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SCALE IN THE BALANCE: READING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR ARABIC FICTION ("THE ARABIC BOOKER")

Abstract
This article brings area studies approaches to Arabic novels into dialogue with world literature through a critical engagement with the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), commonly known as "the Arabic Booker." This prize launches Arabic novels out of national fields and into a world marketplace whose reading practices have been shaped by the Anglophone postcolonial novel, canonized by the IPAF's mentor: the Booker Prize Foundation. Against this institutional backdrop, the article develops a scale-based method to revisit the intersection of postcolonial tropes and national epistemologies in two winning IPAF novels: Bahaʾ Taher's *Wahat al-Ghurub* (*Sunset Oasis*, 2007) and Saud Alsanousi's *Saq al-Bambu* (*The Bamboo Stalk*, 2013). By interrogating the literary and political work performed by comparative scale in these novels, the article argues that dominant applications of theoretical methods inherited from postcolonial studies fail to supply trenchant forms of critique for Arabic novels entering world literature. Bridging the methods and perspectives of area studies with those of comparative literature, this article develops new reading practices that are inflected through contemporary institutional settings for literature's circulation, translation, and canonization.

Keywords: fiction/novels; gender; literature; postcolonialism; translation

The circles of oppression in Bahaʾ Taher's *Wahat al-Ghurub* (*Sunset Oasis*, 2007, hereafter *Sunset*) close in on the Siwa Oasis, a colonized periphery of the 19th-century Egyptian state, and finally on a woman: Maleeka.[1] As a child, she cross-dresses to wander in the forbidden zones of temple ruins. Her mother forces her to marry an elderly man, instrumentalizing her body to make peace between feuding community factions, but Maleeka runs away. She is soon widowed and becomes "the ghoul-woman," a liminal figure between life and death who is ritually separated from her community and eventually killed.[2] As a character, Maleeka is unassimilable to the nation, marriage, and even language. She communicates primarily through replicas of statues abandoned in the ruins, inscribing the uncanny into a novel in which most speaking subjects are both oppressor and oppressed.

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Because *Sunset* makes the silence of a marginalized woman the epicenter of colonial and gendered modes of oppression, it will be tempting to interpret Maleeka as a Siwan subaltern, a figure of textual resistance.[3] In what follows, however, I trace an alternative route toward Maleeka's meaning. I do so through a materialist and theoretical engagement with the institution that, in 2008, secured *Sunset*'s translation into numerous languages: the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), commonly known as "the Arabic Booker." This prize, which has attained unprecedented success since its founding in 2007, annually selects an Arabic novel for recognition, financial reward for its author, and translation. My reading of Taher's novel is not, however, a general paradigm for all IPAF novels (i.e., those recognized by this prize). Rather, I use *Sunset* and the IPAF as a lens to revisit the relation between the Arabic novel, material context, and critique.

Prizes are nodes that bring together diverse actors concerned with literature, including journalists, publishers, writers, and critics; they make overt the imbrication of literature in economies of exchange and reproduction; and they assert, by selecting and celebrating texts, commonalities between genres and texts. Cultural fields and audiences are identified and invoked, as consumers and critics participate in the consecration of the work that "best" represents a community or standard. Moreover, in the debates and scandals around prizes, perennial questions of literature's relation to society and politics are laid bare and reworked. Thus, prizes are often studied from materialist and sociological perspectives that tend to marginalize textual reading.[4] Key among these works is James English's *Economy of Prestige*, which argues that "institutionally, the [literary] prize functions as a claim to authority and an assertion of that authority—the authority, at bottom, to produce cultural value."[5] Sarah Brouillette's works on the creative economy also offer compelling accounts of the material and political contexts that shape literature's production and circulation. These scholars draw on Pierre Bourdieu's legacy, notably his characterization of the literary field after the 19th century as a "dualist structure" between a "restricted field" of high art and intellectual production and "a mass entertainment audience."[6]

Despite this privileging of the material, though, few are willing to cede literature's capacity to offer creative or resistant readings of the world—nor should they be. Reading *with* the IPAF, I suggest, must address texts as representational objects *and* commodities. To this end, I trace the institutional contours of this prize before exploring its implications for reading practices we might bring to novels entering world literature. Currently at the center of debates in literary studies, world literature in this context denotes a corpus of original and translated texts from across the globe that circulates primarily, but not exclusively, in English and that is sustained by transnational institutions—most relevantly, here, publishing houses and the literary-critical output (again, primarily, but not exclusively, in English) of the contemporary academy.[7] Of particular concern to my argument is the malleability of theoretical paradigms—such as the subaltern—that have entered the canon of literary criticism vis-à-vis Arabic texts. In this, I respond to a call by Mohamed-Salah Omri for dialogue between theory and Arabic literary scholarship, which he characterizes as entangled in area studies. In a short but evocative essay, Omri suggests that scholars tend to apply theory to texts without allowing for the possibility that the latter might require us to reconceptualize the terms and uses of theory itself. By opening this one-way street to two-way traffic, Omri concludes, "Arabic literature has the potential to challenge literary theory to be genuinely global,

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flexible, and self-critical."[8] Omri cites the IPAF as an opening for this traffic, arguing that despite the prize's "symbolic as well as financial capital," which "directly affects the production and circulation of Arabic literature," the IPAF has "not been discussed, let alone theorized."[9]

In addition to general cautions over the portability of theory, I will suggest that theorizations of IPAF novels must remain flexible because this prize produces a contingent intersection between national and world literary fields, asserting the ability to launch expressions of the Arabic novel into global circulation. On the one hand, IPAF novels may be read through their "original" national frames, a move that typically deploys expertise associated with area studies: the history of, for example, Egyptian, Iraqi, and Algerian nationalisms and their respective expressions in the Egyptian, Iraqi, and Algerian novel. Such readings foreground the specificity of national fields, including their institutions, textual norms and genres, and notions of literature's function. On the other hand, when an IPAF novel is translated into new semiotic codes and reading publics, it takes on new afterlives.[10] Whether we are concerned with a pun on a president's name that doesn't quite translate or a reference to national history that elicits no echo in an Anglophone reader, the meaning that an IPAF novel produces will become, simply, other. Scholars routinely perform a bridging work to address these afterlives in the classroom, teaching the skills to read a translated novel through national histories and iconographies while simultaneously deconstructing a specter that so often lurks in worldly readings of Arabic novels: Orientalism.[11]

A stark either/or between national and world literary frames, however, cannot apprehend the ways in which a movement between them is institutionalized in bodies such as the IPAF, nor can it grapple with the implications for reading. My reading of the IPAF, while concerned with the worldly, does not dispense with national frames for Arabic novels, whose critical lives are often tied to national histories, nor does it treat them as a guarantor of "authentic" meaning against a disembodied world literature. To the contrary, it argues for a resituation of national frames, institutionally and hermeneutically, within the nodal relation the IPAF represents. The readings that follow interrogate tropes associated with the postcolonial novel (e.g., polyvocalism, hybridity, subalternity), which destabilize national monoliths, and their (non)intersection with national epistemologies in IPAF novels.[12] I argue that texts like Taher's, whose worldly legibility may hinge on references to such tropes, in fact foreclose the radical forms of critique that literary theory today associates with narratives of peripheral borderlands, silenced subalterns, and ineffably plural forms of identity. In this regard, my argument participates in critiques of world literature's tendency "to suggest a political mind without betraying a real one," but roots its text-based claims in contemporary contexts for the production of Arabic literature and institutional settings for its reception.[13]

Because IPAF novels are on the move, physically and interpretively, I use the paradigm of scale, developed in the context of Anglophone African literature, to shuttle between text and context, nation and world. Scale foregrounds the role of comparison as a textual strategy (e.g., a novel telescopes between nation and periphery) and as a critical-literary task—one that must be continually re-evaluated in tension with the novels under study. IPAF novels invite us to interrogate the uses of comparative method in relation to Arabic literature, a task this essay addresses by combining methods from postcolonial and world literary theory and from area studies, notably research on the Egyptian novel.

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A key premise is that methods associated with literary and disciplinary space (e.g., the Arabic or African novel) render aspects of texts legible and others opaque; without clutching at comprehensiveness, we may invigorate critique by attending to these fleeting illegibilities and, in turn, to our reproduction of method across disciplines.

THE PRIZE

Like any prize, the IPAF confers legitimacy on expressions of a genre: the Arabic novel, heuristically defined by its language of production. It was born in a 2005 conversation at the Frankfurt Book Fair between Ibrahim El Moallem, head of Egypt's Dar El Shorouk publishing house and then president of the Association of Arab Publishers, and British publisher George Weidenfeld, as described below by IPAF administrator Fleur Montanaro:

> They discussed the regrettably low amount of high quality contemporary Arabic fiction being translated into leading Western languages. The suggestion was made that an international prize for Arabic literature, based on the highly successful Man Booker Prize, would be a good way to encourage recognition of high quality Arabic fiction and to ensure increased translation of such literature into world languages.[14]

From these early stages, the IPAF was imagined to be "Arab owned but internationally facilitated."[15] The Arab ownership lies in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the international facilitation stems from the Booker Prize Foundation, which commissioned the feasibility study for the prize and provides its informal title as well as ongoing mentoring. From 2007 to 2011, the Emirates Foundation, a venture philanthropy organization, funded the IPAF. In 2011, the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) took over. This state institution supports a range of cultural and artistic initiatives, most famously the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi on Saadiyat Island, a hub for "luxury-based experiences" in commerce, culture, and tourism.[16] With these financial backers, the IPAF injected significant capital into the regional prize circuit, offering US $10,000 to six short-listed writers and an additional US $50,000 to the winner.

The IPAF selection procedure is as follows: each year, publishers nominate up to three of their own novels to a panel of judges, chosen annually by the prize's Board of Trustees.[17] The judges select a long list and subsequently a short list.[18] Each list is announced to the media, building up to the announcement of the winning novel in a gala celebration on the eve of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. Prominent names have graced these panels—including Mohammed Berrada, Georges Tarabishi, and Fadhil al-Azzawi—and each year a non-Arab literary specialist is included "to ensure an international dimension."[19]

The IPAF has drawn on expertise that the Booker Foundation honed over decades in the United Kingdom. Its Man Booker Prize dates back to 1968 (when it was called the Booker Prize for Fiction) and is known colloquially as the Booker.[20] The role of the Booker in canonizing the Anglophone postcolonial novel will be discussed below. Logistically, the common features of the Booker and IPAF are the length of the short list (six titles); the initial role of publishers in selecting novels; the size and composition of the judges' panel (five; a mix of academics, writers, and critics); the gala announcement

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of the winner; and the postponement of the winning announcement following the release of the short list. Richard Todd suggests that the rise in the Booker's fortunes in the early 1980s can be in part attributed to its decision to delay the announcement of the winning novel, creating "a potent brew of suspense and speculation" in the press.[21] If the prominence of IPAF short-listed novels—with dust jackets touting the distinction like a title—and the media buzz are any indication, the brew has been no less potent for Arabic fiction. Indeed, the IPAF seems to embrace the media hype that often makes scholars squint askance at prizes.

Prizes tend to be a neglected stepchild in scholarship because they evoke the spectatorship of popular culture and the materialism against which high literature and criticism define themselves. Scholars often dismiss prizes as an antithesis to literature's rarified realm, while the sociology of literature has long suggested that prizes produce this opposition between materialism and a "pure" realm of art. They permit writers, critics, and academics (who benefit from literature's restricted capital) to perform their investment in an art whose separation from the market must be constantly reproduced. This pure realm, English notes, "stands in relation to the economy of cultural prestige" much as gold stood in relation to "the cash economy in the days of the gold standard—the perfectly magical guarantor of an imperfectly magical system."[22] The very possibility of "selling out" to the market presumes this binary. English thus concludes that "antiprize rhetoric" is, in fact, "part of the apparatus of prizes," reproducing and recirculating the cultural value that is their very *raison d'être*.[23]

Critiques of the IPAF have suggested that with a publisher's eye on driving up sales, it favors "sociocultural" novels characterized by easy reading and neglects experimental works that are less liable to gain wide readership.[24] Others speculate about hidden agendas; for example, the IPAF is rumored to favor male writers.[25] These critiques accept the prize's status as an arbiter of literary value and thus transform it into a site for valuable debates on Arabic literatures and diversity (or lack thereof) among leading authors in the field. Yet these approaches do little to theorize or critique the notion that the IPAF could constitute such a site. Developing the terms of such a critique requires a digression into the institutional formation of the IPAF as a producer of literary value and, subsequently, into its relation to its mentor: the Booker Prize.

DETERRITORIALIZATION

A striking aspect of the IPAF's impact has been a widespread acceptance of its authority to negotiate the Arabic novel's entrance into world literature. Critiques have focused on regional geographies of culture, notably the shift to the Gulf, with remarkably little to say about the international facilitation of the prize.[26] We can trace this legitimacy, following English, to the value the IPAF produces: a diligently publicized claim to transparency that is enmeshed in the move to global institutions and markets. The IPAF's founding narrative asserts a basic lack in regional prizes; in 2007 "it was recognised that many literary prizes in the Arab world were either local or not entirely independent and transparent in their processes."[27] Intent on constructing itself as the first neutral prize for the Arabic novel, the IPAF has ensured a balance of age, gender, and nationality in committees of judges. In a further gesture toward integrity, judges' names remain anonymous until the announcement of the short list, and individuals affiliated with

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publishers that nominate novels cannot serve as judges. The prize's departure from "the Arab world" is thus a deterritorialization: from local institutions to a world brand and from rumors of corruption to international transparency. And it has been successful: no writer, to this author's knowledge, has rejected an IPAF award.

The following reading traces the contours of one national field—Egypt—to elucidate the deterritorialized value the IPAF has put into successful circulation. My reading attends to the Egyptian field for reasons both intellectual and pragmatic. Cairo, a major literary-cultural center, has historically been seen as a broker of prestige in Arabic literature. This status is now in dispute due to the meteoric rise of the Gulf states—a shift of which the IPAF is symptomatic. Egypt has also been central in scholarship, yielding important sociological works on literature and culture. Finally, the Egyptian literary field constitutes the necessary background against which to read Taher's *Sunset,* below, with the IPAF.

In contrast to the IPAF's acceptance, the *sine qua non* of antiprize rhetoric is prize rejection. In 2003, Sonallah Ibrahim rejected the Cairo Prize for the Novel, awarded to him personally by Minister of Culture Faruq Husni. After offering "a virulent diatribe against the Egyptian regime," Ibrahim announced "I publicly decline the Prize because it is awarded by a government that, in my opinion, lacks the credibility of bestowing it."[28] Under Bourdieu's dualist structure, we would read Ibrahim as partaking in a "long tradition of sincere animosity between artists and bourgeois consecrations," in which artists act as "freedom fighters on the old model of art versus money."[29] When the field is understood in these terms, authors who have garnered prestige in the restricted field can "put their symbolic capital . . . to work politically by linking autonomy with truth."[30] These are what Bourdieu terms old-style intellectuals.[31] However, Ibrahim's rejection points up the role of the state, not the market, and its legitimacy in determining hierarchies of art.

This dispensation adheres to arguments by Richard Jacquemond and Jessica Winegar, who have revealed complex relations of patronage and contestation that took shape between the Egyptian state and writers and artists, respectively, in the second half of the 20th century.[32] Both underscore the vital role of the state after 1952 in shaping these fields and the centrality of the nation, as a conceptual and affective frame, in intellectuals' evaluation of art and literature's value. Indeed, as Winegar argues, in the culture wars of 1990s Egypt, "the state was continually held accountable against an ideal of it as the primary creator, nurturer, and protector of the nation."[33] Both Winegar and Jacquemond argue that this formation of Egypt's cultural fields explains what may otherwise sound anachronistic: intellectuals' valorization of political commitment as a measure of literature's meaning.[34] Moreover, it requires moving beyond a strict understanding of the market/art binary as it has been studied in Anglophone settings to interrogate the relation between authorship and the literary field.[35] As Jacquemond puts it, "the written word" has become "the most important expression of [Egypt's] national imaginary," while the writer is seen as uniquely equipped to "give a true and authoritative version of history."[36] The implications of this formation for reading are explored in the discussion of *Sunset* below. Outside the text, however, Jacquemond situates authors between the position of writer and scribe, with the latter corresponding to a mouthpiece for state ideology. The state, acting as patron, is not separate from a writer's material success; thus, the autonomy of the writer is produced first in opposition to the scribe and

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her state. Indeed, Jacquemond suggests that after 1958, literary prizes in Egypt became symptomatic of "the overextended character of state control" in determining literary value; this perception became particularly pertinent in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the Mubarak regime reasserted the role of the state in the literary-cultural sphere.[37]

The IPAF's insistence on neutrality can thus be understood as a move away from the entanglement of literary capital with state interests—including in the Gulf, where a parallel vision of authorial autonomy versus a state/market hybrid dominates. Scholars have interpreted Arab writers' acceptance of non-IPAF Gulf prizes as an "exchange of symbolic [and] material capital," and scandals surrounding these prizes have similarly revolved around the imbrication of literature in wealthy states' control over culture and, more particularly, censorship.[38] A cautionary tale in this vein is the withdrawal of the Sultan Bin Al Owais Cultural Award for Poetry from Saadi Youssef in 2004 following his criticisms of Shaykh Zayid bin Al Nahyan, the late ruler of the UAE.[39]

Still, if national prizes are viewed with skepticism, the IPAF's success cannot be attributed to the mere fact of partnering with a foreign institution. The IPAF invites comparison to the American University in Cairo's Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature, established in 1996, which leveraged the global legitimacy of the Nobel Laureate to consecrate the best Arabic novel from anywhere in the world.[40] In 1996, Ibrahim declined the inaugural award, an act described by Samia Mehrez, former chair of the award:

> The first award was intended for [Ibrahim], one of the alley's [i.e., nation's] most prominent and "trustworthy" [authors], in recognition of his highly acclaimed novel *Dhat* (*Zaat*). But Ibrahim . . . who, as a staunch leftist and nationalist, has always had a problematic relationship with AUC as an American institution in Egypt, discreetly declined the award.[41]

Certainly, Ibrahim's discretion suggests that rejecting the AUC award courts more risk than rejecting a state prize. But Mehrez's interpretation tells a similar story, in which Ibrahim pits his symbolic capital—his political stance and moral authority as an autonomous writer—against the merging entity of the Mubarak state and US political-cultural influence, embodied in AUC. This reading is made explicit in arguments against the prize, which condemn AUC's "political agenda and its well-known intelligence role in Egypt," and argue that "AUC was actually 'using the name of Naguib Mahfouz' in order to 'seduce' [writers] through the promise of translation that combined both symbolic and material gain."[42] In this latter claim, the market indirectly enters the fray: the autonomy of Mahfouz as a national writer is pitted against the global (i.e., Anglophone) market for fiction, rendered a further symptom of US hegemony.

A crucial dimension of the IPAF as a node *out* of the region and *into* world literature is the novelty presented by the "global" Booker Foundation. The prize's partnership with this foundation marks a separation from states and a rapprochement with a prestigious literary brand perceived as external to regional tangles of political-economic influence and culture.[43] Thus, the IPAF's production of cultural value relies on distancing prize giving—as a brand and a process—from fields in which prizes materialize the overlap of state patronage and literary capital.[44] In this perception, however, the IPAF's placement in another genealogy of capital and prize giving is occluded.

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In Anglophone literature, the Booker is known for canonizing the postcolonial novel, with awards made to figures such as J.M. Coetzee (1983, 1999), Arundhati Roy (1997), and Salman Rushdie (1981). Few dispute Rushdie's representative status in this canon since he won the superlative Booker of Bookers in 1993 for *Midnight's Children*. Yet the Booker has been lambasted for its implication in colonial economies and the construction of postcolonial exoticism. In 1972, English writer John Berger accepted the Booker while announcing, in a notorious display of old-style intellectualism, he would donate half his prize money (then £5,000) to the British Black Panther Party. He pointed out that the Booker McConnell company, which established the Booker Prize for Fiction, earned its wealth as a sugar plantation company in British Guyana.[45] Thus, critics have noted that the Booker's "frequent recognition of postcolonial authors carries the dubious tincture of the company's history."[46] More recently, Graham Huggan's critique of the postcolonial exotic has skewered the Booker for its celebration of literature that commodifies and domesticates the postcolonial Other.[47] Huggan argues that postcolonial fiction, an established niche in the publishing world and a staple of undergraduate literature courses, satisfies a touristic impulse among privileged readers to consume exotic fiction from the Global South.

Does this genealogy imply that the IPAF is postcolonial? A certain rewriting of the IPAF's structure might cast it as such: a British literary institution with ties to colonial economies provides the expertise, and a Gulf emirate, until 1971 a Trucial State of Great Britain's informal empire, provides the funding. The raw materials of Arabic novels are brought to global markets via translation into English; an English institution, worse yet, is said to guard against corrupt rulers in the region.[48] Yet while such readings of the IPAF merit attention, the content and implication of "the postcolonial" must be worked through with care. The applicability of postcolonial theory to diverse expressions of the Arabic novel, states and societies in the region, and the role of intellectual production has been in question for some time.[49] Although the IPAF is funded by TCA Abu Dhabi, the Arabic novel's imbrication in an economy branded by tourism cannot be adequately comprehended or critiqued by fast analogies to touristic reading practices. Moreover, in textual criticism, *pace* Brouillette's critique of Huggan, we might be cautious that the work of debunking the postcolonial exotic does not presume insight into an "authentic," local or national textual realm.[50] Rather than apply ready notions of postcolonial critique to the IPAF, let us revisit the emergence of the Anglophone postcolonial novel within global markets.

Recent scholarship concurs that since the 1980s the market for literature has globalized through the consolidation of publishing houses. Brouillette highlights the creation and increasing diversification of niche markets that resulted from this consolidation, wherein a group of major firms (e.g., Holtzbrinck/Macmillan, Penguin Random House, HarperCollins) and their imprints dominate. She argues that one outcome of this shift has been the new viability of a market for "serious" literary fiction.[51] It is within this niche market, made up of aesthetically educated readers, that we find the submarket for postcolonial literature in English. Translated IPAF novels now circulate within this global economy.[52] Thus, the transnational alliance between TCA Abu Dhabi and the Booker Prize Foundation must be understood as one expression of a publishing industry that perpetuates imperial translational practices and market inequalities, but that has also produced and marketed the canon of novels that *critique* the representational legacies

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of colonialism and anticolonial nationalisms. As IPAF novels circulate into this global canon, the prize's material genealogy must nuance assumptions that they, particularly in their postcolonial attributes, constitute unmediated resistance to a hegemonic world market; the implications of this point for reading will be returned to in the discussion of scale below.

In many ways, none of this is news to the studies of the Egyptian field discussed above, which chart how actors navigate state neoliberalism and the hegemony of "Western" standards in cultural production. In Arabic literary studies, scholars have attended to the impact of "Western" markets and institutions in Egypt that began in the 19th-century *nahḍa*.[53] Their scholarship permits readings of the IPAF's impact on domestic and regional publishing networks; on the changing calculations of publishers; and on the styles and forms of the Arabic novel confronting the pressures of hegemony. However, they remain rooted in a national, or area studies, perspective that considers the impact of world markets on the local, and thus do little to engage texts as they depart from the nation, institutionally and imaginatively, through the nodal formation represented by the IPAF.

Today's "economy of cultural prestige," English writes, "is a global one, in which the many local cultural markets and local scales of value are bound into ever tighter relations of interdependence."[54] For English, globalization has diminished the nation-state as the frame for the production of cultural value. The "tendency of prizes . . . to facilitate exchange of symbolic capital between the indigenous and the metropolitan marketplaces—often by circumventing strictly national institutions—has become much more pronounced."[55] English shows how this economy of prestige forges direct connections between world literature and local, or subnational, zones and the writers who can be identified with them—"indeed whose place within world literature [is] a function of their particular relationship to those local roots."[56] The nation thus cedes institutional place to a shuttling between local sites and the global. As English notes, the nationalization of culture industries that accompanied decolonization and the concomitant valorization of nationalism have faded since the 1970s; while the nation remains an index of value, it is not necessary for an artist ("the local hero") to valorize the nation to be consumed and understood in world markets.[57] Indeed, literary invocations of nationalism today appear anachronistic, out of step with a globalized, hybrid, and mobile world.

It is in light of this that the link between literature and tourism in the IPAF becomes legible. TCA Abu Dhabi celebrates a marriage of development, culture, and preservation, calling for the global promotion of "the heritage, culture and traditions of Abu Dhabi" and its recognition as "a world-class, sustainable destination which makes a unique contribution to the global cultural landscape."[58] For English, the deterritorialization of prestige has led to "place-promotion," in which cultural institutions are linked to cities rather than nation-states, such that "the very name of the host city becomes resonant of symbolic fortune."[59] Thus, the outcome of the IPAF's regional deterritorialization translates successfully into a global trend toward place-promotion. The prize's mix of marketing and culture, moreover, capitalizes on literature and its creators as paradigmatic models for neoliberal development.[60] Indeed, as Brouillette notes in the context of the United Kingdom, "creative-industries policies have been rapidly embraced as an inexpensive way to brand one's city or region or nation as friendly to private enterprise and to investment and development."[61]

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SCALE

Against this backdrop, reading novels with the IPAF opens a host of questions for reading, translation, and critique. The fraught relations between literature's material life and its interpretation are far from settled, and the IPAF invites only one iteration of a lengthy debate.[62] The following discussion of *Sunset* brings into play a national reading, in which female figures stand in for a national imaginary, and demonstrates that through its invocation of forms and codes associated with the postcolonial—polyvocalism, cross-colonial networks, and epistemic instability—the novel destabilizes and critiques the Egyptian national narrative. As noted above, Taher's *Sunset* departs from Cairo to a subnational colony in late 19th-century Egypt. While this geography is isomorphic to English's account of globalization, it is not an analogy for market structure. Rather, it initiates a comparative reading of empire, conjuring a pluralistic rewriting of the national novel's iconography from a state periphery. To engage this textual move, I draw on Nirvana Tanoukhi's "scale-sensitive" reading that, perhaps counterintuitively, cautions against the dominance of spatial metaphors in criticism.[63] Tanoukhi argues against reading postcolonial literature as a peripheral zone (e.g., "Africa-of-the-Novel") that "writes back" to another, separate space: the "world" of markets and erstwhile metropoles. Here we note an echo of Bourdieu's dualist structure, but the object of concern is critical method, which spatializes African (or Arabic) literature and thus renders it resistant to world markets that embody neocolonial power.[64] As noted above, the postcolonial novel emerged precisely within global markets. My interpretation of Tanoukhi's paradigm thus advocates attention to the *making* of scale through the act of comparison—within texts and in the methods we bring to them.[65]

Sunset's cross-colonial geography, rendered from a subnational periphery, invites a reading wherein Maleeka is a subaltern figure in whom the critic finds resistance to the imperialism the novel takes pains to dramatize. Against this reading, my interest is not in rooting Taher's text "back" into a national frame, but in arguing that global scale does not in fact release us from the epistemology and ethics (what Partha Chatterjee dubbed the thematic) of nationalism in the novel.[66] By drawing apart the novel's thematic from its postcolonial tropes, I demonstrate the perdurance of a conservative, rationalist worldview that is manifest in the novel's self-positioning as a weigh station for meaning. As will become evident, what troubles me in the maintenance of an either/or (nation/world) is the fact that neither renders visible the elision of meaning that occurs as the novel passes into Anglophone reading publics, an elision that finds its analogy in the untranslatability between Taher's positioning in the Egyptian literary field (an enlightened voice of the nation) and a global one (a local hero drawing attention to the plight of women in a Muslim society). The instrumental silencing of women will persist in this elision, wherein the possibilities for literature to limn subaltern critique or radical politics are foreclosed.

* * *

Mahmoud Azmi was district commissioner of the Siwa Oasis, on the Egyptian–Libyan border, at the end of the 19th century. His Irish wife Catherine accompanies him, attracted to inscriptions on ruins she believes to hold the tomb of Alexander the Great.

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Mahmoud is sent into quasi-exile there, banished from Cairo in belated punishment for his involvement in the ʿUrabi Revolt.[67] He is haunted by the failure of this revolt, which he attributes to the elite who betrayed ʿUrabi when Britain defeated his forces and occupied Egypt:

> I beheld with my own eyes the stab in the back [*al-wals*] that broke Urabi, and then I beheld the greater betrayal [*al-wals al-akbar*] that followed . . . in the square that had witnessed the glory and the joy, with Urabi on his horse waving his sword and berating the Khedive . . . And in the very same place, just one year later, I saw . . . the great men . . . who had delivered fiery speeches against the British in the days of the revolution . . . alighting from their carriages to join the Khedive on his dais, from which he reviewed the army of occupation . . . [that] with the help of the traitors, had annihilated our army at Tell el Kebir.[68]

In its focus on national revolt, this novel pays homage to the *nahḍa* novel in Egypt, shaped in the first half of the 20th century by figures such as Taha Hussein, Tawfiq al-Hakim, and Naguib Mahfouz. As Samah Selim has argued, the rise of the novel "was linked to the emergence of liberal nationalist ideologies" and a need for "a new and properly national literature" to explore the experiences of the Egyptian middle-class subject.[69] In texts such as Hakim's *Return of the Spirit* (1927), the march to individual and collective liberation culminates in 1919—a year enshrined in literary-critical memory as the birth of national consciousness.[70] The geography of these novels imagined "a national reality" in "the quotidian landscape of the city" but also in the country, where land and fellah (peasant) embodied "the millennial spirit" of national unity.[71] More precisely, the tensions between these spaces encapsulated "the conflict between the social and cultural values of a modernizing city and its other—a vast rural zone."[72] In shuttling between these spaces and producing their opposition, the novel spatialized an imaginary of Egyptian modernity—one that preoccupied novelists, notably Taher, into the postcolonial period.[73]

Like its predecessors, *Sunset* dwells on the national consciousness evinced in 1882, but never attains the narrative climax of the 1919 revolution. Instead, without hope, Mahmoud looks back to 1882 as a time when "there was meaning, but [now] that's over and done with."[74] This betrayed national telos is spatially expressed in a departure from Cairo: not to the rural heartland of the nation, but to Siwa, where Arabic is not spoken and Egypt's sovereignty rejected. With this relativization of national geography, a horizontal network of imperial oppression becomes visible. In Cairo, Mahmoud can position Egypt vis-à-vis British imperial power with certainty, as in the following passage with Mr. Harvey, British advisor to the minister of internal affairs:

> Observe, [Mahmoud], our colonies in Africa and Asia, where chaos reigns because labor there—" I interrupted him once again with a laugh and said "My dear Mr. Harvey, *we* don't have colonies in Africa, or Asia." I managed, however, to prevent myself from saying, "We're the colonized!"[75]

But as Mahmoud crosses the desert, he becomes a representative of *Siwa's* metropole: Cairo. Egypt is imposing colonial rule on the "ceaselessly rebelling" Siwans, and Mahmoud is the state's tax-collector.[76] The Siwans and their struggle for independence are described by Ibraheem, an Egyptian who serves as a guide for (and foil to) Mahmoud:

> Say what you like about them, they're the bravest people I've ever seen. When I came with the army twenty years ago, we bombarded the town with artillery and the only weapons they had were

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small rifles . . . [But] they didn't surrender until their ammunition ran out. They have their feuds, but they always form one front against outsiders.[77]

The British bombardment of Alexandria in the late 19th century is echoed in this recollection of siege—a window onto another history, in which Egypt becomes the aggressor against a small, out-armed community.

Taher's novel can thus be read as a literary instantiation of a historical argument made by Eve Troutt Powell: that colonization was central to the imaginary of Egyptian nationalism, despite the fact that it was anti-imperialist in relation to Britain. Powell reads this paradox via representations of the Sudan in the late 19th century, in which Egyptian nationalists expressed "the perspective of the colonized colonizer."[78] In their "Janus-like view of the world," the reclamation of the Egyptian nation from British imperialism accompanied the reclamation of a "past greatness and regional power" through the colonization of the Sudan.[79] In *Sunset*, Mahmoud, the anti-imperial nationalist, occupies this Janus-like perspective in his loathing for the Siwans and identification with a superior, imperial power. In one scene, he refuses to exchange his helmet (a gift from the British) for the Siwan turban, despite the extreme heat, because it would be undignified to behave "like them."[80] As he internalizes the practices of colonization, he swears to "imprison, and possibly flog, [the Siwans] to collect the taxes" and contemplates turning "Easterners against the Westerners"—just as Mr. Harvey advised him.[81]

Although Taher's narrative lays Mahmoud's colonial outlook at Britain's feet rather than rendering it an integral part of Egyptian nationalism, it is clear that the departure to Siwa opens a paradox in Mahmoud's worldview and limns a critique of nationalism. Siwa was, like the Sudan, conquered by Muhammad ʿAli (in 1820 and 1821, respectively), and like the Sudan, it functions in the novel as an outpost—a site of exile—that is nevertheless imagined as internal to Egypt.[82] Thus, through comparative scale, *Sunset* rewrites the codes of the national novel: rather than depart to the countryside, we travel to a colonized periphery; rather than reach the nationalist apex in 1919, we linger in the unresolved promise of 1882. And as the nation fractures into simultaneous colonizer and colonized, the novel does not track progress to liberation, but maps rhizomatic networks of oppression that are rendered visible through women.

Women, as Powell and Beth Baron have shown, were central to the iconography of the time period the novel depicts, when visual representations of Egypt crystallized around female figures.[83] Moreover, "'the national feminine'" remained "absolutely central in twentieth-century Egyptian fiction . . . in this trope, (rural) woman is constructed as a metaphor of the nation."[84] In keeping with this tradition, *Sunset* paints in idealized strokes two marginalized women—Maleeka and Mahmoud's slave, Dusky Niʿma—whom we may read as national feminine figures that permit a critique of complicity in oppression. It is Niʿma who first invites such a reading because she is associated with the euphoria of 1882 and her raced, gendered body is rendered a sensual embodiment of Egypt and the Nile: "Dusky Niʿma got her name from the color of her smooth, clear, golden-brown skin, which was like the color of the Nile in flood" and which emitted the "scent of Egyptian jasmine" from its pores.[85] During the uprising, Mahmoud returns to her each evening, where she feeds him, reflects his emotions, and makes love to him. In a classic trope of the woman as a keeper of collective memory, she is a storyteller, likened to Scheherazade, who recounts romances of "good kings and bad kings."[86] Her discontent

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is only apparent when she flees to an unknown fate, and we are led to understand that it is because Mahmoud failed to marry her, unwilling to break racial codes that made dark-skinned women central to the Ottoman-Egyptian household, but not its marriage structures.[87] "The respectable officer marry a slave of unknown parentage? What a scandal!"[88] The irony is that Mahmoud's family setting soon transforms from a harem household to a bankrupted ghost of elite life, ruined by debt.[89]

In keeping with the novel's distancing from the nation, Niʿma fades into the past while Maleeka, in the novel's present, is disentangled from political frames. As noted, she is painstakingly depicted as unassimilable to Siwa (where her difference is read as devilish), Egypt, gender, marriage, and language. She is linked instead to the land: Siwa's ancient ruins and nature. It is Sheikh Yahya, her uncle, who describes her beauty and precocious intelligence, which she channels into an ability to craft clay images of beetles and birds (like those "on the walls of the ruins") and to grow plants.[90] Because of her attachment to the ruins, a nationalist account of Maleeka might map her onto a Pharaonic past. Indeed, Catherine describes the temples as "a symbol of the whole country, its roof decorated with stars like the sky and its floor the Egyptian earth."[91] Yet Maleeka's relation to the ruins remains as illegible to her interpreter, Yahya, as it does to all other narrators: we don't know why she makes the statues. If the novel is a critical rescaling of the nationalist text, then this proximity without meaning recasts the signification of the female body, dramatizing the collective symbolism attached to Maleeka's body (as a pawn in Siwan disputes, as the ghoul-woman) while preserving her impenetrable difference. Nowhere is this theme more apparent than in a climactic scene when Maleeka breaks her isolation as the ghoul-woman (ensuring her own death) by bursting into Catherine's room with two statues for reasons that remain unknown. Mahmoud narrates what transpires, and we remain observers of an embrace between the women that is at once erotic, maternal, and violent. After Maleeka's death, Catherine revisits the scene, struggling to interpret it: "was it she who had seduced me? I who had seduced her? And was there in fact any seduction . . . what had she wanted, in fact?"[92]

There is ample evidence, then, to read *Sunset* as a postcolonial rewriting of the national novel. The departure to Siwa and resulting scale write ambivalence into the national telos, while the novel's structure nods to the polyvocalism of the postcolonial Arabic novel. Its chapters switch between characters' voices, and Taher uses this technique to perform misunderstanding, particularly between Mahmoud and Catherine, and to suggest a certain unknowability in others (though his preference for declarative speech tends to defuse this motif).[93] Echoing the loss of national telos, Mahmoud announces the destabilization of meaning. "History" is a "bastard" (*laqīṭ*), and identity is lost: "I wish I knew what I wanted! I wish I knew who I was!"[94] Catherine similarly worries the borders between truth and history, as she questions the hermeneutics of deciphering temple inscriptions. Such indictments of representation recall the famously (some would say notoriously) ludic metafiction of the postcolonial Anglophone novel: "an awareness of mediation" and the construction of history.[95]

* * *

It is, of course, not necessary to grasp the representational history of Egyptian nationalism to derive meaning from *Sunset* in translation. In keeping with English's argument, the

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nation has faded: with or without "local" codes, the novel's critique of power's many guises is overtly conveyed. Thus far then, an area studies approach seems nothing more than a helpful bolster to a postcolonial reading. As the novel departs from a national to a transcolonial scale, *Sunset*'s translatability may only seem more assured. However, it is by keeping the novel's national frame in view that the following analysis grounds a critique of this IPAF novel.

Sunset introduces its transcolonial scale through Catherine: a colonized Irish subject carrying a British passport in occupied Egypt.[96] We then find Niʿma's double in Catherine's sister Fiona, a quasi-mystical Irish woman who, like Niʿma, provides an idealized reflection of anti-imperial sentiment and is linked to storytelling. Mahmoud overtly compares them, noting that while Fiona speaks calmly, Niʿma "lived her stories," embodying each of the characters in turn.[97] If narrative style differs, the stories themselves incarnate a transnational romance, in which characters move seamlessly across anticolonial Irish and African imaginaries: "Here suddenly was Niʿma's beautiful prince in the middle of Fiona's story!"[98] The act of comparing the nation—of rescaling—becomes central to the narrative precisely *through* narrative, indexed to women as the keepers of memories that concern, above all, the lives of repressive rulers.

The relevance of this theme and the implications of *Sunset*'s cross-colonial networks become apparent in an incident that departs from the novel's realist register. Catherine is hunting for inscriptions in the ruins when a rock falls and almost hits a sleeping boy. Ibraheem rushes to save the child, but Mahmoud hangs back to save himself. His cowardice triggers a revelation: "In a few seconds, the false image of the past that I'd drawn for myself fell away . . . I boast to myself of a heroic past and deliberately forget [my] moment of ignominy."[99] Mahmoud acknowledges that he betrayed ʿUrabi, denouncing him to save himself. Between the rock's fall and Mahmoud's revelation is a monologue by Alexander the Great, who obligingly introduces himself as a ghost of empire, detailing his imperial conquests and recalling his vision of a new historical era: "a new world" in which there would be one race, one language, and "no ill will or wars."[100] The Egyptian seat of empire was to be Alexandria, but in an ancient mirroring of journeys from imperial capitals, *Sunset* suggests the sepulcher of Alexander was moved by devotees to "the Oasis of Amun"—Siwa.[101] And, speaking from the periphery, Alexander too is inclined to look back on his life and on empire with a critical eye. He recalls a young rebel, who demands to die if he cannot be free, and his decision to execute the boy: "I was a tyrant, no matter what justifications I might find for my tyranny."[102]

What do a rock and a ghost of empire have to do with scale? In Taher's text, they underpin a transcolonial hermeneutics that overspills the Janus-faced vision of 19th-century Egypt and open out onto an eddy of historical repetition. Alexander concludes: "I thought long but could not discern the starting point in the chain of tyranny, fear and betrayal. Which gave birth to which? And was I truly the one who fashioned it, or one of its victims?"[103] The novel's synchronic networks (Egypt, Britain, Ireland, Siwa) shift to a diachronic account of empire, introducing a chronotope that overlays 19th-century empire onto the ancient Mediterranean and splinters empire into the globality to which Alexander aspired. Mahmoud explains the lesson:

> We didn't come to [the Siwans] as brothers, but as conquerors. We didn't treat them [as] fellow citizens but [as] a colonized people who had to pay their taxes to the conquerors, like it or not.

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Why then should we get angry at what the British were doing to us, or why should Catherine get angry at what they were doing in Ireland? We practice the law of might here just as the British practice it there.[104]

In a sudden twist, we find that the act of *comparing* empires does not introduce radical, transcolonial solidarity, but obviates the ethical-political project of critiquing violence and structural oppression. Mahmoud cuts short his reflections: "There's no point thinking about it. The wheel [*al-ʿajala*] has started turning and nothing can stop it."[105] Transcolonial scale here collapses difference into fatalistic tropes of repetition: wheels, chains, grindstones, and crushing rocks that fall from tombs. Mahmoud declares the futility of thought just before he is about to shoot the subaltern woman whose silence opened this text: Maleeka, caught at the center of "the grindstones [*al-ruḥī*] of war, feuding, and conflict that crush all men."[106]

The problematic implications of such a reading are many. Alexander the Great's conquests are purportedly the same as Britain's bombardment of Alexandria and colonization of Ireland, which are the same as the gendered rites that eventually kill Maleeka. It is her uncle, Sheikh Yahya, who glosses the meaning of her death: "Who will confess that he buried the knife in her heart? All of them, all of you, took part. Even the ancestors who invented the story of the ghoul-woman."[107] The assignation of collective blame for Maleeka's death—of tradition, the state, the British—renders all and thus none accountable. The novel ends with Mahmoud blowing up the ruins, an antiquity the British used to show that "[Egyptians] had once been giants and now were dwarves."[108] He is struck by a stone and dies. The stones, we learn in an author's note, were used to build steps to the police station and to strengthen the commissioner's home; a discursive tool for one empire becomes the material foundation of another's disciplinary sites. The wheel turns; the text is earnest, yet ambivalent.

Sunset is not alone among Arabic novels—including IPAF novels—in telescoping out to imagine transnational networks, whether of colonialism, immigration, or terrorism. Scholars often read such moves, particularly in relation to colonial networks, as resistant acts of solidarity and the restitution of "different forms of memory and . . . alternative modes of feeling and apprehending the social world."[109] A crucial premise is that reading across peripheries (e.g., from Siwa to Ireland) breaks down the binary reasoning of colonialism, which posited a rational and universal Europe against the nonreason of the colonized. To be clear, I do not disagree that transnational perspectives may elicit radical critique. Yet as I have shown, the introduction of comparative scale beyond the nation does not *in itself* guarantee emancipatory modes of thought and can, rather, be put to conservative ends. In *Sunset,* the rescaling of the nation destabilizes knowledge of the Other, identity, and power relations; but it does so to make a more forceful case for the rule of enlightened reason, embodied in none other than Aristotle.

As discussed, the revelation of global empire occurs in Alexander the Great's monologue. In it, he mourns his failure to heed Aristotle's teachings "on the happiness that comes with wisdom and rationality" and the importance of moderation in governance: "everything I had done in life flew in the face of what he had taught me. He had dreamt of a middling country, neither too large nor too small . . . I, though, had built an empire as big as the world."[110] Alexander's imperial excesses should have been checked by "the arbiter of . . . the rational mind."[111] The ghost thus voices the notion that reason is the

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necessary counterweight to political ambition and the violence it breeds, resumed in the text as the grindstones of empire. Their present-day shadows are Mr. Harvey (British imperialism), Mahmoud (Egyptian imperialism), and Sheikh Sabir, the Siwan leader who manipulates the people with prophecies. It is no coincidence that Sheikh Yahya condemns Sabir's manipulations of the "superstitions" that he dubs the curse of the Siwa and withdraws from politics to the eminently rational pursuit of cultivating medicinal plants.[112]

Read in a national frame, the valorization of reason in *Sunset* recalls the moral authority of the written word in Egypt's literary field and of the author as a conscience of the nation. The silent Maleeka, by this account, enters a tradition of indigenous subjects who are instrumentalized in collective iconographies but excluded from politics because they are external to the march of rational history. The subaltern woman is thus instrumentalized as "a signifier for the establishment of a *good* society," wherein law and reason conquer superstition.[113] In choosing how to read Maleeka and thus *Sunset,* we appear to face an either/or: postcolonial critique of the nation or paternalistic enlightenment. However, it is the risk of elision between them that concerns us here: we must linger in the tension between frames.

Chatterjee influentially distinguished between the thematic of nationalism, "the epistemological [and] ethical system which provides a framework of elements and rules for establishing relations between elements," and its problematic, which denotes "concrete statements about possibilities" in the political realm.[114] The thematic of nationalism in the colonial world corresponded to the universal knowledge of post-Enlightenment Europe, creating contradictions in the very structures of anticolonial nationalist thought.[115] More than revealing contradictions though, Chatterjee attends to the dialectic between thematic and problematic, its impact on the political realm, and, of interest here, the "closure" the thematic may impose on a search for new possibilities in thought.[116] *Sunset*'s transcolonial history, wracked by the struggle between reason and the "grindstones" of superstition and violence, perpetuates the epistemological-ethical vision associated with the national novel while introducing transcolonial geographies and subaltern tropes.[117] The violence enacted on silenced women's bodies limns a plea for reason's universality, and the text's polyvocalism acquires a new significance: the novel weighs the narratives of diverse characters to position itself as a courthouse for meaning, the textual double of the rational mind that should have reined in Alexander's excess.[118] Though these aesthetic features correspond by analogy to nationalism's problematic, we should be cautious not to flatten literary language into the latter, which is defined by its modal qualities.[119] Rather, Chatterjee's distinction can be used in a literary context to underscore the foreclosure of critique—theoretically and politically—at the precise instance when an Arabic novel, harnessing the terms and geographies of postcolonial literature, enters world literature.

As Aamir Mufti has argued, world literature operates as "a concept of exchange" that "recodes an opaque and unequal process of appropriation as a transparent one of supposedly free and equal interchange."[120] While Mufti, among others, has turned to historical perspectives and the critique of Orientalism to counter this notion, my reading of contemporary literature has focused on valences and practices of postcolonial theory, which may unwittingly act as a translational medium to set texts like Taher's into interpretive motion and perpetuate the illusion of open, homogenous exchange. Arabic

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literary studies, by attending to representational pasts and institutional settings occluded in world literature, is positioned to engage, contrapuntally, differing concepts of literature's function and imbrication in contestations over power—both between world and Egyptian literary fields and traversing these internally stratified zones. For example, Taher evinces a well-known rationalist stance in public life. Beginning in the 1990s, Egypt's "literary establishment broadcast . . . the official ideology, consisting in the main of praise for the intellectuals and values of the *nahḍa* [renaissance], summed up as patriotism and tolerance, faith and rationalism, and liberty and reform."[121] Taher argued in 1993 that Egypt required a return to the *nahḍa* and the role of the intellectual exemplified by Hussein and al-Hakim; if Egypt, he writes, is to advance along "the path [of enlightenment] begun by [society's] best intellectuals since the beginning of the *nahḍa* . . . then intellectuals must become the true leaders of thought."[122] Although literary scholars may balk at what appears to be biography, Taher's paternalistic public stance illuminates the contested practices that structure the Egyptian literary field, conditioned by, and in dialogue with, state ideology.[123] To read the critique of power in *Sunset* without easy recourse to Maleeka's resistance is to grapple with the epistemic and political weight of such calls for secular rationalism against "superstition" in Egypt since the 1990s—particularly after 2011—and thereby to texture the smooth surface of world literary interpretation.

The literary-critical task I am advocating does not comprise a one-way translational act of explaining national histories and political struggles into the universal lexicon of theory. Rather, by rendering visible *Sunset*'s belonging in other representational and institutional fields, Arabic literary studies may challenge world literature to give an account of its own textual and institutional practices and, perhaps more polemically, its failure to account in analytically interesting ways for the tensions described here. For, once we acknowledge that *Sunset*, despite gestures to power and pluralism, in fact opens no position from which to critique political or epistemic violence, the path of reading remains open. The representation of Maleeka's silence *can* be read as a mark of resistance, but it must be done in overt tension with the text itself. Not coincidentally, Spivak's argument on the subaltern—beyond the sign of suppressed speech under which it now circulates—will offer a crucial resource because it is concerned with the positioning of the intellectual, her representation of subaltern women, and the material conditions for the latter's erasure from history. Reading *with* the IPAF might thus be likened to a dual movement of first reading *along* a novel's grain—tracing the critical and epistemological lines sketched through its scale—and then permitting the text, in all its contradictions, to generate friction in theoretical practice via methodological reflection and material contextualization.[124]

LABOR, HYBRIDITY, MIGRATION

The above argument and reading process are staked on the conviction that novels can and should be read for their creative, resistant capacities. This task cannot, however, rely on a fast equation of IPAF novels with opposition to nation-states or world markets. As we have seen, a "resistant" text may be imbued with a rationalist thematic and reflect its author's elite positioning and normative politics. Moreover, as described above, the IPAF is institutionally entwined with the market emergence of the postcolonial novel.

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A brief concluding example takes up this point, demonstrating the flexibility of scale as we move away from the gendered figure of the subaltern to other contemporary tropes of the postcolonial: labor, hybridity, and migration.

Kuwaiti author Saud Alsanousi's *The Bamboo Stalk* (hereafter *Bamboo*) is narrated by José/Isa, the son of a Kuwaiti national (Rashid) and a domestic worker from Manila (Josephine).[125] The novel compares Kuwait and the Philippines: as he grows up, José/Isa contrasts urban spaces and social and religious practices between these nations with anthropological curiosity. This scale underpins the novel's major theme of hybridity: with two names, José/Isa belongs in both places and in neither. More accurately, however, it probes his marginalization in Kuwait: José/Isa is a Kuwaiti citizen but is not accepted because he is seen to belong to the Gulf's "laboring underclass."[126] The novel's scale thus connects its protagonist's hybridity to critiques of inequality in global capitalism, embodied in the Gulf and its migrant laborers. In this vein, José/Isa's yearning for Kuwait and his subsequent disappointment may be read as the "cruel optimism" of neoliberalism, wherein the individual fantasizes about an unattainable "good life" and undercuts his own flourishing.[127] Indeed, José/Isa eventually returns to Manila, choosing interpersonal acceptance over wealth.

A closer reading of scale will suggest that *Bamboo* mobilizes colonialism for reasons similar to *Sunset*'s: to limn a critique of power, now inflected through wealth and social acceptance, via the marginalized. As the novel shifts to a metafictive register, we learn that José/Isa has written his text as a continuation of Rashid's novel, left unfinished when he disappeared in the war with Iraq. This act of literary inheritance is compared to the work of José Rizal, the nationalist, anticolonial leader of the Philippines whose name the narrator carries and whose words punctuate the text in epigraphs.[128] In this analogy, José/Isa's writing signifies paternal inheritance of national identity (heightened in the symbolism of his father's military service) *and* the Philippines's struggle for independence from Spain. This leap in scale is underdeveloped; indeed, the grafting of Filipino nationalism onto Kuwait is formally expressed in *Bamboo*'s use of the epigraph.

Because the ties between colonialism, nationalism, and the novel in Kuwait are distinct from those in the Egyptian case, the heuristic of anticolonial nationalism described above is not germane to *Bamboo*.[129] A detailed discussion of the novel and its institutional context in the Kuwaiti national field lies beyond the scope of this article, but it can be said that comparative scale in *Bamboo* acts to denounce the exclusion of children who are born of transnational economies from the societies these economies structure. These are José/Isa and his half-sister, Merla, child of a Filipina forced into sex work and a European tourist; the text conjures her paternal genes as imperialism haunting the Philippines and her body in the contemporary tourist economy.[130] But if this dispensation echoes the conflation of nation and female body and appeals to critical theorizations of neoliberalism, we should proceed with caution. For, the stakes of this comparison are not global flows of labor, but Kuwaiti citizenship and its exclusions. The polemic at the novel's heart concerns Kuwait's stateless Bedoon population, represented by Ghassan, a former soldier who loves Kuwait but is the "bad gene" (*al-jīna al-khabītha* [*sic*]) in the national body.[131] Indeed, *Bamboo*'s preoccupation with inheritance and DNA bespeaks its normative vision of the nation as a kinship union. Why, then, invoke transnational scale? Because José/Isa is an isomorphic double who mirrors the Bedoon; an insider/outsider, his anthropological perspective defamiliarizes the troubled norms of Kuwaiti society,

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permitting Alsanousi to indulge in narrative exposition on class hierarchies and gossip (a driving force in the plot) and in dialogue that explicitly compares José/Isa's outsider status to that of the Bedoon.[132] *Bamboo*'s self-positioning is, in other words, not that of a courthouse, but that of a mirror reflecting, and pleading for, the nation via a hybrid Other.

Thus, although this IPAF novel draws us closer to the Gulf and themes of globalization, the meaning we draw from its critique of labor flows and their social consequences must not presume *Bamboo*'s unmediated resistance to world markets or even its primary concern with globalization. Its comparative scale, rather, throws into relief discourses of xenophobia and the exclusion of perceived outsiders that can be traced to the development of the Kuwaiti state.[133] A plea for an inclusive social contract does not, in itself, prevent a critique of neoliberalism; indeed, *Bamboo* debunks fantasies of the good life in Kuwait, depicting a breakdown in trust and civic sentiment as the cause of social fragmentation. Yet *Bamboo* forecloses its own critical horizon because it produces an elitist and Orientalist essentialization of the Southeast Asian Other from within comparative scale. José/Isa romanticizes the material deprivation of the Philippines in contrast to Kuwaiti wealth, expounding on the simplicity of a social world where poverty ensures the predominance of material pleasure (i.e., food) and the absence of complex class prejudices that split Kuwait.[134]

CONCLUSION

Scale-based reading is above all concerned with the extent to which novels, and the theoretical practice that engages them, can sketch new aesthetic horizons and renew the traction of critique, both political and theoretical. In the work required to perform this task—between local and world literary methods, at the institutional intersection represented by the IPAF—Arabic literary studies may well open the traffic of theory to a two-way street. Significant work remains, not least in exploring the internal stratification of national and regional (i.e., North African and Middle Eastern) fields and networks for the Arabic novel, both prior to, and in relation with, the world literary setting that has constituted the focus of the above argument. A more directly political impetus for such research, I should note in closing, is the need for scholars working in Arabic literature to confront critically the current tendency to market and consume Arabic novels as privileged expressions of the popular uprisings that have been silenced by state authoritarianism and civil war since 2011.

NOTES

Author's note: My interest in the intersection of literary prizes and postcolonial theory began in conversations with Joseph Cleary in New Haven in 2013. The ideas in this essay were presented at the American Comparative Literature Association's annual meeting in 2014 on the panel "Shifting Centers of Cultural Capital in the Arab World," organized by Nancy Linthicum and Amr Kamal. Thanks are due to them and the panel participants for supportive feedback, as they are to Fleur Montanaro and Alex Seggerman. I express my gratitude to Nancy Reynolds, Nancy Linthicum, Caroline Kita, and the anonymous reviewers at the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* for thoughtful and thought-provoking engagements with the essay's argument and scope at various stages of writing. Special thanks to Alexandre Dubé.

[1]Citations and the spelling of character names follow Davies's translation: Bahaʾ Taher, *Sunset Oasis,* trans. Humphrey T. Davies (London: Sceptre, 2009).

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[2]Ibid., 168–70. On the rite, see Ahmad Fakhry, *Siwa Oasis* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1973), 62–63.

[3]My use of subaltern here alludes to the widely held interpretation of Spivak's argument in terms of suppressed speech. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

[4]An exception is Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Literature in the Global Literary Marketplace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), on the construction of authorship in Anglophone postcolonial novels.

[5]James English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 51.

[6]Ibid., 220. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 141–73.

[7]Although it is customary to cite Goethe's coining of the phrase "world literature" in 1820, most date the beginnings of these debates to the publication of Pascale Casanova's *La république mondiale des lettres* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), published in English as *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), and David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003). Broadly speaking, a text enters world literature when it moves beyond its "culture of origin," which is why networks of translation, publication, and circulation are key to the field. Damrosch, *World*, 4. Critiques of world literature are numerous; this article participates in arguments that foreground the role of institutions outside Europe and North America; the "global relations of force that the concept simultaneously puts in play and hides from view," in Aamir Mufti's felicitous phrasing; and the role that an unreflexive criticism may play in perpetuating those relations. Aamir Mufti, "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures," *Critical Inquiry* 36 (2010): 465.

[8]Mohamed-Salah Omri, "Notes on the Traffic between Theory and Arabic Literature," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 732.

[9]Ibid.

[10]This article concerns the move to worldly, primarily English-language, reading publics, but the IPAF also invites research on the transformation of novels' circulation and reception across North Africa and the Middle East. Novels recognized by the IPAF (whether as short-listed nominees or winners) gain unprecedented distribution outside national fields and traditional publication circuits. My thanks to Nancy Linthicum for helping me think through this point.

[11]Michelle Hartman, "Teaching Modern Arabic Literature in Translation: Why Theory, Politics, and Ethics Matter," in *Teaching Modern Arabic Literature in Translation*, ed. Michelle Hartman (forthcoming).

[12]My association of these tropes with the destabilization of national monoliths does not discount the importance of the nation to postcolonial critique; to the contrary, it holds that they often evoke methods deploying hybridity, fragmentation, alterity, and equivalent themes to ground critiques of hegemonic power associated with colonialism and the nationalisms that took shape in opposition to it.

[13]The Editors, "World Lite: What Is Global Literature?," *n+1* 17 (2013), accessed 1 October 2015, https://nplusonemag.com/issue-17/the-intellectual-situation/world-lite/.

[14]IPAF Administrator Fleur Montanaro, email correspondence with the author, 6 May 2013.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Saadiyat Cultural District, http://www.saadiyat.ae/en/about-districts/5/Saadiyat-Cultural-District, accessed 19 December 2015.

[17]At the time of writing, the Board of Trustees was composed of literary figures who have achieved prominence in writing, publishing, and academics, as well as the Chair of the Booker Prize Foundation, Jonathan Taylor (CBE); Secretary of the Booker Prize Foundation, Evelyn Smith; and an advisor to the UAE Presidential Court, Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh.

[18]Previously short-listed authors can be submitted without adding to a publisher's total.

[19]Montanaro, correspondence with the author.

[20]The Booker Prize was awarded to English-language novels from the Commonwealth and in 2013 opened to English-language fiction from anywhere in the world. The foundation has lent its name to the Russian Booker Prize and the Man Booker International and provided financial support for the Caine Prize for African Writing and the Asham Award for women's short stories.

[21]Richard Todd, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 73–74.

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[22]English, *Economy,* 212.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Sayyid Mahmoud reported criticisms of a "bias for works with a populist tone" and overlooking of literary experiment. The result is a preference for "socio-cultural works" and "conservative style of narrative." Mahmoud, "Bukar al-ʿArabiyya 2013 Dawrat al-Qatiʿa maʿa al-Tajrib?," 23 April 2013, accessed 24 January 2014, http//www.al-akhbar.com/node/181763. Others suggest it neglects the Maghrib, a point that often overlaps with charges that it ignores experimental literature. See, for example, Kamal al-Riyahi, "al-Riwaya al-Magharibiyya wa-l-Bukar al-ʿArabiyya," *Al Jazeera*, 30 December 2012, accessed 30 April 2013, http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/1bcc6a29-bce7-49e7-9b3f-b50c421160cb.

[25]Marcia Lynx Qualey, "Eyes on the Prize," 12 February 2014, accessed 20 January 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/02/12/eyes-on-the-prize/.

[26]A stock saying invokes this debate: "Cairo writes, Beirut publishes, and Baghdad reads." Current wisdom holds that the Gulf is displacing these centers. See, e.g., Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Thriving Gulf Cities Emerge as New Centers of Arab World," *Al-Monitor*, 8 October 2013, accessed 1 March 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/abu-dhabi-dubai-doha-arab-centers.html.

[27]Montanaro, correspondence with the author; the trustee is anonymous.

[28]Cited in Richard Jacquemond, *Conscience of the Nation: Writers, State and Society in Modern Egypt*, trans. David Tresilian (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 229. On the Cairo Prize, see pp. 100–101. Taher rejected the Mubarak Literary Prize in February 2011.

[29]English, *Economy,* 218.

[30]Ibid., 220.

[31]Ibid., 218–19.

[32]Jessica Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006). Jacquemond traces Egypt's literary-intellectual field to Muhammad ʿAli's reign and the rise of the modern state, which fostered an intellectual class and "the national production of printed materials." Thereafter, Egypt's writers acted within a triad defined by the *kātib* (writer), *kitāb* (book), and *dawla* (state) that crystallized in the first third of the 20th century. Jacquemond, *Conscience*, 5–6. The al-Nasir state's appropriation of the literary field after 1952 formalized this tie between writer and nation through institutions and networks of patronage, and the nationalization of related industries. Jacquemond, *Conscience*, 15–34. See also Marina Stagh, "The Limits of Freedom of Speech: Prose Literature and Prose Writers in Egypt under Nasser and Sadat" (PhD thesis, Stockholm University, 1993).

[33]Winegar, *Creative*, 141.

[34]Jacquemond, *Conscience*, 98–101.

[35]For Egyptian artists, "art was a means of individual expression, but it was also a way to become respectable elite members of their society." Thus, there is no "one-to-one correlation between the bourgeois and autonomy." Winegar, *Creative,* 47.

[36]Jacquemond, *Conscience,* 42, 4.

[37]Ibid., 46–48. On the Mubarak regime's role in the 1990s and early 2000s, Nancy Linthicum, personal correspondence with the author.

[38]Jacquemond, *Conscience,* 48.

[39]Andrew Hammond, "Prestigious 'Arabic Booker' Plagued by Criticisms," *Reuters Africa,* 15 December 2010, accessed 19 January 2015, http://af.reuters.com/article/idAFLDE6BB06220101215?sp=true.

[40]The winning novel receives US $1,000 and a promise of translation into English with American University in Cairo Press. Samia Mehrez, *Egypt's Culture Wars: Politics and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 45.

[41]Cited in Mehrez, *Culture,* 46. Mehrez's language of scribes and alleys is based on Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*. She argues that in 1990s Egypt the writer acted as a recorder of truth in and for the nation. As such, her use of scribe corresponds to Jacquemond's use of writer.

[42]Cairo University professor Sayyid al-Bahrawi cited in ibid., 47.

[43]Its deterritorialization is also physical; the IPAF has no regional site beyond its celebration at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. "Q&A with International Prize for Arabic Fiction Administrator Fleur Montanaro," Arabic Literature (in English), 11 August 2011, accessed 25 January 2015, http://arablit.org/2011/08/11/qa-with-international-prize-for-arabic-fiction-administrator-fleur-montanaro/.

[44]A promising area for comparison is the role of privately funded literary prizes in the Egyptian field, which, as Nancy Linthicum notes, began to appear in the 1990s and early 2000s (e.g., the Sawiris Cultural Award). Such prizes stratify the national literary scene in ways distinct from the IPAF, yet in their separation

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from the state they mobilize comparable forms of legitimacy in a local setting. Linthicum, correspondence with the author.

[45]Graham Huggan, "Prizing 'Otherness': A Short History of the Booker," *Studies in the Novel* 29 (1997): 412–33. On Berger, see p. 416; on Booker-McConnell: "The company, initially formed in 1834 to provide distributional services on the sugar-estates of Demarara, achieved rapid prosperity under a harsh colonial regime. At the onset of independence the company was placed under increasing pressure, eventually relocating to London, which remains its headquarters today." Its book division was established in the early 1960s. See p. 415.

[46]Hugh Eakin cited in Huggan, "Prizing, " 415.

[47]Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[48]Shaden Tageldin, "The Returns of Theory," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 728–30.

[49]Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial,'" *Social Text* (1992): 99–113; Robert J. C. Young, "Post-Colonial Remains," *New Literary History* 43 (2012): 19–42; Samer Frangie, "On the Broken Conversation between Postcolonialism and Intellectuals in the Periphery," *Social & Political Thought* 19 (2011): 41–54.

[50]Brouillette, *Postcolonial*, 17.

[51]Ibid., 51–54.

[52]Ibid., 49–54. Winning and short-listed novels have been published in English by Random House, Sceptre (an imprint of Hodder & Stoughton, an imprint of Hachette), and Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing (BQFP), owned by the Qatar Foundation and managed by multinational Bloomsbury Publishing with offices in London, New York, Doha, and New Delhi. The following were published by BQFP: Inaam Kachachi, *The American Granddaughter* (shortlisted 2009); Mohammad Achaari, *The Arch and the Butterfly* (joint winner 2011); Saud Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk* (winner 2013); Abdo Khal, *Throwing Sparks* (winner 2010). Several IPAF novels are published by independent houses: for example, Raja Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* (joint winner 2011), Overlook Press.

[53]Jacquemond, *Conscience*; Michael Allan, "How Adab Became Literary: Formalism, Orientalism and the Institutions of World Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43 (2012): 172–96.

[54]English, *Economy,* 259.

[55]Ibid., 271

[56]Ibid., 303.

[57]Ibid., 272.

[58]"About Us: Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority," accessed 1 March 2014, http://tcaabudhabi.ae/en/about/Pages/about-us.aspx. On domestic tourism, see miriam cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2014).

[59]English, *Economy,* 283.

[60]Winegar argues that the Mubarak regime adopted this stance toward artists. Winegar, *Creative*, 156.

[61]Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014), 29.

[62]For a review of this debate, see Mathias Nilges and Emilio Sauri, eds., *Literary Materialisms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1–14.

[63]Nirvana Tanoukhi, "The Scale of World Literature," *New Literary History* 39 (2008): 604.

[64]Tanoukhi traces this divide to a misunderstanding of alternative modernity, originally describing the transition of colonized states to independence and now used to describe the synchronic state of multiple, nonhegemonic cultures. Ibid.

[65]Tanoukhi advocates a phenomenological approach uniting close reading, methodological reflection, and "the time-honored [problem] . . . of historical contextualization." Ibid., 614.

[66]Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 38.

[67]In this movement, named for Colonel Ahmed ʿUrabi, peasants, urban guilds, and the intelligentsia revolted against the Ottoman-Egyptian upper classes and European bourgeoisie. Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's ʿUrabi Movement* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1999), 22. Britain bombarded Alexandria in June 1882 and defeated ʿUrabi and his forces a few months later at the Battle of Tel el Kebir. See also Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians! The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt 1878–1882* (New York: Ithaca Press, 1981); and Thomas Mayer, *The*

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Changing Past: Egyptian Historiography of the ʿUrabi Revolt, 1882–1983 (Gainesville, Fl.: University of Florida Press, 1988).

[68]Taher, *Sunset*, 39; Bahaʾ Taher, *Wahat al-Ghurub* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 2008), 54–55.

[69]Samah Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880–1985* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 60, 73. See also Hilary Kilpatrick, "The Egyptian Novel from Zaynab to 1980," in *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 223–69; and Elliott Colla, "How Zaynab Became the First Arabic Novel," *History Compass* 7 (2009): 214–25.

[70]This view of 1919 and its impact on the novel was influentially developed in ʿAbd al-Muhsin Taha Badr's, *Tatawwur al-Riwaya al-ʿArabiyya al-Haditha fi Misr, 1870–1938* (Cairo: Dar al-Maʿarif, 1963), discussed in Selim, *Novel*, 63–70.

[71]Selim, *Novel,* 74, 91.

[72]Ibid., 91.

[73]See Selim's reading of Taher's *East of the Palms* (Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal, 1985). Ibid., 205–13.

[74]Taher, *Sunset*, 29.

[75]Ibid., 6. Emphasis in original.

[76]Ibid., 18.

[77]Ibid., 37.

[78]Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003), 6.

[79]Ibid., 6.

[80]Taher, *Sunset,* 88.

[81]Ibid., 193.

[82]Fakhry, *Siwa*, 104–5. For Powell's discussion of the Sudan as an outpost for exiles, see *Shade*, 77–78.

[83]Beth Baron, "Nationalist Iconography: Egypt as a Woman," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East,* ed. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 105–24; Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005), esp. 57–81 on visual imagery. Powell, Baron notes, demonstrates that the paradox of an anticolonial nationalism that also sought to colonize the Sudan "was fought metaphorically over the bodies of female slaves." Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 25. On this, see Powell, *Shade*, 1–8.

[84]Selim, *Rural*, 20.

[85]Taher, *Sunset*, 84–86.

[86]Ibid., 85.

[87]On this and the household as a microcosm for the Egyptian nation, see Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 17–39.

[88]Taher, *Sunset,* 87.

[89]Ibid., 10–11.

[90]Ibid., 74.

[91]Ibid., 233.

[92]Ibid., 223–24.

[93]Catherine wonders: "what is your crisis Mahmoud? You're the only one who knows." Mahmoud clarifies in an unvoiced monologue: "I wept for my country and myself. And Catherine asks me what my crisis is?" Ibid., 36, 39.

[94]Ibid., 104, 93; Taher, *Wahat*, 133.

[95]Huggan, "Prizing," 424.

[96]*Sunset* shares a concern for global empire with Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*—shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize—which situates *nahḍa* Egypt in anticolonial struggles in South Africa and Ireland. See Shaden Tageldin, "The Incestuous (Post) Colonial: Soueif's Map of Love and the Second Birth of the Egyptian Novel in English," in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arab Novel in English: The Politics of Anglo Arab and Arab American Literature and Culture,* ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 82–105.

[97]Taher, *Sunset*, 207.

[98]Ibid., 208. My use of romance alludes to David Scott's characterization of anticolonial narrative as heroic "narratives of overcoming . . . of vindication" and the march of history toward progress. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 8.

[99]Taher, *Sunset*, 135.

[100]Ibid., 121–22.

[101]Ibid., 106–7.

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[102]Ibid., 127.
[103]Ibid.
[104]Ibid., 164.
[105]Ibid.
[106]Ibid., 73. Mahmoud does not shoot Maleeka; her murderer remains unknown. Ibid., 254.
[107]Ibid., 254.
[108]Ibid., 300. On Pharaonism and nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s, see Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), which intersects with gender in the discussion of *Nahdat Misr* on pp. 227–33.
[109]Françoise Lionnet, "Transnationalism, Postcolonialism or Transcolonialism? Reflections on Los Angeles, Geography, and the Uses of Theory," *Emergences* 10 (2000): 28. My use of "transnational" here differs from Lionnet's in this article, where she associates it with "the political economy of development." See p. 27. I follow Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih's *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), which uses the transnational to denote those "lateral and nonhierarchical network structures" that evade universalism. See p. 2. A counterperspective is offered in Partha Chatterjee, "Beyond the Nation? Or Within?," *Social Text* 15 (1998): 57–69.
[110]Taher, *Sunset,* 125.
[111]Ibid., 125.
[112]Ibid., 196.
[113]Spivak, "Subaltern," 298.
[114]Chatterjee, *Nationalist,* 38.
[115]Ibid., 38–39.
[116]Ibid., 42–43.
[117]On the *nahḍa* novel and elite national subject formation, see Selim, "The People's Entertainments: Translation, Popular Fiction, and the Nahdah in Egypt," in *Other Renaissances: A New Approach to World Literature*, ed. Brenda Schildgen, Gang Zhou, and Sander Gilman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 35–58.
[118]It is in this sense of heady authority that we may translate the comparative vision at the heart of *Sunset*'s scale as *al-muwāzana* (weighing). I am indebted to Najwan Darwish for sharing his thoughts on this translation of comparison.
[119]My reading is closer to the distinction between *langue* and *parole* that Chatterjee reads as inadequate for the intellectual-political context he studies because it would presume knowledge of the "discursive field" within which texts circulated. Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 39–40. The literary-discursive fields for the current context are, in contrast, well substantiated.
[120]Mufti, "Orientalism," 488.
[121]Jacquemond, *Conscience*, 26–27.
[122]Baha' Taher, *Abnaʾ Rifaʿa: al-Thaqafa wa-l-Huriyya* (Cairo: Kitab al-Hilal, 1993), 11–12. Taher here echoes Chatterjee's characterization of civil society elites in "Beyond the Nation?," 62–65.
[123]The 1990s also saw the emergence of a new generation in Egyptian literature that broke with the stances and institutional practices of the generation represented by Taher. Nancy Linthicum, "Independent Cairene Presses as Literary Actors in the 1990s and early 2000s" (paper presented at the American Comparative Literature Association annual meeting, New York University, New York, N.Y., 22 March 2014).
[124]Reading "along" the grain refers to Ann Laura Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[125]Citations from *Bamboo* are the author's translations; character names are spelled following the English translation: Saud Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk,* trans. Jonathan Wright (Doha: Bloomsbury Qatar, 2015).
[126]cooke, *Tribal*, 24.
[127]Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 1–2.
[128]Saud Alsanousi, *Saq al-Bambu* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2013), 326–27.
[129]On Gulf nationalism from a literary perspective, see cooke, *Tribal*. cooke does not take the novel as the privileged form to express the "tribal modern," focusing rather on architecture, poetry, and festivals. She does, however, study the novel as an expression of post-oil boom cosmopolitanism. See pp. 16–29.
[130]Alsanousi, *Saq*, 320–22.
[131]Ibid., 228. On the Bedoon, who make up approximately a third of Kuwait's population, see cooke, *Tribal*, 61–64; Farah al-Nakib, "Revisiting *Hadar* and *Badu* in Kuwait: Citizenship, Housing, and the

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Construction of a Dichotomy," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 11–14; Aziz Abu-Hamad, "The Bedoons of Kuwait: Citizens without Citizenship," *Human Rights Watch,* August 1995, accessed 18 December 2015, https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Kuwait.htm; and Maureen Lynch and Patrick Barbieri, "Kuwait: State of Exclusion," *Refugees International*, 5 July 2007, accessed 18 December 2015, http://www.refworld.org/docid/47a6ee9bd.html.

[132]Alsanousi, *Saq*, 276–77.

[133]Farah al-Nakib and Anh Nga Longva have written on the role of exclusion in state-building processes and the development of Kuwaiti citizenship before and after oil. See, for example, al-Nakib, "Revisiting"; Longva, "Nationalism in Pre-Modern Guise: The Discourse on *Hadhar* and *Badu* in Kuwait," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (2006): 171–87; and Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997).

[134]Alsanousi, *Saq*, 279, 247.

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