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The American University in Cairo

The School of Humanities and Social Sciences

DRAMATIZING NATIONAL DIGNITY IN EL LOZY'S TRILOGY

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of English and Comparative Literature

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

by

Samy El Sayed M Omar Selim

B. A. ECLT

Under the supervision of Dr. Ferial Ghazoul

May 2010

The American University in Cairo

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ABSTRACT

American University in Cairo

Dramatizing National Dignity in El Lozy's Trilogy

By Samy El Sayed M Omar Selim

Adviser: Dr. Ferial Ghazoul

Mahmoud El Lozy's trilogy, *We That Are Young*, consists of three plays: *Bay the Moon*, *And Then Went Down to the Ship*, and *Us and Them* (a widely circulating unpublished typescript written in 1998-2005 that has been performed and directed by the author or/and directed as staged reading in Cairo privately-- or by invitation--as well as publicly in New York). This thesis analyses how El Lozy dramatizes the concept of national dignity from the Arab and Egyptian perspectives. The trilogy is contextualized using the writings of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Galal Amin. El Lozy's status as a dramatist and critic is presented. The close reading of three crucial scenes demonstrates how Egyptian/Arab independence is threatened through co-option and the manner with which it is defended in the plays. The three scenes are also used to explore the intertwining themes of national honor, the neo-colonialist tendencies of the West, the Western use of media to undermine Arab dignity and distort the Arab image, and the overall arc of deterioration exhibited by the scenes. The conclusion is that in spite of all attempts to undermine Arab and national integrity, El Lozy's trilogy is optimistic because neither of the protagonists succumbs to co-option.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“What was, and is still being sought, is the colonization of Egypt.” (Shoukri, 388)

Egyptian national dignity was compromised in the late 1970s. Anwar al-Sadat, Egypt's President then, visited the Israeli Knesset in fall 1977 without consulting other Arab countries and thus shattered the collective Arab front that was maintained since the creation of Israel in 1948. The Camp David treaty that was signed between Egypt and Israel in 1979 further compromised Egyptian sovereignty by not allowing the presence of the Egyptian military on Egyptian soil of Sinai--among other restrictive clauses imposed by Israel. In spite of these paralysing compromises, the official history recounts the visit to Jerusalem and the unilateral peace with Israel as examples of diplomatic and political victories. Prior to November 1977, there was a politically conscious Egyptian society that, at its most cynical, smiled in the face of adversity; safe in the knowledge that history will smile back. This was a society that, along with the rest of the Arabs, threw down the gauntlet to Zionist imperialism with the three “no’s” of the Khartoum summit: No Peace, No negotiation, and No recognition of Israel.¹ After Sadat’s “initiative”, a flagrant renunciation of Arab resolve, there was only raw anger remaining in the hearts of the few who knew the real history and saw the larger picture. In the final analysis, those who forgot the truth thrived on a reconstructed reality while those who remembered were isolated and disbelieved.

In his preface to Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre described the state of the native elite that has been indoctrinated by the European elite using the following piercing words: “These walking lies had nothing more to say to

their brothers.” (Fanon, xliii) In the same work Fanon himself describes a colonizer’s ruling class as a “Ruling species [that] is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere.” (Fanon, 5) Sartre is describing a character all too visible in all countries that have suffered from colonialism; the character that returns to the country of origin intent on cloning that country into the “counterfeit presentment” of the European colonizer’s country. The collusion of this character with the character described by Fanon results in the world crafted by El Lozy in his trilogy. Fanon associated his “outsider from elsewhere” with the use of napalm. El Lozy shows his audience that there are newer, more sinister weapons in the colonizer’s arsenal; the most sinister of which is the colonizer’s ability to create more “native” agents of invisible colonialism such as those identified by Sartre.

Mahmoud El Lozy has lived through the entire period of Egypt’s historical rewriting and is one of the precious few who still retain the memories of the unpopular reality. Besides being a remarkably gifted sensitive and serious stage and film actor, El Lozy is a professor of theatre at the American University in Cairo (AUC), a director at the same institution, a critic, and a playwright. Nehad Selaiha, a critic for *Al Ahram Weekly* and a professor of drama, has pointed out that:

Mahmoud El Lozy, an actor, director, and teacher of the finest caliber in all capacities... has been one of the main pillars of that department [Performing and Visual Arts (PVA) at AUC], treating us to wonderful performances and productions, coaching new generations of theatre artists and scholars and providing a valuable link between his department and the contemporary theatrical community in Egypt. (Selaiha, “Melodrama With A Difference”)

Of El Lozy’s directorial/dramaturgical technique, Selaiha stated:

Of all the Egyptian directors who have attempted to revive the classics of the Egyptian theatre, past or present, El Lozy has proved the most adept at discovering their latent vitality, demonstrating their stage-worthiness, bringing them to our times and excavating their enduring relevance. Amazingly, he achieves all this without adding new lines, rearranging the order of the scenes, amalgamating some, or resorting to the usual flashy gimmicks adopted by most directors when handling the classics... he invariably manages to stun his

audience with fresh and unexpected readings of the plays. (Seliaha, “Melodrama With a Difference”)

El Lozy, the critic is also “fresh and unexpected” in his reading of Egyptian playwrights of the fifties, sixties, and seventies such as Naguib Surrur, N’oman ‘Ashur, Sa’d El Din Wahba, Alfred Farag, Ali Salem, and Mikhail Roumane, as well as more contemporary writers such as Karim Al Rawi.² As evinced by his choice of topics, his affinity for Nasser³, and his clear admiration for the theatre of Bertolt Brecht (though he is critical of the way Brecht has been compromised on the Egyptian stage [El Lozy, “Brecht”]), El Lozy’s politics are his own special blend of left-of-centre Arab Nationalism.

Whether his audience is in the auditorium, the classroom, on stage receiving his direction, or at a desk reading his criticism, El Lozy will always shock and provoke in order to educate. He consistently creates an atmosphere for learning that is laced with sardonic humor, outrageously playful generalizations, and well-aimed blows at “facts” that we all take for granted. Mahmoud El Lozy’s world is one where nothing is taken for granted; everything is scrutinized until its real purpose is revealed. I have experienced El Lozy’s methods as his student, as an audience member, as a member of several companies of actors in several theatrical productions under his direction, and as a reader of his criticism. It is the accumulation of all of the above experiences that enables me to appreciate some of the power of El Lozy’s most politically subversive dramatic output: his trilogy of plays, *We That Are Young*.

El Lozy’s trilogy is made up of *Bay the Moon* (1998), *And Then Went Down to the Ship* (2002), and *Us and Them* (2005). All three plays are unpublished to this day owing to the cancellation of the performances of *Bay the Moon* in 2000 due to censorship issues that El Lozy explains:

The play was not banned, it was cancelled. They demanded that we go through the procedure of a public show even though it was a private one with no ticket sales. That meant submitting a copy of the script. I didn't want to do that as it could have put me in the position of having to be tried before a military court owing to the references to the army. That's a taboo. (El Lozy, Email to author)

This cancellation and the “demand” that accompanied it may not seem to be crippling or hostile until the full picture of the government’s intervention is rendered. There was one highly persuasive element that supported the power of the “demand”: Police cars outside the theatre. Egypt has been under military rule since 23 July 1952 and as of that date, the most cursory reference to the military or the police in any public performance has to be approved by the institution in question. The script of El Lozy’s plays would have had to be scrutinized by the armed forces and stamped page by page. Since *Bay the Moon* contained a view of the October war that ran contrary to the party line, there was virtually no chance of acquiring permission to perform.⁴

The setting of the plays are: Cairo 1973-1974, West Beirut 1982, Los Angeles, Cairo, and El Gouna 2002-2003 respectively.⁵ Spanning these critical thirty years, *We That are Young* is a trilogy that chronicles momentous events that are responsible for the current willfully dismal and treasonously servile state of the Arab regimes as well as the intolerably frustrated state of the Arab people. El Lozy paints the geopolitical picture of an Arab world that is fundamentally a group of American vassal states controlled by the harmonious duet of Arab regimes and Zionist imperialism. On the interpersonal level of the characters, he has constructed a work “about young people whose lives have been destroyed by older people”. (El Lozy, Interview) On the level of the set as described in the stage directions and as seen in performances and/or stage readings, the intricately detailed and real world of *Bay the Moon* is literally demolished in *And Then Went Down to the Ship* to give way to the artificial fantasy world of *Us and Them*.

The social context of the three decades is captured by Galal Amin in his highly illuminating *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians*. Even though Amin traces all the causes of change in Egyptian society to the 1952 Free Officers Revolution, he still aptly describes the general state of affairs caused by high social mobility:

In both the city and the village, there is an increasing westernization of social life accompanied by a growing respect for whatever is foreign and a disdain for everything local. (8)

Understanding this attitude of Westernization is vital in order to appreciate the forces that the protagonists of El Lozy's plays have to contend with. Amin's book is a helpful companion to El Lozy's plays, especially when it comes to a reading of *Us and Them*, where the *nouveau-riche* behave in a manner analyzed by Amin in his chapter on cinema as follows:

the big businessman looks upon the downtrodden signalman with real hatred and fear, for in his eyes, this wretched creature represents his own recent past, which he is desperately trying to banish from his memory. (142)

In *And Then Went Down to the Ship* and *Us and Them*, there is a need to reflect on the Western view of the "Arab." The antagonists in the scenes discussed in this thesis, Jeff and Abby, have undergone indoctrination from birth by a system criticized from within by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Said encapsulates the personas of these modern-day Lawrences as follows:

Now the Orientalist has become the representative man of his Western culture, a man who compresses within his own work a major duality of which that work (regardless of its specific form) is the symbolic expression: Occidental consciousness, knowledge, science taking hold of the furthest Oriental reaches as well as the most minute Oriental particulars. Formally the Orientalist sees himself as accomplishing the union of Orient and Occident, but mainly by reasserting the technological, political, and cultural *supremacy* of the West. History, in such a union, is radically attenuated if not banished. (246, my emphasis)

Jeff and Abby do feel superior to the Arabs they deal with in the play. They attempt to hold a dialogue with people that they are in reality unprepared to listen to. Every

cliché that Jeff and Abby utter is condescending and shows them to presume themselves to hold the moral high ground. All condescension and supremacy is quickly withdrawn upon encountering the protagonists, but these agents/journalists are prepared for such a setback by labeling Ali and Layla as “radicals”.

Even though each installment of the trilogy is a self-contained play, the connections and overarching themes are compelling and enlightening. In order to achieve the full effect of *We That Are Young*, the three plays need to be performed in rapid succession in the tradition of the Classical Greek festivals. Unfortunately, due to the censorship issue, it is unlikely that these plays will be produced in Egypt in the foreseeable future. El Lozy is partial to Egyptian performances, even though *And Then Went Down to the Ship* was performed in the Director’s Lab at the Lincoln Centre in New York. When asked if he has a vision about performing the plays in Egypt, El Lozy responded:

I’d like to perform it twice over six days. Three nights, one play each, then a dark night, then another three nights. But it’ll never happen. You know, I want people to see one play. I want them to see one scene. Anything (El Lozy, Interview)

I share a small portion of the pain El Lozy feels at being unable to do justice to this trilogy; I participated in an aborted attempt to produce *And then Went Down to the Ship* at AUC. I was the light-designer of that production which depended heavily on the technical aspects of staging. Those who have read the play will realize that light, in various forms, is virtually a sixth character in the play, endowed with its own unique script. In addition to being the light designer, I was reading every unit of the play off El Lozy’s computer screen as he was writing, which allowed me to witness the creation of this emotionally draining drama. My involvement with the first and last plays was mainly as a spectator since *Bay the Moon* predates my acquaintance with El Lozy and I was working abroad while he was writing *Us and Them*. I have

watched a video of a makeshift performance of *Bay the Moon* with the original cast of the AUC production, and a stage reading of *Us and Them* in 2007. These three plays have played a crucial part in heightening my sense of national pride and belonging.

It is fitting that my sense of national belonging finds some of its roots in this paradoxical fictional-chronicle trilogy. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community... both inherently limited and sovereign.” (6) When explaining his definition, Anderson argues that the nation is a communion in a solely mental capacity, much like my own communion with Ali and Layla, the protagonists of El Lozy’s trilogy.

The three analytical chapters of this thesis will use a scene from each of the plays in El Lozy’s trilogy to show how he dramatizes the attempted compromise of Egyptian dignity. In each of the scenes there is an attempt to lure a principal Egyptian character away from principles based on dignity and towards a highly suspicious and artificial future. Each of the scenes is to a large extent a dialogue between an Egyptian in a perilous situation and an agent of “establishment” corruption. The two sides of the conversation are always unlikely to meet each other during their daily routines, which means the agent is Fanon’s “outsider from elsewhere.”(Fanon 5) In each case the agent is the one who seeks out the Egyptian character. The dialogue always reaches a point of dramatic tension that results in the Egyptian character’s refusal to be co-opted or reticent acceptance depending on the historical context of the play in question. The three scenes demonstrate the different tactics employed by the modern internal and external colonizers to compromise Egyptian dignity and thus silence a minority of subversive voices. These tactics are a symbolic attempt at tearing the protagonists away from the community and imposing an external will that removes any semblance of sovereignty, thereby destroying the nation as defined by Anderson.

After presenting the intertwining motifs of the three parts of the trilogy and contextualizing them, I will focus on these three scenes that will highlight the dramatic moments of the theme of national dignity and analyze the methods of compromising it and the responses.

One entry of academic criticism exists so far about El Lozy's work: AUC and McMaster University graduate Inas Hassan's MA Thesis, "Compass of Shame", which she has electronically sent to me. Hassan's Thesis is a comparative study of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and the first part of El Lozy's trilogy *Bay the Moon*. She applies the compass of shame and affect theory to both plays using the "angry young man" tradition as a point of departure. As one of El Lozy's students, and his assistant director on the aborted production of *Bay the Moon*, Inas Hassan was fully aware of the genesis of the play as well as its historical and social contexts. Her work will be instrumental to this thesis, especially in Chapter 2, due to its unique nature and subject matter.

Bay the Moon (1998), tells the story of the disintegration of the life of the protagonist, Ali. He is an upper middle class Egyptian civil engineer who is simultaneously an officer in the Army reserves. The disintegration of Ali's life happens as a result of the events and consequences of the October war, which run parallel with erratic shifts in his relationship with Carol, an American university student with whom he is involved. Ali's attitudes cannot be described; they must be seen and heard. In terms of characterization, however, he is an eloquent, witty and entertaining performer who likes an audience. The scene that will be analyzed in Chapter 2 will be a dialogue between Ali, and a friend of the family, General Abul Fadl, an officer in Egyptian Military Intelligence. Abul Fadl is endowed with the power and authority of an intelligence officer, coupled with the quasi-omnipotent air

of the rank of General in a country that is under military rule and in a state of war. The interview ends with an underhanded victory for the General, which forces Ali into exile.

The events of *And Then Went Down to the Ship* take place eight years after Ali's exile from Egypt. The summer of 1982 in besieged West Beirut witnesses the reunion of Ali and Carol. In This play Ali has more to say in terms of contemporary political events and the figures who shape them. He has clearly identified the enemy and speaks from an Arab nationalist perspective. Carol has become a photojournalist whose humane side is clear and sympathetic towards the sufferings of others, most recently the Arabs in Lebanon. She is also now the mother of Ali's eight-year-old son, even though she does not divulge the parentage. In spite of Carol's importance to the dynamic of the scene under analysis, the main focus is on the confrontation between Ali and Jeff, an American reporter. Jeff is El Lozy's portrayal of the Western media; limited, arrogant, ignorant, clichéd, and dangerous. In sharp contrast to General Abul Fadl, Jeff has no authority or leverage that may assist him in the co-option of Ali and the interview ends with Jeff's ejection from Ali's flat.

A similar fate awaits Abby, a female version of Jeff, when she attempts to co-opt Layla, an Egyptian journalist/activist, in *Us and Them*. Abby is the archetypal "bimbo" or "airhead". She is the type to make the most ridiculous pre-programmed statements in complete earnestness. Abby is in her element when dealing with characters who have an identity crisis: Khadija/Didi, Fatma/Tammy, and Tariq/Rocky.⁶ Layla is the more grounded female version of Ali from the earlier plays. The characters and the audience/readers alike are fully aware of the fate that awaits Abby's coercive offers once Layla starts responding.

The close reading of El Lozy's trilogy will reveal the different tactics that are used against those who cling onto Anderson's definition of the nation and Fanon's vision of decolonization. The West, especially the media, views them as radicals, the ruling elite sees them as an irritating threat to the status quo, and the victims of neo-colonialism – the masses for whom they toil— hardly ever get to hear them.

Chapter 2

“You’re in Trouble”

*Pour le peuple colonisé la valeur la plus essentielle, parce que la plus concrète, c’est d’abord la terre: la terre qui doit assurer le pain et, bien sûr, la dignité. Mais cette dignité n’a rien à voir avec la dignité de la “personne humaine”. Cette personne humaine idéale, il n’en a jamais entendu parler (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 12)*

“For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with ‘human’ dignity. The colonized subject has never heard of such an ideal.” (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 9)

Fanon’s highly specific re-definition of dignity is a perfect fit for the Egyptian mentality before the societal transformations that took place as a result of the “open door” economic policy. The generation of Ali, the protagonist of *Bay the Moon*, is one that believed in their connection to the land. It is this generation that was intrinsically connected to the recovery of lost land; they were part of the army that was “on alert” (El Lozy, 28) between the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 October/Yom Kippur war. While losing six years of the prime of their lives, this generation obviously did not expect to engage in what Ghali Shoukri terms “a substitute for war.” (*Portrait of a President* 142) Ali and his generation, in spite of an air of cynicism, would only settle for the restoration of dignity that comes with the reclamation of the land. It is then hardly surprising that Ali would spontaneously perform the actions narrated in scene XI of *Bay the Moon*, where he “takes matters into [his] own hands” in a manner that authority, in the form of General Abul Fadl, sees as “incitement to mutiny.” (El Lozy, 86)

Scene XI of *Bay the Moon* is the confrontation between a literally and metaphorically decimated generation fuelled by “cold rage,” (El Lozy, Interview) and the agency of an invisible yet ruthless neo-colonialism which had abandoned the

October war by signing the kilometre 101 6-point agreement. (Shoukri, *Portrait of a President* 159) It is this scene that most likely prompted the cancellation of all performances of the play in October 2000 at the American University in Cairo's Wallace Theatre. The power of the scene's shocking revelations, coupled with the theatre's "greater power to convince," (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 44) were not to be tolerated after twenty-seven years of aggressive private and public fabrication of history. The consequences of the dialogue between Ali and General Abul Fadl are Ali's exile and a heart-rending realization that dignity in the form of land has been lost through the coercion of the political authority.

Scene XI opens in a disturbing manner; a strongly built older man is sitting drinking coffee alone with Ali. This disturbance is amplified by many factors. Foremost among these factors is the suspense created by Ali's outspoken nature especially vis-à-vis contemporary politics and the state of affairs after the October War. Given that the party line was an overwhelming Egyptian victory, described by Sadat as a "miracle by any military standard," (Speech to the People's Assembly, 16 October 1973) it would be difficult to see how the authorities would tolerate Ali's diatribe in the previous scene:

ALI: Sinai is almost liberated. Sinai is almost occupied. We almost won the war and we almost lost it. Almost this, almost that. Riddle me this, riddle me that. One thing I know for sure is that the next generation of Egyptians will be a generation of tourists in their own country. (*Ali heads for the bedroom, disappears for an instant, then returns*) American tourists, definitely. (El Lozy, *We That Are Young, A Trilogy* 78)⁷

Along with the natural Egyptian paranoia about government surveillance inside one's own home, a paranoia that is the product of decades of police-state mentality and mass arrests, the audience of the play would be apprehensive about a stranger's visit as they would be of the figure of Ali and his dramatic pronouncements. Ali's

outbursts and cynical remarks about the war prior to the beginning of this scene have all served to prepare the audience for the inevitability of this denouement.

If the discovery of the stranger at the beginning of the scene introduced a sense of disturbance, then the first three lines would serve to confirm the worst fears: Ali is in trouble. The lines rapidly establish the identity of the visitor, remind the audience of Ali's disability, and demonstrate that the visitor has a clear superiority in the power relationship throughout the dialogue:

ALI: I must admit you are the last person I expected to call on me, General.

ABUL FADL: How's that leg injury coming around?

ALI: Can't hide anything from Military Intelligence, eh? (83)

Ali's tone and style of conversation prior to this scene has consistently established him as either superior or equal to the other characters. In this exchange there is a clear surrender to the dominance of this Military Intelligence General. In the lines that follow, he expounds on a topic that he has thus far ruthlessly deflected when broached by the other characters:

ALI: It's getting much better. Still hurts from time to time, though. It'll be all right.

ABUL FADL: Leg injuries always feel worse than they really are.

ALI: You can say that again. (83)

At this point, the feeling of unease and tension is heightened by pauses and changes of beat that permeate the dialogue to control its pace and provide its threatening subtext. The General initially permits Ali to stray briefly into a shared realm of acquaintance that is not linked to Ali's military past. Another pause and change of beat precedes the General's anticipated inquiry about being alone. This simple technique is used repeatedly by El Lozy to communicate Ali's unease, as well as demonstrate the extreme power of the Intelligence officer in the police state. The General knows the trajectory of the conversation and is therefore aware that his next question is not prevarication as it might seem to Ali and the audience:

ALI: What's this all about?

Pause.

ABUL FADL: What are your plans for the future? (83)

Dictating the answer to this question is the super-objective of the General's character.⁸ The remainder of the conversation is merely an exploration of the causes that dictate the need for the General's prepared answer to this question.

After the General's question about the future, there is an entire unit of the dialogue where there are no imposed uncomfortable pauses. During that unit, General Abul Fadl amiably discusses with Ali a scenario that involves his marriage to Carol and reluctantly emigrating to the United States. The conversation here hardly warrants the seclusion that the General had requested of Ali. There is no reason for a General in the Military Intelligence to be interested in Ali's private life unless it was linked to a greater matter. This would account for Ali's uncharacteristically disjointed speech where he is clearly searching for a reaction from the General:

ALI: Then I guess I'll have to go along with her plan and move to the States. She is quite insistent on that. Personally, I have my doubts. I really can't imagine myself living anywhere else but here, in Egypt. I suppose we'll probably go to the States at some point. I'd like to be able to come back regularly, though. (84)

The General's reaction, a non-committal "I can understand that feeling", manoeuvres Ali and the scene back to the original question of the reason behind the visit. The wording of the question reveals that Ali understands that the previous topic of conversation is not even a remote concern for this Intelligence officer:

ALI: You told me over the phone that you had something important to talk to me about. (84)

In this relationship between the representative of authority and a citizen, even one as outspoken and rebellious as Ali, it is the former who dictates the "important" concerns. In this case, Abul Fadl is so vastly domineering to the extent that he induces Ali to brush his own private life aside.

Once the private domain is out of the way, the scene is propelled into the clandestine political realm in a unit rife with unsettling and dangerous pauses that serve to rivet and refocus Ali and the audience. This next unit is short enough to highlight frequency and importance of every pause:

ABUL FADL: I can understand that feeling.

Pause.

ALI: You told me over the phone that you had something important to talk to me about.

Pause.

ABUL FADL: I do. *(Pause)* I have on my desk a report which includes, among other things, a list of officers whose behaviour during that last war hasn't been too... orthodox.

Pause.

ALI: There was little about that war that was. *(Pause)* And my name is on that list? *(Abul Fadl nods. Pause)* Well, that doesn't surprise me in the least. I sort of expected it. *(Pause)* So?

ABUL FADL: So... you're in trouble.

ALI: What kind of trouble? *(Pause)* Is it serious?

ABUL FADL: It could be. It depends on how we handle the situation.

ALI: Who's "we"?

ABUL FADL: You and I.

ALI: I see. *(Pause)* What does that report actually say? I mean, what am I being accused of? (84-5)

There are nine pauses in this unit. At its slowest pace, this unit would account for ninety seconds of stage time. This would increase the dramatic tension in a manner that compels any audience to hang on Abul Fadl's every word. After causing Ali to dismiss his private concerns and attempting to get to the point of this interview, the General pauses before and after confirming suspicions. The General then utters two words that are culturally linked to state menace: "desk" and "report". That was after all a time when the Egyptian citizen was accustomed to Sadat appearing on television to read reports for two hours and following his reading up with mass arrests of thousands of people in the name of national security and democracy. He then follows up this menacing clause with the use of the words "behaviour" and "orthodox"; phrases that bring to mind Sadat's descriptions of all who opposed him. It is this

moment that classifies the General as a mouthpiece for the Sadat regime; a regime which Ghali Shoukri, among others, accuses of opting for a substitute to war, and which Ali in *Bay the Moon* accuses of hatching a “conspiracy of peace” (El Lozy, 68). By accepting a pause after the General’s revelation, Ali proceeds to use the pauses to deflate the situation and trivialize the entire matter to the extent of nonchalantly using the extremely dismissive “So?” But this is not a riposte that can affect the General; he is an Egyptian who is fully aware of the tools needed to penetrate another Egyptian’s resistance. The ruling elite is fully aware of all the techniques that are needed to manipulate the people and force them to submission. When the need arises, brutal bluntness is used to devastating effect as evinced in Ali’s last three lines in the unit once the General uttered the phrase: “you’re in trouble.” El Lozy here exposes a side of Ali that is fundamentally rattled for the first time in the entire play. In spite of being rattled though, Ali is still not defeated.

The next unit is Ali’s solitary attempt to pre-empt and undermine the report that is soon to be unleashed on him. The General responds to Ali’s attempts in the manner of a man who has anticipated every conceivable reaction on the part of his interlocutor. Once again the General brings to mind Sadat’s performances on television as he reveals his report:

ABUL FADL: (*leaning towards his briefcase*) I’ll read it to you.

ALI: You have it here?

ABUL FADL: (*taking out a voluminous folder*) Yes.

ALI: I didn’t expect the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

ABUL FADL: It’s very thorough.

ALI: I bet it is. You mean to say that while we poor sods were burning our arses in the desert, you people were sitting in your offices happily gathering intelligence on your own armed forces?

ABUL FADL: It’s part of our job.

ALI: You would have done better to collect intelligence on the enemy.

ABUL FADL: (*smiling*) We do that too.

ALI: Do you, really? Then tell me what happened at the Deversoir. Tell me why we were ordered to stop when there was nothing to prevent us from going

all the way to the passes. Tell me what happened in Suez. Tell me. I'm listening.

ABUL FADL: That's not the point. Let us rather see how we can get you out of this mess.

ALI: I'm sorry. (85)

Actors use action verbs to describe the intentions of their characters. In this unit it is vital to note the sequence of these verbs that lead to the General's victory over Ali's accusations. Abul Fadl systematically stuns, deflates, deflects, absorbs, slaps, and finally redirects Ali while extracting a rare apology. All of Ali's bravado collapses in favour of a significantly tempered tone bordering on the defeated.

Having sufficiently reduced Ali's resistance, the General marshals the report in his possession to shower Ali with one damning accusation after another regarding a violation of the cease-fire. In military terms, and in a country like Egypt under military rule, these accusations are sufficient to end a life:

ABUL FADL: This report states that you have repeatedly transgressed your prerogatives... Willful insubordination. Refusal to carry out your commanding officer's orders... (*Looking at a sheet*) You deliberately ordered troops that were not under your command to violate the cease-fire, and engaged them in an unauthorized operation that cost us three men. (*Pause*) Some people could call this incitement to mutiny. (85-6)

Having faced death during the war, Ali's response to phrases such as "insubordination", "violate the cease-fire", "unauthorized operation", and "mutiny" is one of frustration and defiance. This very defiance is what helps complete the portrayal of Ali's generation; a generation that Inas Hassan links to the "Angry young man" tradition in British drama:

both Jimmy and Ali heartily reject surrender to such an extent that they retaliate against their society's ineffectiveness with verbal aggression. Their 'angry' words strike like daggers, but in the end they are merely 'baying the moon' in an attempt to survive their postwar turmoil *and* remain psychologically alive despite their devalued existence. (Hassan, "Compass of Shame" 68)

Ali's defiance did take the form of verbal daggers. He launched two violent speeches which, though merely narrating the incident in question, communicated the amount of resentment he felt for the "High Command" and all officers who, in his opinion, conspired against the army. But as Hassan points out, he is merely "baying the moon" when saying the following lines:

ALI: Is that all? ... About that violation of the cease-fire incident? ... if I hadn't "violated the cease-fire"... we wouldn't have lost three men or ten, or twenty, but maybe as many as three hundred... Something had to be done. I mean we got back every inch of that territory at tremendous cost. We left a trail of blood behind us. There was no way any one of us would have accepted retreating. (86)

Here Ali's own words equate dignity with the reclamation of "territory"; the land.

After hearing that officers like him will be "dealt with in a much harsher manner", he again links his actions and words to the concept of shame and is more than willing to face the consequences of his actions:

ABUL FADL: It would be better for you to leave the country... at least for a while.

ALI: Wait a minute. Leave the country? Why? I've done nothing to be ashamed of.

ABUL FADL: You must leave.

ALI: I won't! I defy them to find me guilty of anything. (88)

Ali uses all the key words that describe his generation; a generation that would only willingly leave the country if they were ashamed of their own actions. One that is responsibly defiant and guilt free. This form of resistance leaves the General with no option but to use a weapon that brings back the private realm that was set-aside at the beginning of the scene.

By invading the private plane of an individual, the General is using the *modus operandi* of the Israeli Intelligence community: women (Blum, *Eve of Destruction* 32). Besides being the motif of the Old Testament, using women is also a remnant of the Salah Nasr era of the Egyptian Intelligence bureau⁹. In this instance the use of

women is not mere temptation. Abul Fadl's understanding of his compatriot's mentality is so thorough, that his use of this age-old leverage is complex and worthy of respect. The General is aware that Ali is willing to face the consequences of his own actions, but he cannot face an obstacle that was not of his own making. The General quells Ali's little rebellion with one smooth long sentence that is timed to perfection:

ABUL FADL: It's not to your advantage to escalate matters.

ALI: That's what we'll see.

ABUL FADL: Especially when it is widely known in intelligence circles that you've been living intimately with an American woman of dubious connections for the last ten months. (88)

General Abul Fadl's mission was accomplished. He had placed Ali in a position of total submission because the problem was Carol's actions which were beyond his control. Ali's opinion of leaving the country is communicated through a term with a highly negative connotation: "run away". This manner shows that his dignity is still intact, even though he will be *forced* into exile.

Having coerced Ali into leaving the country through circumstances beyond his control, the General effectively dictates the answer to his first question about the future. The General supplies the official pretext for Ali's exile down to the last detail and then proceeds to sever every connection remaining with the country: Carol is returning to America, his best friend and business partner, Ibrahim, is under arrest for seditious activities, and Ali wants no involvement with his family. The General is confident that Ali has nothing to return to.

Chapter 3

THE EXILE ON MEDIA

*... les Arabes ne parviennent pas toujours à s'effacer devant l'objet. Le vécu culturel n'est pas national mais arabe. Le problème . . . d'assumer une culture arabe ou africaine face à la condamnation globale portée par le dominateur. (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* 147)*

. . . the Arabs do not always manage to forget their common identity when faced with an objective. Their actual cultural experience is not national but Arab. The issue at stake is . . . to pit an Arab or African culture against the universal condemnation of the colonizer. (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 152)

It is this refusal to ignore the “common identity” of the Arabs that saves Ali from being co-opted in *And Then Went Down to the Ship*. Whereas in *Bay the Moon* there was an attempt to compromise his Egyptian dignity, so strongly linked to homeland, by pushing him into exile, in this sequel he is subjected to an attempt at compromising his personal dignity by the newest agency of colonialism: the media. The character in the play who is the designated dignity broker, Jeff, is deliberately created by El Lozy in a manner that alludes to all the popular interviewers and talk-show hosts that the West has unleashed onto the world over the past three decades. Ali cites them as a source of irritation as he launches into the longest monologue in the play (El Lozy 144). By the end of the interview with Jeff, Ali has secured a double victory: he has humiliated an agent of neo-colonialism, and, more importantly, retained his dignity by embracing the collective pluralistic Arab identity.

The image of the Arab that Jeff believes he is dealing with is a manufactured construct. Edward Said notes in *Orientalism* that:

*... after the 1973 war . . . cartoons depicting an Arab Sheik standing behind a gasoline pump turned up consistently . . . In the films and television the Arab is associated with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty . . . an oversexed degenerate, capable it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low... In newsreels or news-photos, the Arab is shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences... Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of *jihad*.*

Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world.
(285-7)

This is the image that Jeff takes with him to besieged Beirut in 1982. Ali, knowing that this is the American journalist's preconception, assumes a counterattacking stance that stretches the Western media's portrayal of the Arab to the point of absurdity and self-destruction. Ali does not settle for an assault on the media; he incisively reinforces his offensive by condemning the value of selective objectivity and the seasonal/token freedom of expression. The manner with which he conducts the dialogue is perhaps the most riveting characteristic of the interview; Ali is calm, relaxed, sophisticated, occasionally self-deprecating, and paradoxically, charged with an undeniably aggressive attitude towards all those he believes are responsible for the plight of "our people". By maintaining this demeanor, he distances himself from Fanon's indoctrinated colonized intellectual who "is unable to make himself inessential" (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 13) and instead becomes "the colonized intellectual who is lucky enough to bunker down with the people during the liberation struggle." (11)

The interview takes place at the beginning of scene IV of the play. The principal characters in the scene are Ali, Jeff, and Carol. Carol has two initial roles in the scene: a photojournalist, and an intermediary. By the end of the interview, she becomes the sexual topic that releases the pathetic hostility of Jeff and the nonchalant hostility of Ali whereby he expels Jeff from his house. The stage time of this scene is approximately eleven minutes. During that time Jeff fails to acquire any information that can form part of what he calls a "human interest story" in scene I.

The scene opens *in medias res*. The audience is spared the moment of Ali's introduction to Jeff and literally cuts to the chase with a statement by Ali that he does not deviate from throughout: "I have nothing to say" (El Lozy 142). As far as his use

of the singular pronoun “I”, Ali, as an individual, does not provide any insight of any kind into his personal past and therefore symbolically insists that his personal history is not for sale. This opening line reveals the power relationship in the conversation: Ali feels and has no doubts about his superiority. He feels confident enough with his status to silence Jeff the moment he opens his mouth. The irony here is that, as an Arab, he is in besieged West Beirut

¹⁰ where the Arabs stand militarily inferior to the Israeli aggressor. We are reminded later during the interview that Ali’s sanctuary has just been rendered a serious blow in the previous scene when the Israelis bombed his balcony. Nevertheless, inside what remains of his personal sanctuary, Ali retains the right to exercise his power without question. The reason Ali agrees to this interview is hidden inside one of Ali’s double entendres: “We get our kicks where we can find them.” (142) Carol, knowing Ali all too well, understands this and does not respond. She misunderstands his hidden jab as a sign of the return of their “subtle complicity” (78) during their first encounter in *Bay the Moon* and begins to feel comfortable enough around the flat to go get drinks without Ali’s permission. El Lozy has a heightened awareness for precision of movement in all his plays. That awareness is naturally increased when dealing with a bare stage such as the one in *And Then Went Down to the Ship*.¹¹ He has restricted Carol’s movement to the onstage portion of the flat in the previous two scenes. Whenever she left the stage, it was in order to leave the entire flat. In this scene, he roams the flat freely, thus staying within the attention span of the audience until her imminent return. She takes these liberties as a result of the misunderstanding of Ali’s words mentioned above and because she does not take into consideration the new pluralistic mode of Ali’s character.

The manner with which Jeff begins his interview is a reflection of El Lozy's contempt for the neo-colonialist media and its jargon, as well as his resentment of the consumerist mentality. Jeff utters four ridiculous phrases in a single line to start the interview: "It's OK then? Great. I'm ready. Let's do it." (143) The use of "OK" is a standard parody of the notoriously limited American vocabulary, especially among educated Egyptians. Coming from a journalist, whose livelihood depends on skillful manipulation of language, this verbal irony demonstrates the extent to which the fast-food culture has penetrated the everyday lexicon of American journalists. As subtle as the usage of "OK" may be, the redundancy of the word "Great" positions the audience in opposition to the overexcited Jeff who cannot possibly foresee the verbal onslaught that he is about to be subjected to. To ensure that the audience fully appreciates Jeff's predicament, El Lozy sets him up further with his next utterance of "I'm ready". The audience would here find it impossible not to break out in laughter in response to this naïveté while the more adventurous spectator would be compelled to behave in Boal's forum theatre manner and retort: "No you're not!" The last phrase in this line alludes loosely to the Nike slogan "Just do it". This play is targeted at a twenty-first century audience that would either feel attacked or amused by this jab at consumerism but never neutral. The phrase "Let's do it" is used by Jeff almost as an unconscious response to the Nike slogan, the attitude of which is now a fully digested part of his psychological makeup.

In an absurd parody of Polonius's "brevity is the soul of wit" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 2. 2. 90), Jeff is brief in his prompting of Ali: "A story. Tell me your story." (142) This line reveals the media's way of "fabricating a fictitious reality" (El Lozy, Interview). A Western journalist such as Jeff would take any "story" and, as standard procedure, retell it out of context. Whereas journalists throughout the world may

fabricate stories for short-term gains, Western journalists with equally individualistic ambitions function within a larger framework that ensures their fabricated contributions become part of an overarching alternative reality. In his pursuit of the “story”, Jeff, who is naïve but not a fool, is willing to accept any information, quips, or even abuse from Ali in order to establish a semblance of a rhythm to the interview:

JEFF: It’s OK then? Great. I’m ready. Let’s do it.

ALI: What is it you want from me exactly?

JEFF: A story. Tell me your story.

ALI: That’s it?

JEFF: That’s it.

ALI: Which one do you want to hear?

JEFF: The one about an exiled Egyptian ex-army officer in Beirut.

Ali gives Carol a meaningful look.

ALI: (*to Jeff*) Are you sure that’s the one you want to hear. I may have better ones, you know.

JEFF: Whatever you’ve got.

ALI: I have some scotch left. Interested?

JEFF: That’d be great... (142-3)

Jeff is seen here to be clinging on to anything to placate this potentially hostile Arab who possesses what he’s been craving for since arriving in Lebanon, and in his own words:

JEFF: A “human interest” story. The daily reports I send my newspaper back home on the military action around here, all the political mumbo jumbo, all the arm twisting of negotiations, will the Palestinians stay or go... It’s just routine. It’s OK while it lasts. And it won’t last long. When it’s over you move to another story that makes the headlines. So to make this fucking miserable summer worth something I should come out of this with some kind of book. An American journalist’s experience in Beirut! I mean, how many times will anyone get to experience anything like this, or even close to this? When was the last time that a capital city was besieged? This is the closest thing to the London Blitz we’ll ever see! And I’m an eyewitness! I saw it all. I can say I was there. (104)

Even though Jeff was thinking of a story about himself and his own experience in the Lebanese capital, he quickly abandons that scenario in favour of Ali’s potentially “juicier” narrative. In fact anything that comes from this exile is “great”, including scotch.

Once Carol leaves to get the scotch, Jeff feels the need to alleviate his discomfort by means of hollowed out clichés followed by a reference to Ali's susceptibility to the forces of Israeli invasion:

JEFF: You should think of this as a really good opportunity to present your point of view, you know? You've got a chance to let the world know something they don't know about... let your cause be known... make your voice heard... *(Pause)* What happened to your balcony? The bombing, of course... Right? (143)

Ali will soon respond to all the clichés, but he is waiting for the opportune moment to strike. Jeff has also been waiting for the right moment to underhandedly shake Ali's sense of superiority, for it is illogical to assume that he only just noticed the absent balcony. Having already dealt Ali a mild blow by revealing his knowledge of Ali's status, Jeff is establishing a desperate rhythm of slowly intensifying verbal attacks. This rationing of verbal artillery is reminiscent of the timed thrusts that General Abul Fadl delivered in *Bay the Moon*. But the idea of rationing the blows is where the similarity with the Egyptian general ends. Jeff is an outsider in Ali's inner sanctuary who is owed nothing and has no leverage, which reduces the power of any verbal assault he may launch. Faced with Ali's silence, his discomfort mounts and he resumes his forced acceptance of Ali's domination.

When Jeff finally asks a question, the wording and the attitude are comic because they allude to the reality of the "characters" on television talk shows and interviews until today. El Lozy again sets up Jeff for a joke:

ALI: Go ahead. Ask your questions.

JEFF: *(suddenly very earnest and with an air of deep concern, almost conspiratorial)* Why Beirut?

ALI: *(dreamily, after a pause)* Because... because I have received promises from the storm...

CAROL: That's from a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, right?

JEFF: I know Mahmoud Darwish. (143)

The power of the joke comes from its shared meaning with the audience. The post

2002 audience have all seen Larry King, Sean Hannity, Jerry Springer, Oprah Winfrey, and a host of other television talk show hosts whose style of interviewing is parodied by Jeff's "air of deep concern". Ali's response to the absurdly "earnest" Jeff is a shot from the Arab cultural arsenal: a literary reference from a poem by a poet who despises and condemns everything that Jeff is and represents. Mahmoud Darwish and his work are symbols of anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism. While Carol, who has lived in the Arab world and experienced it in a much deeper way than Jeff, actually recognizes the verse:

So be it
I can assure you that I will refuse death
And burn the tears of the bleeding songs
And strip the olive trees
Of all their counterfeit branches
If I have been serenading happiness
Somewhere beyond the eyelids of frightened eyes
That is because the storm
Promised me wine and new toasts
And rainbows
Because the storm
Swept away the voices of idiotic, obedient birds
And swept away the counterfeit branches
From the trunks of standing trees
So be it
I must be proud of you
Oh wounded city
You are lightning in our sad night
When the street frowns at me
You protect me from the shadows
And the looks of hatred
I will go on serenading happiness
Somewhere beyond the eyelids of frightened eyes
For from the time the storm began to rage in my country
It has promised me wine and rainbows (Darwish, *Promises of the Storm*)

Jeff merely recognizes the name of the poet in much the same way that an illiterate may recognize the name of Shakespeare without having read him. Jeff is a product of a system that does not use Arabic literature to acquaint researchers, including journalists, with the Arab world. Edward Said explains this reduced attention to

Arabic literature when it comes to researching the “orient” in the United States and its consequences:

One of the striking aspects of the new American social-science attention to the Orient is its singular avoidance of literature. You can read through reams of expert writing on the modern Near East and never encounter a single reference to literature. What seem to matter far more to the regional expert are “facts,” of which a literary text is perhaps a disturber. The net effect of this remarkable omission ... is to keep the region and its people conceptually emasculated, reduced to “attitudes,” “trends,” statistics: in short, dehumanized. (*Orientalism* 291)

This validates the idea that Jeff, by looking for a “human interest story”, is essentially trying to narrate a statistic that exemplifies a “trend” or an attitude or both. By virtue of his quest being a “story”, the principals are “characters”, real but “dehumanized.”

After giving voice to his realization that a joke had been made at his expense by saying “But seriously now,” Ali responds with yet another ironic statement that includes the first utterance of profanity in the scene:

ALI: It’s the only free spot in this fucked up Arab world.

JEFF: (*laughing*) I’m afraid I’ll have to edit that.

ALI: I’m afraid that’s not the only thing you’ll have to edit. (El Lozy 144)

The resistance obvious in Ali’s assertion that the besieged Lebanese capital is “free” is more than irony; it is commentary about the nominal freedom that other Arab countries need to rise against. By using profanity in this political statement, he is deliberately offending the conservative sensibilities of the Western press in order to provoke the response Jeff duly delivered about editing. Ali’s next line is an intentionally unsubtle build-up to his imminent extended monologue where he condemns the selective “objectivity” of the “liberal” Western media and labels it as “unfair”:

ALI: Am I being unfair?

JEFF: I think you are.

ALI: I think I’m not.

CAROL: What makes you so sure?

ALI: Because we've been through this before God knows how many times. Some "well-intentioned" liberal Westerners, very often journalists... they want to "know more" about the Middle East. They want to know the Arab point of view. You are reticent at first, but they insist. They want to "balance things out" because the Western media doesn't present the Arab point of view as well as it should. They want to "give us a voice". They think they are doing us a fucking favour. (*He laughs*) Eventually you start telling them how things are. After listening very carefully, they ask you in this extremely annoying morally superior tone if you are not biased yourself. The implication being that what you are saying is mainly propaganda. Read "lies". And as you may already know Arabs are born liars. Anyway, they insist that there are two sides to the issue. That there are at least two sides to every issue. This is followed by a very elaborate sermon in praise of "objectivity", which I understand to be a Western virtue, even if Westerners only uphold it when dealing with the misfortunes of others, especially darker skinned people. But their last question is the final trap. They ask you, very earnestly, if you believe that violence can solve the problem. I call it a trap because it is not really a question. It is purely and simply a trap. Whichever way you answer it you've had it. You've been set up. And you should never answer it, simply because it is not the correct question to ask. You see, Jeff, there are no two sides to this issue. There is a colonizer and a colonized. There is an occupier and an occupied. There are those who are armed with the most advanced weapons the American taxpayer can afford and those who are armed with the most rudimentary defensive weapons available. Should you choose to argue the point that there are two sides to this question I will bring up other issues where your precious objectivity would be absolutely ludicrous, in poor taste, and frankly quite obscene. For example, do you think one should consider the German SS point of view in the Nazi campaign of genocide against Jews, Gypsies, and other less fortunate humans? Would you want to make a claim for objectivity in such a case? No. I didn't think so. As for violence... well, occupation is violence. Colonization is violence. Land expropriation is violence. Expulsion is violence. (*Pause*) That is why I have stopped talking to Westerners. For the simple reason that we don't need your understanding, we don't need your approval, and we don't need your benediction. Our only responsibility is to our people. For my part I piss on your objectivity, I piss on your morality, and I piss on your Western liberalism. (*Lifting the bottle of scotch*) Another shot? (144-5)

Ali's opening sentence in this speech is an expression of frustration at the seemingly endless cycle of misrepresentation. He then levels his attack on the "well intentioned" journalists, that is to say even those who are operating from behind the façade of fairness and objective journalism. Ali's frustration is coupled with more usage of profanity when he refers to the Western penchant for "giving us a voice"; a penchant that Edward Said questions in *Orientalism* (293). When Ali says, "They think they're

doing us a fucking favour”, he finds himself merging with the collective Arab identity for the first time during the interview. Once Ali laughs, he departs from the light yet frustrated tone to one more subtly menacing, superior, and sophisticated due to his increased usage of witticisms and occasional self-deprecation. Ali’s mock involvement of Jeff is established by delaying the use of the journalist’s name and the use of the second person throughout the first half of the speech. This involvement serves not only to mock Jeff, but more importantly, to attempt to “hold the mirror up to” Jeff and show him his own faults. Even if Jeff does not see his efforts as faults, Ali has at least made it clear that he sees through his real intentions. These intentions do not include fraternizing with journalists mounted on a morally superior high ground, or being trapped by a pseudo-question about violence. Once Ali uses Jeff’s name for the first time in the speech, as well as the entire scene, he faces him with the dichotomies that defy his “precious objectivity” in a manner reminiscent to Fanon’s discourse. Ali also utilizes the example of the holocaust to support the anti-objectivity theory, which derails the stereotype of Arabs as “holocaust deniers”. The influence of Fanon’s discourse is clearest when Ali provides what could be described as a summary of the chapter on violence in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Ali succinctly sums up his barrage of attacks with relatively mild abuse directed at Jeff and his “objectivity,” “morality,” and “Western Liberalism.” That summation however is revealed to be a red herring because Ali is having too much fun to release Jeff so easily; he introduces his next double entendre with glee as he offers Jeff “another shot.”

Having successfully taken refuge in the collective Arab identity, Ali has not only preserved his dignity, he has now managed to endanger Jeff’s dignity. This “sermon” was Ali’s response to corresponding “sermons” by Westerners who are

objective, fair, and impartial “by the mere fact of their Westernness.” (Said, *Orientalism* 319) His next move in this tortuous dialogue is to give Jeff a taste of Western medicine by imposing “another shot” on him. Jeff’s response to this lengthy speech is farcical and anti-climactic: “You really don’t like journalists, do you?” Ali’s subsequent “You noticed” sets the tone for much of the remainder of the interview where Ali systematically destroys all the foundations of American media. In the following exchange, we see Ali dismantling the façade of the freedom of expression:

JEFF: Did you hear of John Chancellor’s piece on NBC the other day? He gave a very accurate description of what Beirut and its people are going through. He said it reminded him of the bombing of Madrid at the time of the Spanish civil war. He even questioned Israel’s declared pretext for waging this war, describing it as an imperial nation. He did say it as it is.

ALI: Two minutes of truth on American television. Can America survive such a blow? But you are not telling me everything, are you?

JEFF: What do you mean?

ALI: The following day NBC apologized to its viewers for the opinions expressed by John Chancellor, didn’t it?

JEFF: Yeah, well, they had to.

ALI: They had to?

JEFF: Because of sponsorship and other things... It’s a complicated system.

ALI: Is that how free you are? (145-6)

This verbal chess game continues with Ali questioning the validity of Jeff’s “citizenship” and “mission”. Jeff insists that his duty is to “inform the public... so that an informed public could have a say in the affairs of the nation.” Rather than the understated taunting manner used thus far, Ali responds to Jeff’s farcical earnestness with a response interspersed with laughter and more witticism which leaves Jeff “visibly annoyed”:

ALI: (*still laughing*) An informed public... But, Jeff... you are in the entertainment business. Your job is to entertain the American public... Entertain it and traumatise it... Two for the price of one... Definitely a good deal, even though I say so myself... and I am not even remotely American Read your own papers, your magazines... Watch your news program on telly... What do they all do? They are all out to show the American reader and viewer that life outside the US of A is fucking awful. That makes them feel good. They feel safe. It makes them glad to be American. They won’t

have to experience any of this. Ever. You keep on hammering into the brains of that American public of yours that the world is such a fucked up mess they are better off leaving foreign policy to the professionals... the Nixons, the Kissingers, the Alexander Haigs, the Reagans... Oh, you are in deep shit, my friend. What's your next question? (146)

After this exposé of the hidden agenda of American media, Jeff “would still like to go back” to his story. This is a manifestation of El Lozy's belief that talking to the indoctrinated American is “like talking to a brick wall” (El Lozy interview).

Stripped of his professional dignity, Jeff is about to resort to a tactic so base that even Americans would call it a “cheap shot.” He effectively tries to provoke Ali out of his Arab persona and into a substantially more personal plane using his knowledge of the past relationship with Carol:

JEFF: ... why don't you tell me what's it like to hook up with your ex-girlfriend after... what? Eight years? Yeah, eight years. And in besieged Beirut of all places. What's it like? Your personal account of it. Your very personal account of it all. (147)

He compounds his own baseness by referring to Ali's leg injury in an attempt to achieve the threat to Ali's dominance he failed to get with the earlier reference to the demolished balcony:

JEFF: She told me the two of you were pretty tight way back in Cairo at about the time of the October War. You received a bad leg injury in that war, didn't you? Ran over a mine in your personnel carrier. Ain't that right, Carol? Not that it shows, mind you. You walk just as well as the rest of us... (147)

Ali's response to this underhanded and pathetic assault is a counterattack on the treacherous source. He does not answer Jeff's question and is practically applying what he had just preached because “it is not the correct question to ask”. The interview ends with a series of lines that are literally “fired off” between the trio and laden with profanity to reflect the aggression and hostility reminiscent of a revolution. This “revolution” is concluded with the pathetic image of Jeff being ejected from the flat after being violently silenced by Ali and Carol.

Ali's victory in this scene is not merely the preservation of his dignity, but his ability to turn the tide and endanger the dignity and pride of the aggressor. El Lozy manages to present a compelling and amusing example of an efficient method of resistance to the ultimate weapon in the arsenal of neo-colonialism, the media. The Western media is a caped crusader who has been stripped naked in this scene, revealing that it is, in reality, the new "opium of the masses."

Chapter 4

THE PRICE OF SILENCE

In every country of the world there are climbers, “the ones who forget who they are,” and, in contrast to them, “the ones who remember where they came from.” (Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* 24)

Post *Infitah*¹² Egypt is ruled by Fanon’s “climbers”, would-be climbers, and former climbers. These climbers are the mutated renaissance of the pre-1952 war profiteers. They have been mutated by replacing Europeans with Americans for their idols and by losing their connection with the Egyptian lower classes since these are the classes that remind them of their own origins. (Amin, *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians* 142) America is the hub of Capitalism and idolizing it comes naturally to most entrepreneurs, but it is the latter mutation that is more disconcerting: the alienation of the lower classes. This alienation is not restricted to abusing the object of their contempt – in this case the majority of the Egyptian population— these climbers invariably alienate themselves from their own roots by fabricating an entirely new individual history (El Lozy, Interview). These characters comprise “Warmongers, war profiteers, and the intellectuals they have bought.” (El Lozy, Interview)

In *Us and Them*, El Lozy provides us with an intellectual who has not been bought: Layla. She is a politically active, witty, outspoken, and optimistic journalist. El Lozy has a substantial amount of unique praise for people like Layla:

People think they’re crazy... Her own father thinks she’s crazy and wants to save her from herself... She represents one of the few people who were opposed to the war on Iraq... They were harassed, arrested, tortured, pursued... branded as traitors. (El Lozy, Interview)

This persecution as described by El Lozy is the price that Layla, and all who resemble her, are forced to pay for their “human dignity.” (El Lozy, Interview) The price is high because the opposition is not merely the climbers, but also the governments that have formed a symbiotic relationship with these climbers. Layla finds herself

constantly “hounded within her own country” (El Lozy, Interview) and constantly at war with identifiable underlings of a larger abstract force. Arnold Hauser described the earliest form of this conflict as one:

...between the hero and institutions... the hero was now fighting against anonymous forces and had to formulate his point of view as an abstract idea, as a denunciation of the prevailing social order. (Hauser, “The Origins of Domestic Drama” 404)

The prevailing social order in *Us and Them* reflects the reality of Egypt where the ruling elite propagates isolation from the majority of Egyptians on a geographical level. The distance that this group puts between itself and the populace is not a matter of elitist neighbourhoods; it takes the extreme form of elitist towns. The elite, former and current climbers, live in “a Kuwaiti Disney land... a mirage... a bubble like Gouna” (El Lozy, Interview) for long portions of the year. El Lozy’s set demonstrates the lack of substance to the elitist domicile by showing the audience nothing other than the beach, a smattering of beach chairs and a table. There are no roofs, no walls; the characters are in the open air. Khadiga, the owner of the location in *Us and Them*, is quick to point out the qualities of her place the moment she receives a compliment:

KHADIGA: We’ll see about that. (*To Carol*) And how do you like this place, my dear? Isn’t it just superb?

CAROL: It is. It’s a very beautiful place.

KHADIGA: It is superb. Supeeeerb. My friends are positively raving about it, you know.

CAROL: I can understand why.

KHADIGA: And exclusive. Absolutely exclusive. They don’t allow just anyone here, let me tell you.

CAROL: I’m sure they don’t.

KHADIGA: And we’re totally self-sufficient... in everything. We can forget all about the rest of the country here. To me this is Paradise. (197)

In opposition to this isolationist trend, Layla is the kind of person who would only go to such a place for a very special occasion such as her father’s birthday.

The invasion of Iraq, which is the historical setting of *Us and Them*, produced an extreme form of anti-Arab nationalism and solidarity rhetoric, highly

uncharacteristic of Egyptians, to emerge from the ruling elite. El Lozy managed to incorporate this aggressive and opportunistic rhetoric having:

...spent a lot of time with nice domesticated Egyptians who were excited about the invasion of Iraq and wanted it to happen because they saw it as a good opportunity for business since Iraq is the real obstacle. (El Lozy, Interview)

El Lozy captures this rhetoric in the dialogue by installing wholesale sections of “overheard conversations” between characters who are portrayed through Didi (Khadiga), Tammy (Fatma), and Rocky (Tariq). This “slice of life” rendition of characters who discard their distinctly Arab names in favour of Americanized nicknames is a technique that El Lozy has been criticized for:

I’ve been told that the dialogue is not nuanced enough, that it’s too “in your face”. But look at Shakespeare: “Come not between the dragon and his wrath,” “nothing will come of nothing”... If it doesn’t hit you in the face then it’s not drama. I have no patience with such people. (El Lozy, Interview)

Among the proponents of the invasion of Iraq are, naturally, the Americans and their most dangerous weapon: the media. At this juncture we meet Abby, Didi’s guest and Mohamed’s willing part-time girlfriend. She is a journalist/publisher who will seem disturbingly familiar to a contemporary audience. El Lozy labels the Abby type as one of the many American pseudo-intellectuals who are:

Stuck with the little sound-bytes they hear on CNN... I didn’t create these characters, I found them. Just watch CNN and you’ll hear it all. It’s just that when you take it out of context it’ll sound like what it is: ridiculous. (El Lozy, Interview)

El Lozy is adamant about the reality of Abby: “I met Abby. I was made the same offer in more or less the same terms.” (El Lozy, Interview) This specimen of American media that is in full support of the clichés regarding the Axis of Evil, the War on Terror, Global Peace Initiative, and all the other “sound-bytes,” is one that is lacking in sophistication to the extent that they do not know the difference between Jazz and Blues and need to have it explained by Egyptians. (240)

Against this background of ridiculous isolationist “climbers” and equally ridiculous and uncouth agents of American media in the “bubble” of Gouna, Layla, the dignified Arab Moslem woman, finds herself conflicting with Abby’s attempt to purchase her silence and hence, her dignity. The scene is called “The Night Before” in a literal reference to the night prior to the invasion of Iraq on 19 March, 2003. The attempt to strip Layla of her dignity takes the form of enticement; she is offered a highly lucrative career with all the fringe benefits a woman in her mid-twenties could hope for. Layla’s refusal to be bought and silenced is a symbol of resistance and retention of dignity.

The section of the scene where the confrontation between Layla and Abby takes place is marked by being left alone by Ali and Mohamed at the beginning, and at the end by Mohamed pulling Abby away. Abby is completely fascinated by Mohamed’s odd mercurial charm and initiates contact with Layla through “girl talk”. When Layla doesn’t respond in a “girly” way, Abby changes tactics and gets to the point in her own way: “I was talking to your father earlier. And when he told me you’re a journalist, I said to myself, Oh my God!” (226) The sitcom culture evident in the exclamations of this character makes it impossible from the outset to consider the possibility of Layla taking her seriously. The audience of a stage reading of *Us and Them* roared with laughter every time Abby spoke, especially in this scene. The reasons for the laughter were their knowledge of what Layla’s response would be like, and a shared recognition of this character’s language and behaviour. This is not a stereotype that does not exist in reality; this is a stereotype that has gained comic effect due to its existence in reality. Layla does not impart anything; she asks questions that cannot be held against her. There is a lingering suspicion that she might be amused by the creature before her, but she still says nothing other than: “You did?”

Abby goes “cruising” past this question in a most excited manner. She tries to engage Layla using a feminist bait “And you being a woman, of course, is just great!” but Layla, predictably, doesn’t bite. Abby then utters seven words that nobody can disagree with: “I’m not making any sense, I know,” followed by the “OK” that El Lozy consistently highlights to show the level of sophistication, or lack thereof, of the American who is about to speak. Abby, having cued herself, unleashed the “sound bytes” that El Lozy referred to:

ABBY: We’re trying to set up this magazine, here in Egypt, but it will be distributed in the whole Arab world, of course. It’s a big thing. And I am here with a group of people to put together a team. There are quite a few Arab Americans with us too. We’re targeting young readers, of course, but, hey, anyone is free to read it, right? It will be both in Arabic and in English. You can see it’s a very multicultural sort of thing. (226)

The erratic pace that dominates Abby’s lines is the first indication that she is a “scatterbrain” in the most basic sense. There is also an indication that she has been fed all these key words since as empty as this speech is, it is not without a strategy. This suspicion of programming is supported by the fact that there is no mention of the purpose, the themes, the topics, or the source of funding of this magazine. All the words that Abby uses are bait that only the Arab pseudo-intellectuals would bite: A “Team” of “Arab Americans” “putting together” a “multicultural” “magazine” “targeting young readers”. It is this last term as well as the way it is phrased that is a sign of danger; young readers being targeted means that the future of the country will be targeted. Layla halts this avalanche of “sound bytes” with the only question worth asking at this stage of the conversation: “Why?” Abby’s response is comically positioned and symptomatic of performers who do not know their audience:

ABBY: Why what?

LAYLA: Why this magazine?

ABBY: Oh! I see. Well, it’s really very simple. I’m sure you are aware that the Arab media is... well, what can I say? You know, not really up to Western standards.

LAYLA: I've noticed.

ABBY: (*laughing*) Who hasn't! (226)

It would be a mistake to dismiss Abby's manner of speech as the pointless rambling of a nitwit, for in this exchange she reveals what she only hinted at earlier: a stealthy ability to prevaricate and a dictated pre-programmed scenario. Between the "Oh!" and the "I see" one can actually see her mentally flipping to the appropriate flashcard that contains the answer to this anticipated question.

Abby's next three avalanches of "sound bytes" are in turn: the voice of "reason against the radicals":

ABBY: Anyway, that's why we are interested in creating a magazine that would help build constructive communication between the US and the Arab World. We want to establish harmony where there is now so much misunderstanding and confusion. As an educated woman, you must realize that Arabs have a very, very distorted vision of the US and, unfortunately, for the moment, the radicals and the extremists seem to have the upper hand. There's so much anti-American rhetoric going on! (226)

The voice of "Reason against conspiracy theories" comes next:

ABBY: I can't tell you how disheartening it is. People should be told the truth. The US is not waging a crusade against Islam. The US is not interested in Iraqi oil. It has no designs on the region. But you know what it's like. When it comes to conspiracy theories Arabs just can't get enough of them. But any sane person will tell you there is no conspiracy. There never was. (227)

And, even though Mohamed tries to restrain her, finally "Reason for change" is voiced:

ABBY: I say we need to replace all this culture of hate, because that's what it really is, with a culture of peace. And this magazine could be an important bridge between our two cultures. Between the West and Islam. Arabs will get a chance to understand what the US is really all about. I'm really very proud and very excited about this project. It makes me feel like I'm really making a difference. (227)

Layla's responses so far in the scene have not exceeded five words per line. She is allowing Abby to "dig her own grave." Abby's terminology and logic are those of round-tables, forums, conferences, CNN, NBC, and Fox News. The audience at the

2007 stage reading could not stop laughing because of the recognition. Yet again, it is unwise to dismiss Abby's maneuvers because after these exhaustive pleas of reason, Layla asks for the purpose of all this information, to which Abby ecstatically responds:

ABBY: We are looking for Egyptians like you to write for this magazine. It would help raise our credibility. But before we get to this we will need to train them, of course... For the kind of objective journalism that, as you know, is sadly missing in the Arab world. They are just not used to it. We'll have to teach them what real journalism is all about. (227)

Therein lies the trap. The journalistic training involved reveals the real intention of this conversation: recruitment. It is common knowledge that this approach is one of two used by Egyptian and Israeli Intelligence bureaus to recruit agents, the other being the formation of an international clandestine peacekeeping organization. If Abby's aim is not related to espionage, then at best, Layla is the target of manipulation and co-opting. Both these ends entail a total loss of dignity. Abby hurriedly makes the next plea to quickly cover up the trap of the "training": "you being a woman and all that is going to be so useful." (227) The phrasing of the line is distracting, but Layla manages to sidestep that and ask, as usual, the right question: "Useful... for what?" (227) Abby then plays the propaganda card of the oppression of women in an "Islamic country" and attempts to flatter Layla by labeling her as "emancipated and Westernized." This next exchange plays extremely well on stage to build up to Layla's explosive yet understated response:

LAYLA: You seem to have thought it all out in great detail.

ABBY: When I saw you, I said to myself, she's got to be the one!

LAYLA: I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am definitely not the one.

ABBY: It really pays very well. You'd be surprised.

LAYLA: I don't think so.

ABBY: I'm not trying to rush you or anything.

LAYLA: Don't worry, you're not.

ABBY: At least give it some thought, you know, before making any final decision.

LAYLA: I can give you my answer right now.

ABBY: You don't have to.

LAYLA: Oh, but I want to.

MOHAMED: (under his breath, to Ali) Oh oh... (228)

Any one of the responses uttered by Layla should have been sufficient to convince anyone other than Abby that, to borrow Mohamed's phrase, she's "Barking up the wrong tree." (227) But Abby's persistence and deliberate imperviousness to real reason make her pull up her final flashcard about "fringe benefits", conferences in Italy, and "All expenses paid." (228)

Layla's long awaited response takes the form of sarcastic deconstruction; she obliterates the Gordian knot of the hidden logic of Abby's scheme with eloquence, wit, and clarity. Her first salvo is against the concept of "bridges":

LAYLA: You see, dear Abby, I have no intention of being a bridge, or a tunnel, or whatever else you come up with, between "the West and Islam", as you put it... I also think you should know that I don't believe in "bridges", as you call them. This is just another one of those catchwords for dimwits. It sounds harmless but it's really nothing but a ploy to encourage weak-minded native pseudo-intellectuals to join your pathetic propaganda schemes with open legs. You see, I believe in solidarity. Solidarity means you don't need to explain yourself. It's about sharing a vision of humanity as indivisible. Solidarity eliminates the "otherness" of others. There is no "other". (228-9)

Not only does she destroy the premise of the need for "bridges", she also alludes to Fanon through her definition of solidarity, thus demonstrating that this argument is one where the likes of Abby are out of their depth. Layla's next counterattack is against the unsavoury image of America in the Arab world and her sophisticated use of American marketing jargon against itself. "No amount of new and improved detergent will help clean it up," (229) is a potent blow to a character as indoctrinated by her own media as Abby. The understated aggression reaches its climax with this next speech:

LAYLA: So you can count on me to continue to expose the policies of your country in every possible forum. As for the collective fantasies you people have about yourself and your role in the world that's fine by me. God forbid I would deprive any of God's creatures of their delusions. Just don't try to sell

me your self-righteous paranoia. It doesn't play well here. I suggest you keep it amongst your beautiful selves as you go down on each other in your never-ending collective displays of self-adoration. And who knows, maybe soon the Iraqis will give you a taste of reality. They won't be throwing flowers at your trailer trash ghetto army, believe me. They will fight. They will fight and you will bleed... Bleed to death, I hope. (229)

This speech is the conclusion of the deconstructive response that Layla has improvised. It contains a refusal, a warning, and a prediction. Layla refuses to part with her dignity, warns against any further attempts to deceive or dupe her, and predicts a bloody alteration of American reality at the hands of the Iraqis. As Abby is being dragged away to relative safety by Mohamed, Layla adds a knockout statement/ultimatum:

LAYLA: One last thing. Never try to butter me up with that middle-class American feminist garbage. I am an Arab woman and I am a Moslem woman. My battles are my own. Do your cheerleading anywhere you want, but not on my turf. And while we're at it just remember that if it wasn't for us Arabs, you Western women would still be wearing chastity belts. (229-30)

In addition to the obvious blow to Abby's feminist card, Layla exhibits a powerful identification with her Arab and Moslem personas. She deliberately says: "don't try to butter *me* up." She says that even though it is inconceivable that Abby and Layla would ever engage in any conversation after this one. This warning is stated in this manner on behalf of all Arab women as well as all Moslem women. After identifying with these two personas, she proceeds to affirm the supremacy of Arab "emancipation" which freed the present day "free world" from the symbol of feminine objectification: the chastity belt.¹³

Layla's response to Abby's offer labels her as a "decolonizing intellectual". She manages to simultaneously defend her dignity and elevate her people's status in the eyes of the aggressor while silencing this agent of neocolonialism and rendering her horrified. But even though Layla stands her ground well and retains her dignity, she does represent the minority of intellectuals; there are so many pseudo-intellectual

“climbers” who ride Abby’s particular brand of “gravy train” in the Arab world, particularly in Egypt.¹⁴

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

*Ce travail colossal qui consiste à réintroduire l'homme dans le monde, l'homme total, se fera avec l'aide décisive des masses européennes qui, il faut qu'elles le reconnaissent, se sont souvent ralliées sur le problèmes coloniaux aux positions de nos maîtres communs. Pour cela, il faudrait d'abord que les masses européennes décident de se réveiller, secouent leurs cerveaux et cessent de jouer au jeu irresponsable de la belle au bois dormant. (Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* 62)*

This colossal task, which consists of reintroducing man into the world, man in his totality, will be achieved with the crucial help of the European masses who would do well to confess that they have often rallied behind the position of our common masters on colonial issues. In order to do this, the European masses must first of all decide to wake up, put on their thinking caps and stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty. (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 62)

To ask for the “crucial” help of the colonizer’s “masses” does not compromise the dignity of the colonized. It is as incumbent on the colonizer’s masses to help as it is on the colonized to find effective methods to communicate their cause and its reality to the outside world. These effective methods have one objective: make the masses think. A performance of *We That Are Young* has a fair chance of making a hostile audience think, while working on a production is guaranteed to persuade anybody. The decolonization that Fanon refers to as a “colossal” task has now become, in its masked neocolonial guise, a continuous lifelong Sisyphus curse. El Lozy’s trilogy moves in a constant trajectory of expositions and climaxes without ever hinting at a denouement, much like a war of independence. *Bay the Moon* and *And Then Went Down to the Ship* provide us with one decolonizing protagonist, while *Us and Them* provides us with the next generation of the same protagonist who ends the last play with: “We’ll finish it later. Thank you. Cut.” (El Lozy 245) In all three plays, the reader/spectator is privy to the disturbing scene where the protagonist is

either summarily removed from the context of decolonization, or an attempt is made to co-opt the protagonist and derail the struggle.

Bay the Moon introduces the audience to the first of the neocolonialist methods of response to decolonizing thought. Ali, along with many other junior officers of the Egyptian Third Army, was forced into exile due to actions that were brought about by his nationalist compulsion to retain his dignity. Chapter 2 of this thesis analyzed Ali's connection with the land, his unwillingness to part with it, and his willingness to face the consequences of his subversive actions. I have attempted to show that, during the scene with General Abul Fadl, in spite of the General's relentless attacks supported by damning documentation, Ali has resisted and rejected the idea of leaving Egypt. At no point during the entire play is there a suspicion that Ali might compromise his national dignity. But since the agent of neocolonialism is a representative of the ruling elite, he is therefore superior to Ali and is capable of pulling out the proverbial "trump card" by leveling a blow that is totally unrelated to the morally blameless efforts: the personal life. But even on the personal level, El Lozy exonerates Ali of blame by indicting Carol's actions. El Lozy then proceeds to sever all of Ali's personal connections to Egypt in order to provide him with a tabula rasa that will prepare him for the life he will eventually lead in Beirut.

And Then Went Down to the Ship begins and ends with explosions that bookend Ali's newfound freedom in 1982 Beirut. Whereas he was connected in Egypt to a group of people of whom he disapproved, in Beirut he is only connected to likeminded individuals whose acquaintance he made by choice. Chapter 3 analyses a scene where a different instrument of neocolonialism, the Western media, enters his new life via a connection from his old life: Carol. In keeping with the volatile and explosive ambience of the city, Ali uses this opportunity to contribute with his own

brand of explosions and totally level the unsuspecting Jeff. Since Jeff is an American journalist, he has no authority or leverage over Ali, especially since the “interview” takes place in the latter’s personal sanctuary of an apartment. Whereas Ali’s assumption of the Arab persona in *Bay the Moon* was mockingly self deprecatory, using terms like “Arab violence,” and “Arab treachery,” (El Lozy 12), in *And Then Went Down to the Ship* we see him as a selfless, serious, and superior spokesman for Arab Nationalism and Arab dignity. Jeff’s repeated attempts to acquire Ali’s personal “story” inevitably include the attack on the personal realm, which is similar to General Abul Fadl’s tactic in *Bay the Moon*. This is where Ali, in his new form, draws the line and proceeds to oust Jeff from his sanctuary. El Lozy makes full use of Fanon’s chapter on violence from *The Wretched of the Earth* in this scene, thus firmly and directly establishing Ali’s character as a decolonizing intellectual. But the invasion of Beirut, “The only free spot” (El Lozy 144) in the Arab world, is not an event that a character like Ali can survive. And so, “like so many other Egyptian officers who survived the October war and went to fight in Beirut,” (El Lozy, Interview) Ali is considered dead by the characters of the last installment of the trilogy.

The post 9/11 world of *Us and Them* is a world with a new vocabulary but ultimately the same attitude. El Lozy calls the new vocabulary “sound-bytes” (El Lozy, Interview) and Layla, his newest protagonist, calls it “catchwords for dimwits.” (229) This is a contemporary play with a more immediate tone and language that we hear every day either on television or whenever there is a congregation of neo-intellectuals. It is disturbing to note that many a forum/conference/roundtable use exclusively the kind of language that Abby uses in her attempt to recruit Layla in the scene entitled “The Night Before.” Chapter 4 exposes the newest form of colonialism:

outright recruitment and purchase of silence, in its own way a significantly more dangerous variation on the extremely American “preemptive strike.” This scene’s brilliance resides in the fact that, unlike the relatively distant worlds of the 70s and the 80s, El Lozy is now addressing a contemporary audience about its own world using its own lexical devices. We have all heard every variation of Abby that America can produce, and this scene is one of the few literary/theatrical occasions where we get to hear a Layla. After listening to the absurd “sound-bytes” and the lucrative offers that Abby offers, Layla retorts by undoing the basic premises of everything she heard and echoes Ali’s connection to the land by warning all the Abbys not to try this form of co-option “on my turf.” (230)

The three worlds of *We That Are Young* produce three different protagonists in opposition to the same antagonist: neo-colonialism. The Ali we meet in *Bay the Moon* shares none of the optimism he enjoys in *And then Went Down to the Ship*. The optimism was ironically forced upon him and was rooted in his latent sense of national belonging and intrinsic link to the homeland. This is an optimism that allows Ali to transform his exile from his country into the missing stage of his metamorphosis from an Egyptian to an Arab, thus embracing the larger picture that has Palestinian liberation as its central and most motivating goal. The initial Ali, to borrow the words of Fanon, was “captured... by the spotlight of History [which] infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of new men, with a new language and a new humanity” (*The Wretched of the Earth 2*). In the 1970s, Ali was part of a minority that dared to speak, as evinced by the student movements (1968-72) and in the 1980s, he was part of the minority that dared to act while seeking out the “spotlight of history”. In the 2000s, we have a majority that does not dare to speak or act, and on their behalf, there are the Laylas who are part of the same optimism,

caught by the same historical spotlight, but with a voice that reaches a larger audience than Ali. Optimism, connection to homeland, and voice are the prerequisites to the realization and maintenance of Anderson's definition of the nation. For the goals of neo-colonialism to succeed, the new generation of Arabs must be "a generation of tourists in their own country... American tourists, definitely." (El Lozy 78) Didi, Tammy, and Rocky are manifestations of that neo-colonial success; Arabs whose characters have been systematically effaced then replaced with recycled versions of characters out of aborted sitcom pilots.

The three scenes that I chose to discuss in this thesis share a temporal location; they are all within the last quarter of the plays. This is the point by which the reader/spectator has formed a dialectic/rapport with the protagonist that, especially with Ali, borders on complicity. Those who agree with the politics of the protagonist are treated to lessons in self defense against neo-colonialist maneuvers, while those who disagree are mercilessly confronted with the reality they helped build. The former will not want the dialectic to end as swiftly as it does, while the latter do not have a chance to leave the theatre unseen. This last group shares a new form of the "white man's burden" because it is their responsibility to discover why they are really offended. There is no language barrier to hinder this discovery through the plays,¹⁵ and they can unearth the historical contexts if they go to the source.

The group that wants the dialectic to continue is wrong to do so; there is much work to be done to eradicate the contemporary realities portrayed in the trilogy. Those who are victims of neo-colonialism under any of its guises need to work to rectify all the factors that lead to the emergence of characters such as Tammy and Rocky. The process is one of rebuilding and it starts in the home and in the school. But whatever is built in these two venues may be destroyed in a second by the media and

entertainment; these two fields must also be purged of all elements that compromise national dignity and belonging. And like El Lozy's trilogy, the momentum must be constant because the struggle never ends.

From the futile baying of the moon to the polarization of forces, and passing through the hazardous and prophetic netherworld full of ghosts from the past,¹⁶ El Lozy manages to dramatize national dignity and the forces that threaten it from within and without. His dramatization is paradoxically shocking and optimistic; playful and serious. From the theatrical perspective, the plays that constitute this trilogy are veritable gems that can test the creative mettle of theatre practitioners. They are three entries into the Egyptian dramatic canon that the Egyptian theatre is currently in dire need of.¹⁷ The salvation of this trilogy from obscurity will in itself be a triumph for Arab dignity.

Notes

1 These three “no’s” were all the stronger by being voiced during the Khartoum conference in September 1967, only three months after the defeat of the Six-Day war.

2 See El Lozy’s “Identity and Geography in Karim Alrawi’s Promised Land” and “The Madness of Rebellion: the Rhetoric of Impotence in Mikhail Rumane’s al-zujaj.”

3 El Lozy is a passionately committed supporter of Palestinian liberation. See “Palestine Uncovered in My name is Rachel Corrie.” El Lozy has also articulated his grievances about the obliteration of the Egyptian repertory theatre at the hands of the State in “From Crisis to Catastrophe: Epitaph for E. T. (Egyptian Theatre)”

4 The official version of the events of the October/Yom Kippur (1973) war was that Egypt achieved and overwhelming military victory. El Lozy contradicts this view in the play as will be seen in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

5 El Gouna is a man-made Red Sea Resort East of the Sinai Peninsula. It is an exclusive town that, in a rather un-Egyptian manner, promotes itself on its website (<http://www.elgouna.com/Home~SectionID~17.html>) as a “self-contained town”, and a “town like no other.”

6 Didi, Tammy, and Rocky are nicknames that the characters have totally substituted their own names for. Many Egyptians, especially the ultra Westernized, elitist upper middle class, have been so consumed by their acquired identities, that members of their own family are unaware of the real name. *Us and Them* also introduces the nonchalant Mohamed who is totally noncommittal while being exceptionally comfortable with his Egyptian identity.

7 Mahmoud El Lozy. *We That Are Young, A Trilogy*, (2005), courtesy of the author. Subsequent page references will be made throughout the text to this copy.

8 The super-objective of an actor is their ultimate objective of the scene and is decided prior to their entrance. It is achieved tactically by accomplishing smaller objectives from moment to moment.

9 Salah Nasr was the director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Bureau for ten years (1957-67). During that period he had made such extensive use of sex and pornography as leverage, that they were perceived by the public to be the only weapons of the bureau. In Egyptian eyes, until today, Salah Nasr’s era represented the darkest manifestation of the police state. For an explicit example of Salah Nasr’s abuse of power, See I’timad Khurshid’s *Shahida ‘ala inhirafat Salah Nasr*.

10 The Israeli siege of the largely Muslim West Beirut was the precursor to the Israeli invasion of the city. This invasion paved the way for the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres at the hands of the Zionist clients, the Christian Phalanges. The siege lasted the entire summer of 1982, during which the city was bombarded from land,

sea, and air. For a compelling and vivid account of these events, see Selim Nassib and Caroline Tisdall's *Frontline Story*.

11 The aborted production (2004) I worked on as light designer had a bare stage, as did the performance at the Lincoln Centre, New York (2002).

12 The Open Door Economic policy that reversed the existing socialist policies. It was implemented through Law 43 in 1974.

13 Arab Islamic feminists diverge from Western feminism in that they operate within the existing framework of an Arab/Islamic country's political and legal systems. See Shahrzad Mojab's article, "Theorizing the Politics of 'Islamic Feminism'"

14 Layla's sister, Tammy, and her fiancé, Rocky take turns supporting anti-terrorism, and attacking Layla.

15 It is clear that El Lozy has chosen idiomatic English for his plays for this reason. It is also dramatically realistic to portray all of El Lozy's characters speaking entire conversations in English because an upper middle class Egyptian can go for hours without speaking a word of Arabic.

16 El Lozy has named *Bay the Moon* in an allusion to Brutus's declaration: "I had rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman." (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* 4.3.27-8) *And Then Went Down to the Ship* comes from Ezra Pound's Canto I which is Pound's version of Odysseus's journey to Hades from Book XI of *The Odyssey*. The name of the entire trilogy comes from Edgar's lines in *King Lear*: "The weight of this sad time we must obey,/Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say./The oldest hath borne most. We that are young/Shall never see so much, nor live so long. (William Shakespeare, *King Lear* 5.3.323-6)

17 Once El Lozy's trilogy is admitted into the canon, the issue of language I referred to earlier will pose an obvious problem. There is, however, a bigger problem to be resolved which is the very existence of an Egyptian/Arab dramatic canon.

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