious train accident. He was expelled from his faculty. He was expelled from the Revolutionary Socialists. He felt like he was suspended in the air after the Revolution ended, incapable of returning to his daily reality or becoming who he wants to be. Fatma experienced a sexual harassment incident where she pursued Religious Studies and blowing the whistle on her harasser alienated her from a lot of her social circles, including her Marxist professor who was against talking about sexual harassment at the time. Thoraya and Amr focused on nurturing their family and 'organizing' their lives. They had their second child, Amr threw himself into his work and Thoraya completed her Ph.D. I did the only thing I knew how to do: I went back to work.

Living with despair

I asked my friends whether they would participate in a revolution again or not. They all responded in the affirmative, with special considerations and questions arising due to their individual contexts and experiences. Among these considerations and questions were Amr's musings concerning what his role and function would be. Ragaa' is looking forward to the next battle and she believes it will emerge from a desire for vengeance. Assi distinguished between his known stance now and what would actually happen during the event itself. Thoraya would participate in demonstrations against the military. Yehia wants a new, popular revolution that mobilizes the entire Egyptian population, not just the elites and the intellectuals. Fatma highlighted the importance of understanding the state and identifying acceptable limits for negotiation with the state because she learned - academically and practically - that it is not enough to have a radical revolution.

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My friends' willingness to participate in a future revolution stems from a long process of introspection about the Revolution and how it impacted their lives. They recontextualized it, as in Assi's case who realized that limiting the Revolution to the Square was a fallacy and asserted that as long as he's 'revolutionizing' in his work and in his mind, then the Revolution did not truly end. Fatma became more critical of the Revolution as an event and wary of romanticizing it, questioning the significance of the movements and actions that occurred between 2011 and 2013. She also echoed the words of one of her professors 'if you cannot defeat your enemy, study them', stressing the importance of assuming any responsibility towards the current political, economic and social reality. Thoraya brings together the aforementioned perspectives into how she raises her kids. They're growing up with the certainty that 'the Revolution is coming' and she's trying to ingrain the values of solidarity and refusing injustice. Several of them reflected on the cyclical nature of history and how another revolution is bound to happen again. It is worth noting that the critical cogs at work among my friends do not deter them from remembering the possibilities that the Revolution offered in their lives. These possibilities took the form of increased mobility, the courage to start a new phase in life, and the sense of ownership of the public sphere.

Reflections about the Revolution brought the question of violence to the centerfold. There was a consensus that the 'revolutionaries' were not violent during the January 25th Revolution. This consensus was reached by distinguishing between carrying arms against the state, and the destruction of public property to disarm the state, i.e. burning down police stations. Fatma, Ragaa', and Thoraya commented on the fact that the 'true' revolutionaries were the ones who burned down the police stations and cars on the 28th of January 2011. There was also a general reflection on the necessity of disarming the arm of the state (the police) in future revolutions or confrontations with the state. Assi added that organization supersedes weaponry, in the sense that anything can be weaponized, including pots and pans as long as there are a manifesto, strategy, and tactics that organize the people against their foes.

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The aforementioned vignettes concerning preparing for a future revolution resonates with Alain Badiou's notion of 'being 'prepared for an event'. Preparedness for an event means being subjectively disposed to recognizing new possibilities. It also means being in a state of mind where one is aware that the world order or prevailing powers do not have absolute control over all the possibilities. He then highlights two ways for preparation. Firstly, one must remain faithful to a past event and its lessons. Secondly, in congruence with the first method, one must criticize the established order (Badiou, Tarby, and Burchill 2013, 12–13)

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Conclusion

Where Can Revolutionary Purity Take Us?

Some of my friends believe that there's no such thing as 'revolutionary purity', that it is imprudent to associate 'purity' with anything, let alone revolutions. I believe that I internalized the notion of 'revolutionary purity'. Between 2011 and 2013, I constantly, ruthlessly questioned my worthiness of associating myself with the surely glorious future of Egypt since I didn't contribute to its turbulent present. Between the denial and the internalization lies a spectrum of interpretations of revolutionary purity. According to some of my friends, revolutionary purity carried positive connotations such as having belief, having faith and bringing them together with love, having a clear ethical stance towards injustice, and raising awareness about the enemy by defining it and examining it. It carried negative connotations as well such as being a tool of judgment and differentiation with the consequence of the expendability of those who are deemed impure. Additionally, it was implied that revolutionary purity is a cliché that serves certain agendas and conceals different privileges and special interests. These connotations blurred the boundaries of the personal and the political, in the sense that some of them were related to personal attributes such as abnegation, passion and practiced honesty, while others were related to social dynamics and machinations, such as moral judgment, and inclusion and/or exclusion. Furthermore, the 'presence' of revolutionary purity in people was associated with younger generations who acted passionately and selflessly, without any political calculations, such as the young bases of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Revolutionary Socialists, as well as the 16 and 17-year-olds who never hesitated to join the front lines, who sacrificed their lives, their health and their freedom. The descriptors of revolutionary purity assigned by my friends render it as a force that is simultaneously ambiguous and powerful, and it has its ebbs and flows on the shores of the personal and the political.

It carried a lot of meanings for the January 25th Revolution and its revolutionaries, which in this context refers to my friends and myself. For us, it helped situate our personal aspirations such as our desires to belong and have purposeful and meaningful lives, and our personal frustrations such as resentments against authority figures and structures, experiencing state violence and oppression and witnessing social injustices and class inequality in the political and social spheres. We were unconsciously working for a revolution in all available avenues. The Revolution came and went, but revolutionary purity keeps on finding a way back. It pokes us to power through despair whenever possible (although it is not always possible). It compels us to remember the Revolution, recontextualize it, re-situate it and critique it, as a stepping stone towards future revolutionary endeavors. The question to contemplate now is the possibility of the convergence of 'preparing' for a revolution and the exceptional, 'shock-like' quality of revolutionary events.

As for the trajectory of the January 25th Revolution, emanating from the intersection of the personal and the political, revolutionary purity was deployed to cast a halo around the first 18 days of the Revolution, and cast a shadow on what did not emulate the sanctity of the first 18 days. The halo and the shadow manifested themselves in the two modes of politicization, which despite not being mutually exclusive and one can move freely between them, were pitted against one another, sticking the other with the label of 'traitor'. Parallely, the real enemy, with its formidable resources and capacities, was at best left to its own devices, and at worst viewed as the savior from the 'other traitor'. Thus, revolutionary purity raises the question of how to reconcile the differential attunements towards a revolutionary event, with the urgency of collectively recognizing and countering the ancien régime in whatever cloak it dons?

The insights and potential areas of inquiry would not have been possible, save for two critical elements in this research endeavor. The first being "Al-Naqaa' Al-Thawri" and the desire to explore different revolutionary traditions than those of the French Revolution, for example.

The struggle of who is the truest revolutionary prevailed across time and space. Utilizing the pervasive linkage between 'revolution' and 'purity' in Arabic revolutionary traditions, allows us to explore this struggle in a new light, and better grasp its complexity.

The second element is the particular nature of the research. Studying a force that may or may not exist would have been very difficult if it weren't for the stories that I collected which allowed me to see the ebbs and flows of revolutionary purity in the lives of people who participated in the Revolution. Furthermore, re-living the stories of my friends with the Revolution, as well as getting to know them in a more profound way allowed me to understand and feel the Revolution in a way that was previously unfamiliar to me. Studying the Revolution and its alleged purity through their lives helped me find myself, in a way, in the Revolution.

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