AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE COFFEEHOUSE IN LITERATURE: SOCIETY AND
POLITICS IN THE CAFÉ

by
GHENWA TANIOS ANTONIOS

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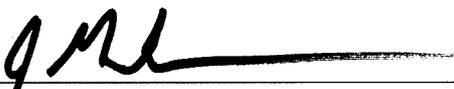
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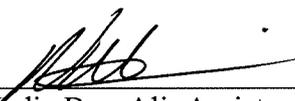
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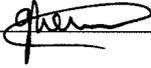
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Ghenwa Tanios Antonios   for   Master of Arts
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Title: The Coffeehouse in Literature: Society and Politics in the Café

In this thesis an analysis of the public settings and interactions of coffeehouses enable a reassessment of the social and political histories of three cities. I connect, in other words, London, Paris and Cairo in a story about print culture and performance. The three cities share similarities, but they narrate different histories. Coffeehouse literature expresses the various interactions between people, as well as the interactions between conviviality, social/political reform, and revolution. Coffeehouse literature, which this thesis treats as a literary genre, is involved, I argue, in a reactive relationship with history. The narratives involved in this thesis react to, as well as influence, historical arguments on the formation of a public and social identity, the generation of political consciousness and a political identity, and the transformation of society and government through revolution. Coffeehouse literature, belonging to different categories and subgenres, evaluate the different aspects of coffeehouse sociability under different social and historical settings. In fact, literature connects the historical arguments, on one level, to the sociopolitical manifestations of café culture. By constructing this narrative, this thesis brings forth the various representations of coffeehouse culture as expressed through different literary subgenres, in order to understand the literary café's involvement in social and political reform.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis an analysis of the public settings and interactions of coffeehouses enable a reassessment of the social and political histories of three cities. I connect, in other words, London, Paris and Cairo in a story about print culture and performance. The three cities share similarities, but they narrate different histories. Coffeehouse literature expresses the various interactions between people, as well as the interactions between conviviality, social/political reform, and revolution. Coffeehouse literature, which this thesis treats as a literary genre, is involved, I argue, in a reactive relationship with history. The narratives involved in this thesis react to, as well as influence, historical arguments on the formation of a public and social identity, the generation of political consciousness and a political identity, and the transformation of society and government through revolution.

Coffeehouses can be defined as public spaces open to all members of society, where people are free to come in, buy a cup of coffee, and engage in a series of activities that range from mundane conversation to intellectual or political debate, solitary silence, or the simple act of reading news. Sociability, publicness and conversation are all attributes that characterize the coffeehouses of London, Paris and Cairo. These coffeehouses are also defined by a range of political involvement in the form of dissent and subversion or suppression and oppression. Coffeehouse literature, belonging to different categories and subgenres, evaluate the different aspects of coffeehouse sociability under different social and historical settings. In fact, literature

connects the historical arguments, on one level, to the sociopolitical manifestations of café culture. By constructing this narrative, this thesis brings forth the various representations of coffeehouse culture as expressed through different literary subgenres, in order to understand the literary café's involvement in social and political reform.

In each of the three chapters of this thesis, I focus on the coffeehouse culture of a particular city. I begin with Restoration London's coffeehouse in the seventeenth century, followed by the Parisian coffeehouse before and after the French Revolution of 1789, and finally, I end the conversation with the Cairene coffeehouse in the years following the Egyptian revolution of 1952. Although these cities are not the only loci for a political and literary movement conducted through coffeehouses, they, nonetheless, present a comprehensive and sequential timeline of the different manifestations and consequences of café and literary spaces, and their social, political and literary products. The discussion centers on these three important political events because my main purpose is to find out how involved literature and the café have been in effectuating revolutions. Under different contexts, we discover that the café reacts to the changing political events of each city. The café, as coffeehouse literature makes manifest, plays a direct and public sociopolitical role that foments a restructuring of society.

Coffeehouse culture is inextricably linked to the emergence of a public sphere in Europe. Jürgen Habermas defines the public sphere, in its simplest form, as the public of "private individuals who join in debate of issues bearing on state authority." (Calhoun 7). Thus, the public sphere must be understood in its *political* sense, whereby the coming together of people to form a public body is accompanied by rational discussion on state affairs which takes place in social settings and institutions such as

the coffeehouse. The publicness of these discussions, as opposed to the privacy of individuals in their homes, for example, is necessary for the formation of a public sphere. Of critical importance to the public sphere is its openness to everyone in a society, and the engagement of those within its space in critical, rational debate. Furthermore, Habermas ties the emergence of the public sphere to a separation from courtly life and the consequent development of a monarch or ruler's own personal sphere (Habermas 29). Habermas also explores the societal institutions which bring about the public sphere. As the sites of "royal representation" faded into passive existence, public establishments such as the salon and the coffeehouse dominated the "town"— i.e., that which is separate from court life (32). Many generations of writers found intrigue in coffeehouses. "As in the *salons* where 'intellectuals' met with the aristocracy, literature had to legitimate itself in these coffee houses" (33). This gave way to literary productions of many kinds, from the poetry of John Dryden to the periodicals of Addison and Steele, which will be discussed in the first chapter. Just as a spark that lights a fuse, so too did these literary productions ignite critical debate that "soon extended to include economic and political disputes" (ibid.). Habermas compares these early institutions, namely salons and coffeehouses, of London, France and Germany but reaches the conclusion that although their sizes and the compositions of their publics might have differed, the debates that took place in these spaces were founded on the same principles. First, social interactions by way of public debate disregarded status and celebrated "befitting equals" rather than rank (36). Secondly, discussion in institutions such as the coffeehouse posited issues of "common concern" which, in the past, were solely left for the interpretation of either state or church authorities (ibid.). Finally, the public found itself immutably inclusive, for "however

exclusive the public might be in any given instance, it could never close itself off entirely and become consolidated as a clique" (37). It is important to note here that Habermas's public sphere theory is a strongly idealistic one. In practice, the public sphere, as experienced through the coffeehouse, forms its own sets of exclusive hierarchies, albeit not always class related ones. In each of the three chapters forming this thesis, certain coffeehouses appear with restrictions on who can and cannot participate in their communities. For example, several cafés were governed by an intellectual hierarchy that commanded acceptance or rejection from the groups of virtuosi who gathered there.

When we talk of the coffeehouse public sphere, it is implied that the public sphere emerged from the coffeehouse, within it, by its public and, most importantly, to serve this public. Therefore, the emergence of a civil society and a public sphere are indivisible. Civil society is meant to extend social life into public life, rather than restrict sociability to the home, that is, to privacy and the family (Calhoun 312). Thus, civil society is a reflection of the changing patterns of social relations between people. These patterns are not universal or constant, but always changing and in need of continuous expression. Therefore, civil society's role is to provide "frames and spaces in which the agency and imagination of individuals can be combined to address the key issues of the day" (Edwards 3). The coffeehouse public sphere provided the unfolding English public of the seventeenth century a space separate from the court in order to socialize and interact in. This distinction between court and civil society is important, since, without it, society, as an entity on its own and not as an extension of court life, would not exist.

Civil society demands the ability to self-govern. Society must be able to represent itself and its needs in front of state authorities. If the people cannot represent their opinions and demands to their government, then society becomes a meaningless concept. Thus, public opinion and the public sphere are necessary for the success of any civil society and the content of its constituting individuals. When we talk of public opinion, we often mean the varying opinions of civil society on their government. Two of the greatest contributors to public opinion are the press and the coffeehouse (Speier 377). In fact, when talking of the coffeehouse, one must always talk of news.

In England, news in the first half of the seventeenth century was a private matter in the sense that it wasn't available to all the people living there, but only to a select few such as merchants, state administrates and clerics. Thus, what the public, in its most primitive form of existence, received as news was highly manipulated and limited by this select few with power and education. Newspaper writing as a regular publication that contained accounts of what was happening within and without the country began in 1620. These early newspapers were initially dedicated to foreign news. However, people's desire for news quickly became more specific: they wanted to know what was going on inside their country. Beginning in the 1640's, domestic news outlets flourished, and in the 50's, became of the necessary furnishings of coffeehouses. The restoration brought with it a suppression of most newspapers, whereby censorship eliminated all but a few official gazettes and magazines. Once again, newspapers had become dull and limited, but only for a short time. Even with the censorship of official news outlets, secret pamphlets, newspapers and magazines circulated in coffeehouses, where people would meet and discuss the most recent events.

Similarly, French and Cairene oppressive regimes, in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries respectively, laid laws against press freedom and limited the numbers of news outlets that serviced the public's growing needs for news. In France, censorship under Louis XVI only aggravated the public's exasperation with the Ancien Régime (Taylor 145). However, censorship did not prevent secret pamphlets, periodicals and journals from circulating in cafés and salons. What differentiates dissenting news outlets in France from those in England is that they catered "for an élite literary audience drawn from the educated bourgeoisie and aristocracy" (ibid.). In France, like in Cairo, revolution began from the top of the social scale and made its way down to the bottom.

This thesis makes use of popular pamphlets and periodicals that pervaded English, French and Cairene café societies and instilled in their publics revolutionary ideals and political dissent. These pamphlets, newspapers and other forms of print culture that were read and discussed in coffeehouses imbued the public sphere with an increasing political awareness that demanded to be felt in the quotidian, as café culture centered itself in people's daily lives. This change—the practice of critical thought and the use of reason—further separated between civil society and the state as the public began to think of themselves as private individuals united by a collective identity in public.

In the first chapter, I establish the coffeehouse public sphere of Restoration England. Restoration café literature looks critically at the public sphere through many different forms. In an attempt to construct a narrative on the evolving nature of Restoration England's public sphere, the first chapter explores three different forms— pamphlets, plays, and *The Tatler,* a periodical written for the coffeehouse public and

published there—, in order to tease out each's contribution to our understanding of this early public sphere. *The Tatler* supports and actively pursues the budding use of reason and critical thinking in public.

Two plays, *Knavery in All Trades* and *Tarugo's Wiles,* ridicule public expression in order to highlight the ignorance of society and the pervading pretentiousness of the self-proclaimed virtuosi. These two comedic plays present satire and the theatre as tools to scrutinize and investigate sociability within the early English coffeehouse. *Knavery in All Trades* also questions issues of the foreigner in England, Turks and Jews are conflated as one enemy of Englishness and Christianity. Perceptions of the Jew and Jewishness, and the Turk and Islam are superimposed on the coffeehouse which becomes an anti-English sphere in its earliest representations. Coffee becomes an Islamicizing drink.

Furthermore, both plays and the pamphlets presented discuss gender and sexual desire, setting up women against coffeehouses, which are seen to decrease the sexual appetites of husbands, leaving their wives wanting. Initially, this juxtaposition suggests an exclusivity of the coffeehouse to men alone. However, this proposition is misleading, since many reports of women in coffeehouses exist from the journals kept by café habitués of the time.

Whereas the first chapter deals with the English coffeehouse through theatre, the second chapter understands the Parisian café of the eighteenth century as a theatre in itself. In Diderot's philosophical novel *Rameau's Nephew*, public persons are actors performing their own desired identities in the café, which has become their personal stage rather than the setting for a play. Sociability becomes a manifestation of personality, of a created identity that is acted out through "transformative verbal

performances" (Ewing 70). Discourse in the café becomes linked to performance and identity. Under Enlightenment ideals in the pre-Revolutionary years, words come to make up a script that is written and acted out by individuals in public. Diderot's text questions the relationship between truth and freedom of expression. When everything can be said, anything can also be said, implying a lack of value to some of these utterances. Freedom, therefore, does not ensure the expression of truths. In fact, as Rameau makes clear in his performative speeches, absolute truth is hardly ever achieved by most people, thus making out the majority of what is said as non-truths. However, the ability to express non-truths is what makes the café such a dangerous space. In this chapter, I suggest that literary space and café space play the same functional role in each of the texts and social spaces under question in this thesis. They are both spheres of expression in which any form of discourse can take place, where identity is created. Ultimately, this freedom becomes dangerous as it foments a desire for a new political identity, not only a social one.

The second half of chapter two tracks the transformations of this political identity born out of the Revolution by looking at changes in the literature and café culture of the period. Following the Revolution, a Republican identity—one that was previously stimulated by Enlightenment ideals and the freedom to desire, or perform, different forms of identities—was created. The ideal of the new politic and independent person was accompanied by a change in literature in the first half of the nineteenth century, whereby literary trends reverted back to a form of Romanticism that idealized the past in the face of a corrupt present. Through Victor Hugo's historical novel *Ninety-Three,* I trace the transformation of the café into a reflection of the Revolution's corruption of ideals. Republican identity is caught between revolutionary fears and

counter-revolutionary threats, thus shaping the post-Revolution identity as one fed by power and not notions of liberty and national unity. The spatial manifestation of this change is apparent in the café which, no longer a subversive public space, becomes oppressive. Post-Revolutionary Paris is presented through the increasing fears of the revolutionaries, and the café public is subdued as a threat.

The third chapter shifts focus to a non-European country. In fact, the third chapter focuses on Egypt's many years of struggle for independence from European powers. Following the revolution of 1919, many nationalist groups rose against the British occupation, in hopes of ending colonialism and regaining Egypt's independence. Like France and England, Egypt's people, too, demanded self-governance. However, what differentiates Egypt from the former countries is its initial struggle against the foreigner, the occupying force. In terms of literature, the chapter is divided into three parts. The first part establishes the Cairene café as a subversive space where anti-British pro-Nationalist sentiment is nurtured. This takes place primarily through the dispersal of secret pamphlets and magazines which discussed the British enemy. I discuss the pamphlets released by the Free Officers Movement, the group of soldiers who brought about Egyptian independence in 1952 under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser. These pamphlets addressed the Egyptian people as a unity in the face of British occupation. The movement's ideals emphasized a liberal Egyptian nation with its own identity.

The second part of the chapter questions the reversal and corruption of these earlier ideals under the revolutionary government. Naguib Mahfouz's *Karnak Café* is a commentary on and discussion of increased police terror and brutality under Nasser's rule. The political pluralism that had flourished during the revolutionary years has been

suppressed by Nasser's state. Under such a political situation, social relations, although strained, find a sense of community in the café. The chapter highlights the new role of the café, under this context, in transforming the disappointments of the people—their loss of effective freedom and dignity, the suppression of political expression and activity, the negligence of their participation in the new state—into false dreams that allow them to ignore their actual situation. The café becomes a space to hide from the truth, since the truth renders them occupied once again, except this time by their own countrymen.

The final part of this chapter looks at Naguib Surur's poetry in *The Protocols of the Elders of Riche.* Surur's collection focuses on an elite café, the Café Riche. The poet criticizes the pretentiousness of the groups of self-proclaimed intellectuals that go there, ridiculing their exclusivity. Intellect becomes phony, and the café is overcrowded with it. The sphere of the café emerges as a closed space with limited access determined by those within.

CHAPTER 2

RISE OF THE COFFEEHOUSE PUBLIC

A. The Business of News

The seventeenth century provides a rich history to studies of English coffeehouse literature and its ensuing sociopolitical ramifications for two reasons. Firstly, coffeehouses came into existence in English society in the middle of the seventeenth century. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, news publication did not come into systemic existence until the late seventeenth century. Of course, news did circulate before then: merchant cities and tradesmen were highly reliant on receiving private letters detailing news on "imperial diets, wars, harvests, taxes, transports of precious metals, and, of course, reports on foreign trade" (Habermas 20); Chanceries equally depended on administrative communication. What both held in common is reluctance in news becoming public (16). Thus, before the end of the seventeenth century, this trade in news did not change or threaten the "traditional domain of communication" because it remained limited, non-public, and servicing the needs of certain groups alone (ibid). With the absence of newspapers, parishes also controlled what their congregations thought, as well as their outlooks on politics, economy and morality (Hill 64). Literacy and education were limited to clerics, forming an "ecclesiastical monopoly" on education (ibid.). Therefore, public opinion, if existent at all, was highly manipulated, suppressed and kept at bay. However, the second half of the seventeenth century saw a transformation in people's desire for news: news itself became a commodity, and state authorities realized the power to be gained from news trade.

It might seem counter-intuitive to a twenty-first-century audience, but the relation between news reporting and political unrest has not always been as clear-cut as it is nowadays. Historians of seventeenth-century England have often clashed on the direct effects of increased news circulation and political conflict. Many Whig historians, for instance, connect political conflict with the dissemination of news, whereas other historians argue that the limited recording of state news, such as parliamentary affairs, only served to further confuse the public rather than enlighten it (Cust 60-61).

The history of the English newspaper and early journalism has not been a straightforward one. Two books, immensely helpful and detailed, serve as the primary guides in formulating an understanding of the most popular form of news transmission for the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century publics. In *The Beginning of the English Newspaper* (1961), Joseph Frank details the development of news writing and publishing from their onset in 1620 until 1660. James Sutherland's *The Restoration Newspaper and Its Development* (1986) explores how, following the Restoration of 1660, newspapers presented the public with political news in a period when government control was in excess. We can begin to talk about the English newspaper only after 1620, although many other news outlets existed before this date. The predecessors of newspapers were "a mixed breed including not only newsletters but ballads, proclamations, political tracts, and any other form of communication that gratified and whetted the public appetite for news" (Frank 2). Only after 1620, however, does the newspaper appear as a printed and regularly published medium engaging with the current events of society. Print culture, rather than the hand-written form, ensured that the newspaper would reach a greater number of people. Therefore, "those with access to written news came to be presented with an increasingly detailed insight into current

affairs, much of it provided by semi-professional journalists with a reputation for accurate reporting" (Cust 69). Illiterate people still received news by oral methods, although these were less accurate than the printed sections of a newspaper.

The earliest English newspaper, in 1620, is a Dutch translation into English by Pieter van den Keere. The paper was printed and translated in Amsterdam, then exported to London (Frank 3). Most of the early English newspapers were, in fact, translations into English and, therefore, were not specific to an English public. In largely impersonal tones, these translated newspapers dispatched semi-official news centering mostly on Central and Western Europe with very rare focus on England every once in a while (4-5). They were neutral papers that avoided making any stern political stances. These papers were "English only in language and point of sale, not in source or content" (6). In the twenty year period between 1620 and 1640, the thirst for foreign news was satiated by the appearance of multiple translated newspapers, or newsbooks as they were referred to, in London. By 1641, political unrest under Charles I was increasing with growing attacks on the crown, driving more and more power into parliamentary hands. With this rise in events taking place in the country, England, having been fed more than its desire in foreign news, finally felt the demand for national news. Even with censorship hanging like a whip at the hands of parliament, unlicensed domestic newspapers flourished. Most had short lifespans with a maximum of three issues (22).

Domestic news was collected either directly from a member of parliament, or heard in taverns and market places (23). With the advent of the coffeehouse in the 1650s, news collection, as well as dispersion, became the central activity of this establishment. Press freedom was often left to its own devices, with the threat of

censorship more prevalent than its actual implementation. Frank metaphorically sums

this up, for "the barks of the censors were worse than their bites" (174). Of course,

when pressure became too high, parliament did intervene with new licensing acts and

censorship committees; these actions, however, never fully suppressed newspapers,

especially with people's growing demand for domestic news in the midst of all the

revolutionary changes defining the second half of the seventeenth century.

With the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, governmental control became

tighter than during the period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Of course, one of

the prime loci for control was the press. In 1662, one of the strictest laws came into

action, the Licensing Act. This act was "An Act for preventing the frequent Abuses in

printing seditious, treasonable, and unlicensed Books and Pamphlets, and for regulating

of Printing and printing Presses" (qtd. in Sutherland 2). After the implementation of

strict censorship came *The Oxford Gazette,* first published in November 1665 and

renamed as *The London Gazette* in February 1666. *The Oxford Gazette,* "Published by

Authority," was a state-run newspaper. In fact, it was the first newspaper as such,

distinct from the newsbooks or weeklies, as its form was a half-sheet folio forming two

pages (Sutherland 11). After the Great Fire of London destroyed most of the city, many

publishing houses were burnt down, and the official *Gazette* remained as the only

newspaper providing people with news until 1679. The *Gazette* was not very popular

among the public, since it focused on foreign news that, more often than not, was not

interesting for most people. The public wanted to know what was happening inside

England, not outside, but the government had no desire for transparency in state affairs.

The year 1679 witnessed a lapse in censorship that allowed for the rebirth of many

unlicensed newspapers. The people had, once again, outlets for domestic news. The

Dutch wars and the weakening of King James II's power decreased newsmen's fears of persecution so that, just as people's demand for national news was at its highest, newspapers were there to satiate it.

B. Where Newsprint and Literature Meet

Part of the value of plays like *Knavery in all Trades* and *Tarugo's Wiles*—which will be discussed in what follows—is their revelation of the nature and details of coffeehouse interactions that shed light on the inner workings of the societies depicted. Which social and political structures did these societies, at specific times in history, have? What differentiated expected state behavior from civic behavior? Most importantly, coffeehouse literature underscores the demands of societies not satisfied with what their state is delivering. The latter is emphasized by the countless numbers of unofficial gazettes and periodicals that refused to be suppressed, and that sought to fight against the silencing of voices that disseminated news to the public. This is why the coffeehouse plays such a central role in the historiography of the early modern public sphere. In particular, the literature presented concerning Restoration and eighteenth-century London relates the emergence of a public sphere to civil society. According to Craig Calhoun, to have a public sphere that is fixed in civil society demands and depends on three separate assertions:

> First, that there are matters of concern important to all citizens and to the organization of their lives together; second, that through dialogue, debate, and cultural creativity, citizens might identify good approaches to these matters of public concern; and third, that states and other powerful organizations might be organized to serve the collective interests of ordinary

people—the public—rather than state power as such, purely traditional

values, or the personal interests of rulers and elites. (311)

These claims delineate a civil society that functions as part of a wider democracy.

Therefore, civil society is a necessary prelude to achieving democracy, and, perhaps, the

primary alternative to the centralization of state power. Because of the flexible nature of

"civil society" as a concept, and the wide array of definitions it can encompass,

discussions on civil society run the risk of drowning in theoretical precepts that attempt

to define the relationship between society and each of state authority, political contexts,

economic factors, and cultural engagement. Coffeehouse literature, or even literature in

general, translates the theoretical into a more practicable and tangible set of ideas that

can be traced and witnessed in society. The importance of public conversation, public

debate, and an interest in affairs that affect the general public to café society, which we

continue to learn much about primarily through the literary field, from plays to

periodicals and pamphlets, allows for the emergence of a public sphere from within the

coffeehouse.

Civil society entails a separation between society and the state. It characterizes

an organized society founded on liberty, freedom to practice—or not to practice—

religion, freedom to express opinions, freedom of press, and the freedom to conduct

business (Calhoun 312). Civil society is one whose citizens assume leadership positions

and provide guidance and services required and wanted by the public. The cornerstone

of an ideal civil society is that it would thrive without governance by state officials. The

public sphere acts as the bridge between civil society and democracy, thus allowing the

proper practice of democracy. The public sphere is supposed to "inform the design and

administration of state institutions to serve the interests of all citizens" (312). However,

much of the theoretical layouts of civil society and the public sphere are ideal, for most societies remain at the mercy of unequal power distribution and the dominance of some over others.

Apart from distinguishing between society and state, civil society itself concerns the public interactions and sociability of people away from private life and the realm of the household. Public sociability, therefore, positions people from different religious, cultural, ethnic, political and social backgrounds in varying states of contact. These interactions occur in society's public spheres, and they often place strangers in conversation. Establishments such as the coffeehouse facilitate the functioning of the public sphere. It is important to distinguish between civil society organizations and public sphere facilities or establishments. The public sphere is not an organization, or set of organizations, that belongs to civil society. The public sphere is an entity on its own, an agent advancing the democratic practices of society. The organizations of civil society, ranging from businesses to charities to political groups, even if working towards public goals, often remain private and personal. Public sphere establishments, on the other hand, are "forged in sociability and communication among strangers" (Calhoun 318; Warner). The coffeehouse stands out because of the arbitrariness of its nature that places people together at random. Of course, this description concerns the early versions of coffeehouses, such as the one described in *Knavery in all Trades,* whose settings enforce such serendipitous encounters by having communal tables instead of individual and separate booths.

News circulation and subsequent discussion of affairs were regarded as threats to the Restoration of King Charles II. Many state officials recommended that news outlets, both foreign and domestic, be restricted and placed under austere governmental control.

However, it is not easy to suppress the myriad of ways through which news is disseminated. It is even more challenging to suppress discussion once information, be it true or false, is released to the public body. Nevertheless, in order to prevent, or rather, to limit and decrease the circulation of news in subversive spaces such as the coffeehouse, King Charles II attempted to suppress these places on several occasions. He couldn't prohibit them completely, however, since their excise revenue was needed and was beneficial for the monarchy (Cowan, *Rise of the Coffeehouse* 34-35). Therefore, well into the Restoration, news circulation flourished quickly in a race to satisfy people's growing demand for national news. The result was that people from an entire social spectrum, "from the lord to the fiddler," were equally discussing topics from theatre to religion and government affairs (Pincus, "Coffee Doth" 807). In light of these activities and their prevalence in coffeehouses, political motivations came to underlie these spaces.

C. The Development of Publicness in Thought

The problem with the official *Gazette,* apart from its constriction on newswriting, was its tediousness and monotony. It failed at delivering the type of news people wanted to know, that being national news, and it failed at achieving any stylistic appeal. Sir Richard Steele wrote for *The Gazette* from 1707 until 1710 (Alsop 455). He described *The Gazette* as innocent and insipid (Connely 143), and he wanted to deliver news to people in a novel and thought-provoking manner. This resulted in the creation of *The Tatler,* an 8x13 inch, single-sheet paper, which was printed three times a week from 1709 until 1711. Steele wrote under the pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, even when bringing in contributions from his friend-writers, Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison.

Although it isn't the first or only such periodical, Steele's *Tatler* is regarded as innovative in terms of style, format, and, most importantly, approach. The first four issues of *The Tatler* repeat the following proposal:

> Though the other papers, which are published for the use of the good people of England, have certainly very wholesome effects, and are laudable in their particular kinds, they do not seem to come up to the main design of such narrations, which, I humbly presume, should be principally intended for the use of politic persons who are so public-spirited as to neglect their own affairs to look into transactions of state. Now these Gentlemen, for the most part, being persons of strong zeal and weak intellects, it is both a charitable and necessary work to offer something whereby such worthy and well-affected members of the commonwealth may be instructed, after their reading, what to think. (Steele 1)

In the first lines of the proposal, Steele emphasizes that the readers are "public-spirited" and "politic persons," thereby asserting a publicness to the use of his periodical. He means it to be used by public persons in public settings—which is also why he claims to write *The Tatler* from different coffeehouses. He continues to write that as most people are zealous in desiring knowledge but lacking in intellect, he considers it a great and charitable work to instruct these individuals on "what to think," but not *how* to think. The usage of the word *what* imposes certain restrictions on what one should think and what one should not think. *What* also assumes that the public is one that requires instruction on content but not on procedure. However, this line, *what to think,* must also be read as *how to think.* Steele's paper informs on various manners and allows the practice of critical thinking, prioritizing the process of thinking over content. Steele encourages readers to write him commentary letters, which, in effect, motivates an act of thinking on and interacting with any subject matter.

The purpose of this journal, as Steele claims it to be through the pen of Bickerstaff, advances the idea of an existing public. In fact, Steele's periodical is a prime example of the conjunction between the London coffeehouse space and Habermas's ideal public sphere. Through this fresh form of literature, Steele facilitates and makes available a myriad of debates and discussions for people to carry out in the space of a coffeehouse. The journal is indissolubly tied to the coffeehouse on the following three levels: to begin with, the papers were found and sold at various coffeehouses throughout London. Steele's choice of vending location implies that he determined his public to be that of the coffeehouse. This choice is, on the one hand, a logical decision due to the commercial and economic gain provided by selling his issues in a place which many people frequented on a daily basis, and where a ready market for buying was available. Finally, Steele ascribes the different sections and themes of the periodical to different coffeehouses, as though he had gathered each of those select pieces of news and entertainment from their respective coffeehouses:

> All accounts of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment shall be under the article of White's chocolate-house; learning, under the title of the Grecian; foreign and domestic news, you will have from Saint James's coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment. (Steele 2)

The Tatler was entertaining to read and listen to. In fact, reading the periodical is still entertaining today. Steele's writing flows easily and uncomplicatedly, making it perfect material to be read aloud, which is what was happening in coffeehouses all over the country. Even in the villages, people would gather in coffeehouses to hear *The Tatler*

being read and then engage in lengthy discussions over what each article contained (Connely 150).

The Tatler encouraged people to think and express these thoughts and opinions. This nurturing of individual thought in a public setting fosters the development of a conscious public sphere that is aware of the various factors at play in society. Steele invited his readers to send their commentaries to him. Often enough, he published these correspondences in *The Tatler* and engaged in a public conversation with their senders. The intermixing of the journalistic and the epistolary, combined with the public rendering of privacy through the publishing of private letters, conveys a unique and novel literary form that saw its birth in the coffeehouse. Letter-writing belongs to the elite and private past of pre-Restoration literate groups, whereas the early form of journalism belongs to the later half of the seventeenth century. *The Tatler* combines the two and uses the coffeehouse as the most efficient way to entertain, inform, and engage with readers and listeners frequenting coffeehouses with the hopes of stimulating a public spirit.

D. Drama in the Coffeehouse

The emergence of a public sphere from within the coffeehouse was invariably tied to the growing demand for and dissemination of news. As people became more aware of the political events taking place in their country, they became entitled to public opinion. Knowledge of current events created possibilities of discussion among different people who, especially in the coffeehouse, belonged to different social groups. However, these discussions did not always take the form of critical and rational debates. Rumors, gossiping and a general lack of critical consciousness commonly characterized

coffeehouse banter. Steele's *Tatler* partly targeted these ignorances, as Steele makes

clear in his proposal. Due to these characteristics, the coffeehouse caught the interests of

varying groups. State authorities wanted to control the space, news writers wanted to

exploit its public, and ultimately, playwrights wanted to manipulate it for their

productions.

Satire was a dominant mode during and after the Restoration, especially satire of

a particular kind, concerned with exaggerating the quotidian. Audiences looked to

theatrical productions, expecting to "see aspects of their moral behavior exaggerated

and made ridiculous, so that their own follies can be recognized and reformed" (Ellis,

Eighteenth-Century 3:x). As the coffeehouse was becoming a recognized center of

everyday public life, it became a natural and even expected scene for the staging of

socially probing satire on the stage. The earliest such comedy was an anonymous play

entitled *Knavery in all Trades: Or, The Coffee-House. A Comedy* (1664)*.

Knavery in all Trades is a five act play that centers around the activities and

changing fortunes of five different tradesmen. Four tradesmen, each with an apprentice

working under him, form a subgrouping within the dramatic structure; one is an oilman,

another is a vintner, another a grocer, and the fourth a victualler. The apprentices are

close friends, and they regularly exploit their masters for their own enjoyment. They

provide each other with free food or wine stolen from the kitchens and cupboards of

their employers. "A friend in a corner is as good as a man's purse, I need say no more,"

comments Froth, the victualler's apprentice (8). Smoak, the grocer's apprentice, further

magnifies the bond of the "Brothers," the society that the four young men have formed

together, by evocatively promising that "while [his] master has Rasons [*sic*], Currans,

Figs, Sugar, Nutmeg, Cloves, all sorts of Spices and Tobacco, they shall march in

Pounds and Ounces to [his] friends" (9). The four apprentices believe they are fairly

cheating their masters, unlike others who "comply to cheat their Masters in gross, to

please their Concubines" (10). They, however, keep to certain moral standards and

"never cheat [their] Masters but in parcels to please [them]selves and keep up merry

Society." Furthermore, they vindicate their actions by indicating that their Masters are,

in fact, greater cheats than they are (ibid.). The questionable moral compass of these

apprentices, and of other characters later on in the play, provides insight into the

hypocrisy of London commercial society of the time.

The fifth tradesman is distinct from the others as he is Turk called Mahoone.

Mahoone owns a coffeehouse, and, whereas his British counterparts are observing a

decline in their businesses, Mahoone's trade is flourishing. The other tradesmen scorn

Mahoone and the nature of his business. They look down upon anyone who visits his

establishment and sits there, sipping at the dark liquid, which is described by one

gentleman in the play as the Devil's gift to the Turk—who is the Devil's cousin—for

slaughtering Christians (25). As a result of this aversion to coffee, the young men

establish a value index that measures one's respectability and morality depending on the

establishments, and subsequently drinks, that one attends and consumes. This index

extends beyond taste-making and mere flavor preference. In fact, it becomes a signifier

of moral, religious and cultural belonging. Later on in the play, it even comes to

measure masculinity and emasculation. Rafey, the vintner's apprentice, insists that the

best of establishments, which serve wine and ale, are frequented by Christian men who

partake in good and noble society. "As I'm a Christian the best gentlemen comes to the

house tastes not better," he emphasizes to his fellow brothers (9). This suggests that

many in London society regarded coffee drinking as at least putting religious identity

under suspicion—implicitly associating the drink and anybody who consumed it with Islam, lack of proper society, and, in effect, immorality. Anti-coffee expressions prioritized the social and moral standing of English trades and establishments over the foreign and seemingly dark hub constituting the coffeehouse. By setting up the coffeehouse as an un-English and immoral space, the play unfolds in a strictly and subjectively critical manner biased against coffeehouse society. This is further amplified by associating the drink to physical changes as well. Again, the value index set up pushes coffee drinking to the extreme end of cultural, moral and religious acceptance. While still in its infancy, it was reported that coffee drinking in England changed the complexion of Englishmen who drank this Satan's drink, their skin turning darker, signaling a blackening of the soul (Matar 113). Recall how in the play, it is said that coffee was the Devil's gift to the Turk for slaughtering Christians.

Relating the drink to non-biological effects on the body and mind was a popular form of social criticism during the Restoration period. When asked by his mistress if he frequents the coffeehouse, Hunt-Cliffe denies it completely; "I hate the Liquor perfectly," he confirms. "give me the Sack, it breeds good Blood," (16). Sack was the name used for a class of white wines that was imported from Spain or the Canaries. Hunt-Cliffe perceives coffee as a disease–inducing drink that infects clean English blood and dirties it, consequently debasing the drinker. Sack, on the other hand, as it is a European drink, preserves 'good blood', or noble status. The play often uses Sack as the drink of opposition to coffee, amplifying the comedic folly of the declarations made in this play. Using a white wine, instead of a red wine for example, in opposition to black coffee seems to suggest that people's hostility to coffee and their absurd misconceptions about its physical and psychological effects stem entirely from shallow superstition. If

the characters chose red wine as their drink of choice, perhaps the argument against coffee darkening one's body and soul would have been weaker.

The play depicts the opposing views concerning coffeehouses. The first two acts of the play center on English establishments and on debasing coffeehouse culture through reoccurring imagery that tie the Turk to the devil. Later acts take place inside Mahoone's coffeehouse, and as such, reveal that a significant number of people were coffee aficionados who supported the establishment and saw it as central to society and socializing. The position of most characters against coffee, the coffeehouse and the Turk[1] is partially elucidated by the historical relationship of the two powers, the English and the Ottomans. Before the eighteenth century, the Islamic world exercised considerable power over the Christians of Europe. Political conflict extended throughout English colonial territories, and many English captives were taken, especially by the Ottomans. In fact, attacks by the Ottoman Empire were so frequent and threatening that, in 1640, a committee whose sole function was supervising the ransoming of English captives was formed by Parliament (Matar 8). Therefore, it is not surprising that many Britons viewed the Muslims, and the Turks by extension, as a threat to the Christian lands.

Apart from the pressure that these hostilities imposed on English military and parliament, the Muslims also influenced English commerce. The earlier years of the seventeenth century witnessed England's incapacity to manufacture, produce and export its goods (10). It became highly dependent on trade with the Ottomans for many commodities, including different types of spices, wool, yarn, oils, silk, etc… Matar's

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[1] Historically speaking, the word Turk is not another name for Ottoman. However, many Christian Europeans used Turk or Turkman as a derogatory grouping that includes Ottomans, Muslims, Arabs. See Matar for more.

detailed historical introduction on the Muslim world's impact on England and the Christian European world reveals that, long before British colonialism, Christendom was militarily, commercially, industrially and socially influenced by the Islamic world. In *Islam in Britain 1558-1685,* Matar describes many of the different political and religious outlets through which Europe encountered Islam. However, Islam did not restrict itself to politics and religion. In fact, the coffeehouse is one of the most important nonreligious and originally nonpolitical settings through which England came into contact with Islam.

In fact, the first entrepreneur of what came to be encoded as an Islamic commodity was a Jew, Jacob (only his first name remains recorded), who introduced the first coffeehouse in Britain, in Oxford in 1650. In 1652, a few years into the Interregnum, a Greek servant by the name of Pasqua Rosée opened the first coffeehouse in London. Many followed after that, but frequenting coffeehouses did not become popular until sometime in the 1660s (94). Both the coffeehouse and coffee itself were seen as curious and exotic commodities. Although the clientele of these early coffeehouses was limited, it is clear that one of the most eager responses to these places came from the virtuosi—the intellectuals noted for their prodigious curiosity on what characterized and belonged to other cultures or worlds (Cowan, "Publicity and Privacy" 1184). These communities gathered in Oxford and then London coffeehouses in order to drink coffee and discuss the medical implications of the drink. Many pamphlets listing the beneficial and medicinal qualities of coffee, the "Mahometan berry," were translated from Arabic beginning in 1652. Soon after, during the Restoration, such handbills were written in English and subsequently published (Matar 110). Many advocated drinking coffee due to its complimentary effects on Protestant ethics. It enhanced drinkers'

concentration and productivity at work, decreased their sexual appetites, and left them sober. Adherents regarded coffee as a symbol of "masculinity, patriarchy, asceticism, antisensuality" (qtd. in Matar 111).

Although there are many examples of positive references to coffee and coffee drinkers, many from London society looked down on the "Mahometan berry" and those who drank it. *Knavery in all Trades* is only the first comedy that illustrates the antagonistic views regarding coffee. The play evidences that many in London's society at the time did not endorse a beneficial relationship between Protestant ethics and coffee. In fact, there are records of writers denouncing coffee as an Islamicizing drink that drove Englishmen away from Christianity. Therefore, the society that resulted from drinking coffee was Turkish, an aberration from Christian or refined society (112). Perhaps the most interesting claim on the de-Christianizing consequences of coffee is its association with the translation of the *Quran*. Matar claims that "a definite association between the opening of the first coffeehouse, the introduction of the Islamic text in England and the Puritan upheaval" exists (ibid.). A pamphlet, published in 1665 and entitled *The Character of a Coffee-House,* states, on its opening page that:

> When Coffee once was vended here,
> The Alc'ron shortly did appear:
> For (our Reformers were such Widgeons,)
> New Liquors brought in new Religions.

The pamphlet refers to the leniency of the reformers during the Interregnum, accusing them of allowing the introduction of Islam into England. The *Quran* first appeared in English in early 1649 in a translation probably by Thomas Ross. Ross, who did not

know Arabic, relied on an earlier French translation of the Holy text by André Du Ryer (Feingold 476). Conflating the presence and dispersion of the *Quran* and the emergence and growing popularity of coffee not only presents coffee as a religious saboteur, it also politicizes the berry.

The former is more obvious. Coffee was regarded as a "Muslim agent to entice Englishmen from their religion and turn them into renegades" (Matar 112). The same medicinal qualities that were praised were also associated with de-Christianization and Islamic enticement. If coffee had as many magical healing properties as some writers professed, then couldn't these same magical properties bewitch the English to convert to Islam? Drinkers of the bean had no control over its powers, for "even if coffee-drinkers did not want to 'turn Turke,' the secret ingredients of coffee would overpower their Protestant faith and convert them to a Levantine religion" (113). They will involuntarily become renegades or infidels. Coffee is so detrimental to the English that it makes them no different than not just the Turk, but also the Jew.

Associations between un-Englishness, Jews, Turks and the coffeehouse are also very common. *Knavery in all Trades* attests to what many other documents from the period record. It has already been stated above that the first coffeehouse to set up shop in Britain was owned by a Jew. For many English people, who associated Jews as having come from communities in the Ottoman Empire, coffee was not exotic and attractive; it was foreign and alien. Thus, alluding to Jews when discussing the implications of drinking the Turkish brew is a way of implying that the drink debases Englishmen; it magically clouds their Christian faith, turning them towards foreign religions, especially Islam, and moral degeneration. In the play, the four apprentices equate Jews and Turks in lowliness and wickedness:

Rafey: Why a Turk's as bad as a Jew, if not worse.

Smoak: For my part I think they are principl'd alike.

Rafey: But the vanity of our Nation is such, that rather th[a]n we shall

cheat'em they'l bring the divel to do't.

Smoak: A song in three parts, the Jew, the Turk, and the Devil. (11)

Jews, Turks and the Devil become metonymically exchangeable. This exchange serves as an example of the reasons that drove many Englishmen to speak against coffee and the establishments that sold it. People made no separation between Islam, Ottoman, Jew and debasement. As the play represents, they held on to superstitious beliefs that not only was it the devil's gift to the Turk, but that the dark liquid itself came from the devil's own Styx River in order to poison Christians.

In order to further separate between English and un-English society, Jews and Turks alike are described as speaking in broken, sometimes unintelligible English. When we first encounter Mahoone, the Turkish coffeehouse owner, his speech is shocking. He speaks in exaggerated broken English that is tainted by strong French undertones. Here, we are reminded that the play is in fact a comedy, and as a comedy, it is subject to exaggerated stereotypes, thus placing Englishmen in one circle, and all foreigners, even Christian Frenchmen, in another.

The problem with the Turkman is the volume of curse words he uses. He replaces adjectives and nouns with curse words. He refers to his wife and maid as "bitch," "hore," or "damn shade." He calls his man servant a dog. From his earliest appearance, the play sets out Mahoone in such a despicable and aggressive manner that it is hard for the reader to have any sympathy or liking for him. Mahoone enters the play in Act 1 Scene 2. He is addressing his maid:

> *Mahoone: Yon damn shade ver be de hore your Metres, and de shack nape dogbolt Rog a me man, degar dis devell Vife me keep, she he a de Bed to breed lechery, and call a me men to rub her Gumms, beggar, and let me do all a de varke my self; ver be de hore you shade.* (12)

When his wife finally enters the coffeehouse, asking why there is so much yelling, Mahoone begins insulting her to her face: "go hang your self shade hore, beggar you be de hore of all de Varld," he responds. Mahoone then continues to insult everyone in the house. He is angry that the milk is spoilt and the eggs are broken—he cannot make chocolate to sell along with the coffee. Mahoone and his wife keep exchanging insults, with her calling him a dirty, foul-mouthed Turk, and him replying that she is a great whore. The maid and the man servant intervene to stop the fight.

The relationship between Mahoone and his wife, Rampant, is itself an analogy for the early relationship between coffeehouses and Englishmen. The play's dark comedy peaks when Mahoone reveals that he despises his English wife, whom he calls a whore, believing that she spends her time having intercourse with various men while he works on his own all day long. Just like her name insinuates, Rampant's lust and infidelity go unchecked enraging Mahoone. Moreover, whereas the English associated the Turks with the Devil, the Turks, or at least those represented by Mahoone, regarded the English themselves as the devils. "He dat marry de *Anglish* woman marry the Serpent, de Snake in bosome, de devell and all," he exclaims to himself scornfully. While indulging in a degree of comic misogyny here, the play excuses this indulgence through Mahoone's plausible deniability, with him being presented in racist terms as well.

The play is full of ironic situations that make its comedy as dark as the drink it is criticizing. Hunt-Cliffe is having an affair with Sweet-Lips, the vintner's wife. The Vintner, Compound, is clueless about this affair—he trusts his wife completely. Sweet-Lips hates coffee, whereas her husband, the wine merchant, has developed a new found love for it. She implores Hunt-Cliffe that he never drink the dark and dry beverage:

> *Sweet-Lips: The other is a dryer, a monstrous dryer, and the greatest enemy unto th'affaires relate unto our Sex that can be; if you love me you must hate that, my Husband is too much addicted to't.* (16)

Like many women during the Restoration, Sweet-Lips blames coffee for the decreasing sexual appetite of her husband, further decreasing coffee's merit on the value index established earlier. She believes that the dry beverage is the reason behind Compound's lack of sexual desire towards her. From the way she addresses Hunt-Cliffe, it becomes apparent that she is also attempting to absolve herself from the guilt of her infidelity. Since coffee has committed, in her words, the most atrocious act of enmity that could be committed against women, coffee is to blame for her affair. Following this logic, she would not have cheated on her husband had he not drank coffee and had become subject to its defeating magic. After Sweet-Lips's attack on coffee, her husband walks in—Hunt-Cliffe and Sweet-Lips were sitting in his shop. Hunt-Cliffe offers Compound some wine, but the latter kindly declines it, having "newly drank Coffee." Hunt-Cliffe retorts with bewilderment, for how could the wine merchant be drinking the beverage of the enemy—both in terms of rival tradesman and in terms of the nature of the drink itself?

Other seventeenth century sources reiterate women's antagonism against coffee. A few years after *Knavery in all Trades,* in 1674, a pamphlet entitled *The Women's Petition Against Coffee* appeared, which stated on its title-page "Representing to Publick consideration the Grand Inconveniences accruing to their Sex from the Excessive Use of that Drying, Enfeebling Liquor." The pamphlet's opening, as stated above, is similar to the views on coffee represented by the play through the character of Sweet-Lips. The same ideas expressed by Sweet-Lips are reworded in the pamphlet but in a forcefully sexual manner. The pamphlet laments the loss of Englishmen's sexual vigor and prowess, for when once a law existed in order to limit intercourse to nine times a night, now, the "Excessive use of that Newfangled, Abominable, Heathenish Liquor called COFFEE" has dried up "the Radical Moisture, has so Eunucht our Husbands, and Crippled our more kind Gallants, that they are become as Impotent as Age" (2). The supposed women penning this petition despise their husbands' daily habits of spending hours at the coffeehouse, only to come home "with nothing *moist* but their snotty Noses. Nothing *stiffe* but their Joints, nor *standing* but their Ears." "Never did Men wear *greater breeches,* or carry *less* in them," their sexual insults continue. Perhaps the directness and lewdness in what is being expressed is one of the causes for doubt on who actually penned this pamphlet. It seems very unlikely that it was written by women—there is almost no proof for that.

The lack of credibility as to the sex of the author(s) of the pamphlet offers a new approach to the play at hand. Is the play making fun of the English or the Turks? Is it ridiculing the aversion to coffee or the drink itself? By characterizing women's stance against coffee as a result of absent physical intimacy with their emasculated husbands, the play seems to be criticizing the folly of Restoration London's society. The marriage

institute was failing. Women desired the attentions of their husbands who, instead of lavishing them with love and compliments, wiled away their time in coffeehouses and taverns. While women took to lovers and affairs, they blamed coffee for drying up their husbands' sexual appetites thus absolving themselves from guilt. When closely reading *Knavery in all Trades* and *The Women's Petition Against Coffee,* the possibility that the play is ridiculing and criticizing the English, rather than debasing the coffeehouse, increases.

Thus far, the focus has remained on the different reactions that people had to the coffeehouse. But the public effects of coffeehouses can also be analyzed in broader terms. How did a public sphere emerge out of the coffeehouse, and how did the establishment foster public opinion, civil society and political consciousness? These questions are being asked, ultimately, in order to establish whether coffeehouse interactions lead to sociopolitical change and active public discourse. Literature such as *Knavery in all Trades,* which is centered around the coffeehouse, criticizing and satirizing it, but most importantly, revealing how the public interacted within the space of the coffeehouse, provides a privileged representation reflecting back to its first generations of inhabitants this new zone of everyday life.

The third act of the play takes place inside the coffeehouse, which is now open for business. The interior of Mahoone's coffeehouse is furnished with candles, pipes, and diurnals—daily newspapers. Groups of gentlemen walk in, asking for coffee and chocolate. There is a busy air occupying the establishment, one that is significantly absent in the more relaxed atmospheres of the other shops in the play. The coffeehouse is, by far, the most prosperous establishment of the five trades described in this play. There is no order as to how the men sit inside the coffee shop. Unlike the other

establishments, where the space is divided into booths separated from each other, seating in the coffeehouse is communal and open. As the shop becomes more and more crowded, Mahoone asks the customers to "sit a little farder, give room to dese Gentleman" (29). The arrangement of seating in the coffeehouse is one of the particular aspects that allow different people to communicate with one another. Having long tables shared by strangers eliminates any forced segregation that would have otherwise been imposed by status; once inside a coffeehouse, a rich man is seated next to a poor man, and an uneducated man is seated next to an educated man. For this new social group that formed in the coffeehouse, the space became the first place in which this group felt equally respected and "felt themselves among equals, despite differences in rank and birth" (Albrecht 95).

The intimacy that formed between people from different stations in the coffeehouse became a political statement (Oldenburg 8) that grew out of news and discussion. In a coffeehouse, customers were expected to engage in public conversation (Ellis, "An Introduction" 158, 162). Much of this excitement for convivial sociability, conversation and discussion came from the abundance of news. News and coffee have always gone hand in hand, but in a coffeehouse, you get both for the price of one (*Character of a Coffee-House* 1). In Mahoone's establishment, after sitting and ordering their coffee, the gentlemen pick up the diurnals lying around on the tables. As was the habit of the day, one person would read the newspaper aloud to the others who would then engage in discussions concerning whatever news was written in the papers.

Many of the gazettes published false news and rumors. The play illustrates people's wariness when it came to newspapers. The man reading the paper announces that the Turks will be entering England in that same month. The other men immediately

dismiss the news, and ask him to continue to the next article: "We were told that a Moneth [*sic*] ago, and he's not come yet" (29). This reveals that, although news writing was itself still relatively new during the late seventeenth century, people remained cautious in what they accepted as truth and what they took to be rumor. Their caution contributes to the growing sense of public opinion as well as to the notion of men as citizens in a civil society that were only just coming to existence at the time.

The play, being a comedy, represents people's desire for different types of news through rapid shifting in conversations. One topic leads to another, only to go back to the initial subject again. Of course, political news was a primary concern for people. No coffeehouse interaction skipped a debate on who was going to war with whom, and which army was going to attack another. Speculation on domestic and foreign affairs were prime concerns in coffeehouses. Reading the newspaper is often interrupted by several discussions and debates. The discussion of foreign news is interrupted by a lamentation on the situation of trade in the country. Trade is personified as a diseased woman suffering from Gout. Some men believe that the days of trade are coming to an end, whereas others regard trade as a prostitute "fit for any man," and thus the business of trading can never become extinct. Restoration officials were always wary about the amount and nature of news officially released to the public. Nevertheless, attempts at controlling or even suppressing unofficial news circulation was never very successful. *Knavery in all Trades* showcases the nature of political conversations that were carried out in coffeehouses. The men march into a debate on whether an army of Turks is going to cross over into England or not. One man claims they were spotted nearby only four days ago, "though the Diurnal mention it not." The discussion of state affairs often got people in trouble with the state, as many court records show. However, people often

managed to extricate themselves from any blame or punishment by referencing the

untrustworthiness and intensity of rumors that plagued coffeehouse banter.

Coffeehouse discussion was not restricted to hefty issues that had widespread

social and political effects. People also discussed entertainment. Having been outlawed

during the Interregnum, theatre was once again becoming popular in Restoration

London after King Charles II issued warrants allowing two men, Sir William Davenant

and Thomas Killigrew, to direct and stage plays (Ellis, *Eighteenth-Century* 3:vii). Since

staging plays was restricted to this duopoly, Davenant and Killigrew's companies made

enough to rebuild many of the theatres that were shut down in the previous years. Their

theatres were often built near important coffeehouses, and thus the spaces of the

coffeehouse and the theatre often overlapped. This overlap suggests one explanation as

to why so many theatrical pieces from this period assumed the coffeehouse as their

setting, and, equally plausible, why people discussed plays and theatre within the space

of the coffeehouse.

In *Knavery in all Trades,* the gentleman at the coffeehouse enter into an analysis

of *Harry the Eighth*, the play, referring to King Henry VIII who initiated the English

Reformation. The men discuss the plot of the play, exalting the main actor. They seem

to be having a pointless conversation, throwing names of actors here and there, often

regretting that these men had died. The narrative becomes unclear here; are they

discussing theatre performers or soldiers who died in combat? However, remembering

that this play is meant to be a comedy, the narrative often purposefully does not make

sense. The mimesis of the ridiculous, silly, or inconsequential qualities of coffeehouse

interactions is deliberate. People sometimes talked in coffeehouses because *they liked to*

hear themselves talk. Talking for the sake of entertainment does not seem to fit into

Habermas's characterization of the coffeehouse as the site for critical and rational debate. Habermas's public sphere is defined by a time when the public voice was just beginning to see the light. This was a time when the middle class was burgeoning, both mentally and socially. Literacy was moving towards a more public norm rather than remaining confined to a clerical class (Habermas 37-38). The differentiation of social institutions such as the coffeehouse also fostered publicness rather than individuality and privacy in the household. This was the beginning of what we now refer to as public opinion. However, irrational discussion seems to be as important to public expression as rational discussion is. Certainly, public expression, as the plays examined in this thesis show, was not always valuable and sound, contrary to public opinion. However, even in its folly it is important. Consequently, social establishments, especially the coffeehouse, require a differentiation between casual expression and public opinion.

Public opinion can imply ideas or thoughts that are open to the public and shared with others, as opposed to the ones confined to certain people and confided in private. However, in the context of its development in late seventeenth-century England, public opinion concerns those thoughts communicated by the public, i.e. civil society, to the state on issues that concern this public. This definition, as offered by Hans Speier, is a "phenomenon of middle-class civilization" (Speier 379). In order to achieve this form of communicative association between government and public, society must undergo a rebirth in its institutions, on the social, political and economic levels. The late seventeenth century in England is a period where political and economic changes materialized in an increased separation between the court and the town.[2] This separation was accompanied by the rising popularity of the coffeehouse, which provided citizens

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[2] See Habermas for more on separation between court and town.

with a convivial space to discuss and debate various issues, some more important than others, in the hopes of reaching government officials with their wants and needs, likes and dislikes, and perhaps, implementing some changes in society. Without social institutions such as the coffeehouse, public opinion would not exist, for the public would not have a place to publicly communicate opinion. The coffeehouse, a realm of the public sphere, ensures that the opinions of the public, through rational and critical debate, survive any autocratic attempt of extinguishing the public voice. As much as the coffeehouse fosters the development of ideas and opinions, it is also provides space for the clashing of ideas. Sometimes, arguments based on critical reasoning lead to productive conclusions. However, clashes often explode following misunderstandings where rationale, reason or common sense are not being implemented. These clashes decrease the value of the coffeehouse public sphere by presenting its public as ridiculous and silly.

The play clearly depicts the swiftness with which people get into fights in coffeehouses. One man, referred to as *fourth,* stands up to reenact an encounter with a friend, and as he is extending his arm, he accidentally hits the man sitting next to him on the mouth. The man, *second,* is enraged and insulted. Even after *fourth* explains to him that he only meant to show off his skill, the *second* man remains angry and threatens that if it "were't in another place you should not come off so, sir" (32). The situation escalates, with the other gentlemen jumping in to defend one side or the other, and it isn't until Mahoone steps in with his loud, broken French that the company calm down. Easily falling into silly skirmishes is read as a judgement on the types of people that frequented coffeehouses. The supposed inclusivity and openness of these establishments

will necessarily draw in uneducated minds who, as a result of their graceless manners, might be quick to temper.

Knavery in All Trades inaugurates an entire subgenre of comedies whose action takes place in part or in whole within coffeehouses. Tarugo's Wiles: Or, The Coffee-House. A Comedy (1668), written by Thomas Sydserf, is another play that showcases the modern form of sociability that emerged within the coffeehouse after the Restoration. The play involves many different characters, and, in its third act only, is set in a coffeehouse "where is presented a mixture of all kind of people," as the dramatis personae puts it. The insistent declaration of the coffeehouse as a social space for mixing and conviviality, both in Knavery and in Tarugo, bears emphasis. The first two acts present the background narrative of the play. Don Patricio, a knight, has become increasingly jealous over his beautiful and virtuous sister Liviana. He keeps her locked inside the house all day as a way of protecting her virtue and innocence. Don Patricio's love interest, the equally beautiful Sophronia, is worried about his extreme jealousy and control. "If Vertuous Liviana thus be us'd, his wife must needs expect to be abus'd" (11). Sophronia refuses to marry Don Patricio until he loosens control over his sister and gives her the freedom she deserves. She enlists the help of Don Horatio and his kinsman, Tarugo, in freeing Liviana from her brother's captivity. Horatio is in love with Liviana and wishes to see her free as well. In the meantime, there is an arrest warrant against Tarugo, for he is known as a womanizer robbing women of their virtues. It is common knowledge that Tarugo spends his morning in the coffeehouse, and so the next day, two sergeants arrive there to arrest him. Act three opens in the coffeehouse, with Tarugo disguising himself as the servant of the coffeeshop in order to evade arrest. The stage directions reiterate the openness of the coffeehouse which holds "several

customers of all trades and professions" (20). The comedy seems to suggest that even someone such as Tarugo, a womanizer who preys on innocent women, is able to find acceptance in the coffeehouse. The space allows him to transform his identity and to perform the role of someone who, outside the walls of the coffeehouse, he would not be.

The coffeehouse is furnished with pamphlets that discuss all the virtues of coffee, from sobering the mind to healing diseases. The coffee-master pushes these in the way of his customers, asking them to read them and learn about the bean. There is no differentiation between the people who walk into the coffeehouse; they are numerically listed as customers one after the other. The play only distinguishes two scholars who walk in some time after, and who purposefully sit apart from the rest, separating themselves from mingling with the "illiterate" (21). As noted above, it was known that coffeehouse discussions dealt with many different topics. The scholars discuss syllogisms with the disguised Tarugo who, in his disguise, challenges the scholars and performs the role of an intellectual. The other customers dispute over a recent invention by one virtuoso, who claimed that by transfusing the blood of a young hog and replacing his old and decaying blood, he would be able to achieve perpetual youth. The absurdity of the discussion, which is a heated one with the disputants passionately standing up, is exaggerated and emphasized by commenting that the hog is a perfect candidate, "because of all Beasts, it resembles most a Man" (22).

Following the motif of coffeehouse conversation, a discussion on art ensues. Two men are debating about which school of art a certain painting belongs to. However, they have different opinions, and the discussion can be summarized as pretentious name-dropping. Again, coffeehouse talk is placed under the comedic spotlight and criticized, for one of the customers insists the painting is a copy of *Tintarets;* what he

probably meant was that it is a copy of Tintoretto. Not only does the other customer disagree on the artist, he thinks it is an original painting by Paulo Veronese. It seems that many people self-proclaimed themselves as virtuosos when they were anything but. The other customers make fun of their pretenses. To calm everybody down, the coffee-master steps in and asserts that such insult and wounding with words cannot be tolerated at the coffeehouse, which is a place "like the School of Athens, where all things are debated with reason" (23).

The coffee-master's statement reveals that even during the late seventeenth century, coffeehouses were acknowledged as spaces for the exercise of reason. To some, such as the coffee-master and those intellectuals who frequented coffeehouses, the space of the coffeehouse welcomed and developed their rational critical thought and allowed them to reason and debate over different topics. To others, such as the writer of this play, the type of debates that took place in the coffeehouse are ridiculed, as are those who partake in them. Instead, they are represented as people seriously lacking in reason and intellect.

The scene then shifts to the conversation between the two scholars. As a way of overemphasizing the absurdity of coffeehouse talk, the narrative turns into a ludicrous lesson on astronomy. The two scholars are looking over globes; one is a celestial globe, and the other a terrestrial one. One scholar is explaining the different bodies found in these globes. As a way of ridiculing even coffeehouse virtuosi, the narrative follows the most absurd explanations and stories. Even the coffee-master admits to the other customers that if they listen in to the conversation, they will "hear most strange Learning" (24). One of the scholars points out different constellations in the Milky–Way—referred to by its Latin name, *Via-Lactaea.* The Cassiopeia constellation is

described as a dry nurse to Jupiter, and a governess for Juno's milk maids. She has a group of wenches who go around the galaxy all day, milking cows and using their milk to "make provisions of Cheese-cakes and Creame for the Mathematical Feast in Copernicus–Hall (24). They keep exchanging ludicrous and mythical explanations and theories instead of rational and scientific knowledge, even when explaining terrestrial bodies, on which their knowledge should be more solid. Accordingly, one scholar concludes that the Atlantic must taste like chocolate, because, like the latter, "the milk of the Coker-nut is its greatest ingredient" (25).

Both plays attempt to represent women's distaste towards coffee by showcasing women's discontent with their husbands' frequent trips to the coffeehouse. This thematic relation between the two comedies suggests the gendered nature of the space that excluded females. However, research points out that perhaps women were not excluded from the coffeehouse at all. In *Tarugo's Wiles,* the baker's wife storms into the coffeehouse, loudly expressing displeasure that her husband would leave her alone, looking after the bakery and the children, while he wastes his time away drinking "the abominable liquor of Infidels" (26). She refers to her husband as a "Vertuoso-Hunter" and to coffee shops as "Prating-houses". This incident reflects the widespread opinion of many under Restoration London who viewed the coffeehouse as a hub for virtuosi posers, which diverts men's attention towards meaningless and time-consuming prattle instead of prioritizing their households and businesses. The gossipy, tattling qualities that men supposedly develop in coffeehouses is another motif also illuminated by *The Women's Petition Against Coffee.* Apart from deploring their husbands' sexual impotence, the petition also remarks on the men's newfound love for gossip. The women are upset that not only has the coffeehouse precluded the satisfaction of their

wifely desires, it has also robbed them of a quality that once belonged to them alone: tattling. The men, like "*Frogs* in a *puddle,* they sup muddy water, and murmur insignificant notes till half a dozen of them *out-babble* an equal number of us at a *Gossipping*" (4).

A problematic situation arises, however, when reading these plays alongside pamphlets that emphasize women's hostility against the coffeehouse.[3] Both these plays represent wives as disparaging coffeehouses and the worthless habits they have entrenched in their husbands' daily lives. All of these pamphlets claim to voice the disgruntled opinions of women, opinions that are clearly mirrored in the plays thus far analyzed. However, there is no solid proof that these petitions were written by women. In fact, research indicates the opposite; many claims insist that these petitions and broadsides were written by men under the guise of women's pens in order to further diminish the reputation of coffeehouses. The fact that these pamphlets often magnified the ale-house while criticizing the coffeehouse and its sociability emphasizes a more plausible involvement of a high church instead of housewives (Pincus, "Coffee Doth" 815). This viewpoint is evidenced by the diaries of several men who have recorded their interactions with women in coffeehouses, thus providing proof that women as well as men enjoyed coffeehouse sociability. Thomas Bellingham wrote of meeting with several women at Preston's coffeehouse and discussing the political developments that occurred under William III (816). Furthermore, there is evidence in such journals that women of status often attended coffeehouses as well. Robert Boyle's sister, Lady Ranelagh, once dined with her brother and Robert Hooke at London's Man's Coffee House (ibid.). Martha Lady Giffard attended coffeehouses regularly in search for

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[3] See *The Ale-Wives Complaint Against the Coffee-Houses* (1675), *The Maidens Complaint Against Coffee* (1663), and *The Women's Petition Against Coffee* (1674).

engaging discussions on politics (ibid.). Therefore, and contrary to what their contents claim, the cited pamphlets represent the contemporary views held by many in the case of the coffeehouse, but they do not illustrate how women regarded the establishments.

This poses the question of whether *Knavery in all Trades* and *Tarugo's Wiles* adapted onto the theatre stage what was revealed in the actual sphere of coffeehouse sociability, or whether much of what they represent is influenced and directed by the publications of such pamphlets and other media. Certainly, the truth lies in both aspects of society. However, we must remember that these plays are comedies, and as comedies, they impose exaggerated stereotypes and distort familiarity. In his *Anatomy of Criticism,* Northrop Frye establishes the genre of New Comedy as "an erotic intrigue between a young man and a young woman which is blocked by some kind of opposition, usually paternal" (44). Both of the plays distort the erotic—marital— relationship between husband and wife into sexual defectivity blocked by the coffeehouse. Consequently, the coffeehouse is shaped as a foreign threat to marital bliss.

Tarugo's Wiles, like *Knavery in all Trades,* mimics how news was disseminated in the coffeehouse. The coffee-master walks in with the latest gazette, and the customers, as per coffeehouse tradition, ask to "let one read for all" (26). The gazette contains "fresh news from all parts," relating both domestic and foreign news: Constantinople, Aleppo, England, Amsterdam, North-Indies; news from all of these locations is read out loud, and after each article, the customers comment and discuss what was read. After reading the news, an important remark is brought up by the discussion of some customers on whether the writer of the gazette has revealed state secrets or not. One of the scholars interjects that "neither has [the news writer] in the

least made any invasion upon the secrets of State," whereas the other scholar believes

he has (28). Another customer remarks that the reason the writer has not revealed any

concealed state affairs is that the state has "none to discover." This raises concern on the

influence of the state on news circulation after the Restoration. How much did the state

control of what was released as news to the public? As discussed earlier, public concern

and displeasure with the limitation of news reception and state transparency following

the Restoration gave rise to unofficial newspapers and other forms of publications,

including pamphleteering and periodical writing. These forms of disseminating news to

the public found constant delivery through the coffeehouse.

The public sphere that emerged from the British coffeehouse in the late

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries faced several problems. The comedic plays

discussed in this chapter highlight some of these issues. The prevalence of xenophobia

among Englishmen was made manifest in their initial antagonism to the coffeehouse.

They regarded the establishment as an Islamicizing commodity that transformed

Christians into infidels. Furthermore, several petitions attacked the coffeehouse

representing it as an emasculating space. Whether these pamphlets and petitions were

written by women or not is not certain. However, what can be ascertained is that the

coffeehouse equally faced hostility and fanaticism. These clashing perspectives are best

highlighted through the comedic genre.

Perhaps the most essential aspect of the growing public sphere is the prevalence

of news outlets in the coffeehouse. During the Restoration, people's demands for news

outweighed what was provided by the state. As such, many unofficial newspapers,

pamphlets and periodicals were being circulated. Although these outlets motivated

political awareness and public discourse, the excess in fake news, rumors, and gossip

that also circulated impeded a coherent rational public discussion. The pervasiveness of fake news is further highlighted by the doubtful authorship of the women's petitions discussed. In all likelihood, these petitions were written by men posing as women. Therefore, although a public sphere certainly did emerge out of the English coffeehouse, this sphere faced many blockades that problematize Habermas's simplistic ideal. Reoccurring motifs in the literature presented in this chapter evidence key obstacles that impeded the coffeehouse public sphere in England—unlike its French counterpart—from developing public individuals into politic persons as well. The existence of xenophobia, in the form of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and misogyny in the coffeehouse showcase the limitations of the public sphere formed there.

CHAPTER 3

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, CAFÉ

A. Identity Performance in the Café

Denis Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau,* or *Rameau's Nephew* is a philosophical work that explores the sociability of men and women in its various and complex forms. In his introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Rameau's Nephew and the First Satire,* Nicholas Cronk notably quotes Joseph Addison in the epigraph; "Man is said to be a Sociable Animal." What better way to introduce a work that takes up its setting in a café and discusses the sociability of humankind than by quoting Addison who, along with Sir Richard Steele, is most notably remembered for founding *The Spectator,* a daily journal succeeding *The Tatler* that widely and wildly circulated in coffeehouses in the beginning of the eighteenth century in London. *The Tatler's* goal, as indicated in the earlier chapter, was to inform the public on how to think. The periodical proved groundbreaking in its approach to the body of people gathered together in social institutions as a public entity. By encouraging and responding to commentary letters, Steele advocated the idea that public persons had valuable ideas and comments to make. This activity of public expression takes on a performative instinct in Diderot's text. In *Le Neveu de Rameau,* expression extends beyond commentary on what newspapers or periodicals have written. Instead, articulating one's thoughts in a public setting—the coffeehouse—becomes a personal performance of self-expression. Thus, in the late eighteenth century French café context, individual personality in public settings was a prime manifestation of sociability.

Like many of Diderot's most acclaimed works, *Le Neveu de Rameau* was published posthumously. The first edition appeared in 1805 as a German translation by Goethe. It wasn't until 1821 that a French edition was published. This publication was not the original work that was written in French by Diderot himself. Instead, it was a retranslation from German into French. Several inauthentic versions appeared after the first French publication, claiming to be based on the original manuscript. In 1890, a librarian by the name of Georges Monval serendipitously discovered a manuscript titled *La Satire Second,* or *The Second Satire.* Recognizing it as Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau,* he bought the manuscript and published it in 1891 as a definitive edition of the work (Cronk viii). It seems that *Rameau's Nephew* has had as eccentric a journey reaching the public as the character of Rameau's nephew has in his manifestation of sociability.

The work is definitely one of intrigue that has captured the attentions of scholars over the years. Many have published their translations and interpretations of *Rameau's Nephew* in an attempt to decode the overwhelming allusions, anecdotes and events brimming the text. Do any of them capture Diderot's actual thoughts at the time of writing this text? Perhaps there is no concrete answer, no explanation that crowds the consensus of scholars from different disciplines and thoughts into one. With a text as rich as *Rameau's Nephew,* as intelligently and wittily written as this, room for interpretation and application is limitless.

In the simplest possible synopsis, *Rameau's Nephew* is a dialogue that takes place in a Parisian café between two men, the narrator— ME— and Rameau's nephew–– HIM, or simply Rameau. The two men discuss a myriad of topics: art, theatre, awful actresses, education, work, writing, philosophy, etc. The greatest complexity of this

debate, however, is its sway between morality and music, virtue and musical genius, truth and composition. HIM absolutely vilifies the honest and truthful nature of humanity, regressing humankind into a disparaging form of immorality. He sees no beneficial outcome of morality and virtue, and is thus content with habitual immorality. His musical genius, however, betrays, according to the narrator, a greater sense of morality. Rameau the nephew abhors his uncle, Jean-Phillipe Rameau. He despises the composer's greed, harshness and selfishness, and as such, does not worship and immortalize his uncle's work as others in their contemporary society do. Rameau himself, however, has been unable to summon enough genius and thought to compose his own music. The narrator finds this an incredible surprise since Rameau clearly possesses musical genius. This becomes apparent to the narrator over the period of their conversation when, very often, Rameau interrupts the discussion with furious performances of song, dance, and acting. He mimics the melody of a piano and a violin, of a woman singing, then a woman shrieking and then a man singing. He performs famous opera songs and memorable symphonies. He acts scenes out, gesticulating wildly until sweat is pouring all over his face. It seems that there is nothing Rameau is incapable of performing. His outrageous performances draw the attention of other customers in the café, as well as the stares and laughs of passersby. Many of Rameau's thoughts are expressed through anecdotes and storytelling.

The dialogue between the two often resembles a tug of war between principles, but more importantly, it is the tug of war between developing Enlightenment ideals at the time. These ideals concern immorality and righteousness, poverty and luxury, genius and foolishness. The conversations between the narrator and Rameau, although not providing resolutions for these dichotomies, instigate their public discussion. The

two men question how men and women should act under an absolute monarchy. They discuss class differences, with Rameau suggesting that when one's fellow citizens are far richer and happier than one, taking advantage of them would not be considered immoral. Rameau and the narrator also provide a narrative on genius, questioning its origins and consequences. Is the genius of Voltaire, Montesquieu, d'Alembert, Rousseau, and even Diderot justified? Or is it simply accidentally successful foolishness? Is genius naturally and inherently allotted to certain people, or is it an acquired quality? Rameau and the narrator do not agree on any of these subject matters. They think differently, and always reach different, if not contradicting, conclusions. Often, the dialogue seems to be a struggle between the two minds of one person. Could HIM and ME be one and the same?

However, as Cronk expressively indicates in his introduction, "at the heart of all the exchanges between 'Me' and 'Him' is a debate about expressivity and performance" (xiii), a debate that allows this text to be situated within coffeehouse politics and sociability. The most important and obvious reason is the choice of setting. For such a lengthy, abstract and complex discussion of ideas and affairs, Diderot chooses the café, an entirely urban public and open space. This goes against the convention of prior French dialogue writing that took place within private settings that preserved the solitude of the conversation (Cronk xv). Thus, Diderot reflects the changing environment of Enlightenment Paris, especially that of philosophers, writers, and musicians, as opposed to the environment of an earlier Paris. With the development of public opinion, or rather, its coming into existence, conversations no longer relied on the selective privacy of noblemen's households and dining room chatter between close friends. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, urban life expanded to

embrace what Habermas refers to as the 'bourgeois public sphere'. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the coffeehouse establishment is the epitome of the bourgeois public sphere. It would not have existed without this sphere, just as the public sphere would not have existed without it. Each is the other's precedent.

The Café de la Régence where the narrator and the nephew meet mirrors the reality of eighteenth-century public life. In the opening lines, the narrator establishes a daily routine of walking through the Palais Royale gardens and, during his walk, he engages in "conversations with [himself] about politics, love, taste or philosophy. [He] give[s] in to [his] mind's every fancy. [He] let[s] it be master and allow[s] it to pursue the first idea that comes to it, good or mad" (Diderot 7). Whenever it gets too cold or rainy, he seeks comfort in the shelter of the Café de la Régence, the most famous chess café in all of Paris. The narrator's habit reflects that of many eighteenth-century bourgeois citizens who frequented the café on a daily basis in order to play chess, read the journal or newspaper, discuss news, or simply watch others taking up these activities. Once again, the importance of having the café as the setting for a play, poem, novel or dialogue is its ability to recreate the intricate details of the past. It allows us to imagine and experience the details of life as experienced by the peoples of the time. It gives us insight into their characters and thoughts, and the general trends that occupied them. Café literature brings life to historical narratives.

The narrator, in his opening statement, betrays a more prominent revelation of café life in eighteenth century Paris. In the privacy of his solitary walk in the garden, he lets his mind roam and take control of his thoughts. He considers any idea that comes to mind, no matter how mad it might be. These mad thoughts, he confesses to the nephew later on, are ones restricted by most people to the privacy and intimacy of their own

thoughts. Nobody admits to thinking them, let alone expressing or debating them out loud. Towards the end of their conversation, and after listening to the most outrageous and morally deviant thoughts of the nephew, the narrator finally admits that "in all of this, he said lots of the things we all think, and which guide what we do, but which never get said out loud" (76). The nephew speaks out loud exactly these thoughts which had previously been limited to the most severe form of privacy, one's own thoughts. The public expression of thoughts is interpreted as the role of the café in extricating the inner workings of the mind. The café has provided a setting to exchange these thoughts and ideas. The narrator no longer has to restrict his mind's "mad" thoughts to his private walks in the garden. Instead, while sitting with other public persons in the café, he can share them out loud.

What allows the ideas that were previously reserved and preserved in one's mind to be said out loud? Is it the café public sphere, or is it literature? In an interview with Jacques Derrida in April 1989, Derrida lengthily discussed "this strange institution called literature," explicating his interest in the literary, and questioning what constitutes literature. The interview was transcribed and published in *Acts of Literature* (1992), a work edited by Derek Attridge and dedicated to Derrida's critical essays on several—Western—literary texts. Derrida explains his interest in literature as an obsession with totality and in that which can represent all forms and any form (36). The literary field, according to him, "allows one to say *everything,* in *every way.*" Therefore, literature embodies an open-ended inclusiveness that allows an expression or idea to be expressed in every single viable form, but, equally important, it also allows the expression of that which is inviable, that which does not have to make sense, or does not possess purpose, or is impractical. Literature, he continues, is not constricted by

law. In effect, "it is an institution which tends to overflow the institution" (ibid.). In fact, it is this quality of surpassing law and any restriction on what can be said or written that makes literature so dangerous. Literature "gives in principle the power to say everything, to break free of the rules, to displace them, and thereby to institute, to invent and even to suspect the traditional difference between nature and institution, nature and conventional law, nature and history" (37). This totality safeguards writers of literature from all forms of censorship, imparting on the writer the responsibility—and irresponsibility—of not answering to anybody or power (37-38). The freedom to say anything and everything, therefore, serves as a tool with which to contest political powers.

This construction of "what is literature" brings us back to the original question posed here: is it through literature or through the café that the Enlightenment public shared those ideas which were previously restricted to one's mind? The answer lies in the ineluctable conflation of café space and literary space. Literary space, in the form of written texts and narratives, finds room for dissemination, discussion and criticism in the physical space of the café. The café, after all, also allows anything and everything to be said. In fact, open expression in the café is what makes it so dangerous and threatening to state authorities, thereby inciting mass policing of the space. This thesis is dedicated to what was said through literature and the café together, and the power that this hybrid relationship produces. In *Rameau's Nephew,* the relationship between saying anything, the café and literature is further extrapolated in order to assess the value of what is said. As inferred from Derrida's interview, one can say absolutely everything in literature, a remark that compulsorily includes truths and non-truths together. Does the freedom to say anything imply a lack of value or worth, then? This question forms the

basic contradiction on which Rameau and the narrator disagree, and which will be discussed later.

Rameau is an actor, a performer, and his stage is the café. Performativity and the café are almost inseparable, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Paris. Diderot's text, in its conversational format, reflects the essential aspect of performativity that goes along with café conversation. The Parisian café, much like the Café de la Régence in Diderot's text, is an open space where expectations of a given social identity dissipate. Anybody can enter the café if they so wish, from highborn gentlemen to lowborn commoner. Once inside, identity can be recreated, reimagined and shifted from one end of the spectrum to another. The commoner can discuss politics with a rich gentleman; they can agree, disagree or get into a squabble. They can form friendships that are entirely situated in the café. It is a unique form of interaction that cannot be found elsewhere. These identity fabrications are facilitated by performativity. In *Rameau's Nephew,* the narrator describes his observations of Rameau's character in the early lines of the text. Nothing about Rameau is constant, nothing is commonplace. He is constantly changing; his weight, his outfit, the length of his hair, the shallowness or fullness of his eyes:

> Nothing is more unlike the man than he himself. Sometimes, he is as thin and pale as someone in the last stages of consumption and you can count his teeth through his cheeks – you'd think he'd not eaten for days or that he'd just come out of a Trappist monastery. A month later, he is as fleshy and replete as if he'd been at a banker's dinner table the whole time or been comfortably cloistered with the Bernardins. Today, skulking in dirty linen, with torn breeches, his coat in tatters, his shoes hanging off his feet, and his head held low, you'd be tempted to call him over and slip him a coin. Tomorrow, hair

powdered and curled, well shod and well dressed, he goes about in public, his head held high, and you would almost take him for a respectable man. He lives from one day to the next. Sad or cheery, depending on the circumstances. (8)

Rameau is the contradictory metaphor that encompasses all the peoples who sought refuge in the welcoming acceptance of the café. Once inside its doors, with a cup of coffee in one hand, and a newspaper in the other, opportunities open up. There were no restrictions on who you could be. Each person inside was a participant in a theatrical performance whose role was determined by the person. This agency of identity and character is one that evades standard rules; it is defined "neither by resistance to, nor clear-cut appropriation of, traditional authority or identities" (Ewing 67). It is "an informal performance space" that allows participants to "try on new identities" (ibid.).

This trying on of new identities is effectively established through discussion and verbal performances. Speech is the orchestra of the café's symphony. By subverting social status in favor of intellect and rational thought, the café facilitates a creative process of identity recreation. For those who frequented cafés, certain rules of performativity, such as rational expression and willingness to debate, ensured this creative process. The result is an overabundance of virtuosi. A virtuoso is defined by his public identity, and the reflection of certain skills in a public setting. It is no wonder, then, that virtuosi crowded the café scene, for it was the largest stage for them to enact their talents and showcase them in front of fellow virtuosi or other public persons. By 1850, Paris had around 340,000 cafés (Haine, "Café Friend" 610). The increase in the number of cafés in Paris meant that more and more people could flock to these spaces and engage in public discussions. This extension of space for the public person took place during the revolutionary years of France and the western world, the cornerstones

of which are the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. The political and economic changes that shaped the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years also had implications on the physical and social spaces of cities. Physical space is material; it is signified by the café, the park, the salon, the restaurant, etc. Social space is immaterial since it is defined by the public activities of groups of people that take place within the physical space, and not by the actual location being used for these activities (Metzner 2).

In his introduction to *Crescendo of the Virtuoso,* Paul Metzner traces how French society in particular developed, in between Enlightenment and Romanticism, from a monarchical state into a self-oriented state that advocated the importance of the democratic self and the opportune bourgeois public. He centers these revolutionary shifts on the French virtuosi of the second half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, on people like Diderot, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, to name a few, whose virtues aligned with the formation of a state far from the aristocratic partiality of a monarchical state. These virtuosi defied the previously adhered to social rules; they "championed tolerance for dissenting beliefs and opinion, education for a larger proportion of the population and a less dogmatic curriculum, a more equitable legal system with more rights for commoners and fewer privileges for aristocrats and clerics," and most importantly, they prioritized "the free exchange of ideas" (6-7). Enlightenment and then Romantic ideals, Metzner highlights, allowed human beings to refurnish their worlds with themselves at the center, rather than the king, or any other entity that had previously controlled every aspect of their lives. Therefore, as the political and economic plates of society were shifting, so too were its social forces, with institutions

such as the café at the forefront of the transfer towards self-actualization, consciousness, reason, freedom and liberty brought about by the enlightenment.

The English public sphere as discussed in chapter one revolved around the composition of a collective social identity once private persons assumed public roles. Once civil society established itself apart from courtly life, individuals gained an identity, but one that was expressed through the social collective. The eighteenth century in France shows the evolution of collective identity into pronounced individual identities as well. These identities are enabled by the individual's freedom to perform and express as a result of coffee house culture. Diderot's text, as it has been presented thus far, introduces the freedom of creating an identity for one's self in the café setting because such an identity has to be public. Freedom and publicness are key for enlightenment as expressed by Kant. Freedom relies on the public body rather than the private mind. The private mind, in opposition, is restricted and cannot achieve consciousness. It is through the use of reason in public that one reaches a state of freedom. The private use of reason, according to Kant, is that which state officials employ—tax collectors for example—in order to ensure that certain rules of society are adhered to. These laws must be obeyed by the other participants of civil society in order to maintain order and community. This use of reason does not further the empowerment of people or their enlightenment. The public use of reason, however, exemplified by the rational and critical discourses of learned men in front of the reading public, is what gradually and systemically improves society and moves it towards a freedom of conscience[4]. In his own study of enlightenment and partial response to Kant's essay, Michel Foucault also stresses the divergence between personal and public expressions

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[4] For more on Kant's exploration of enlightenment, see "Answer the Question: What is Enlightenment" (1784).

of freedom. "Enlightenment is thus not merely the process by which individuals would see their own personal freedom of thought guaranteed. There is enlightenment when the universal, the free, and the public uses of reason are superimposed on one another" (Foucault 37).

Both Foucault and Kant recognize that Enlightenment relies on the public use of reason. Certainly, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century café provided just that. As a result of its publicness and the crowds of virtuosi who gathered there, it became a prime space for the exchange of ideas that ultimately assembled into a body of social enlightenment. However, the content of the texts thus far examined in this research warns of the danger of opening up public spaces in which people can gather and talk. *Knavery in all Trades, Tarugo's Wiles,* and *Rameau's Nephew* criticize public discussions that dangerously teeter on a thin line between reason and nonsense. Kant stresses the use of public reason by scholars. However, society has not developed as far as ensuring that all men be scholars. Perhaps one option to ensure the proper use of reason is that only learned intellectuals be allowed to speak publicly, but the idea of restricting public places to certain people defies the self-implied definition of a public space in the first place. By creating limited public spaces, social hierarchy is shifted from an aristocratic predominance to an intellectual dictatorship of space. Neither one is better than the other.

Rameau's Nephew questions this exchange between what counts as enlightenment and what doesn't, between which practices and virtues ensure the advancement of a person's entire being—spirit, mind and body—and those that don't. ME represents enlightenment ideals. He holds to moral virtue, to the uplifting education of the mind as a way of sustaining the spirit. HIM, on the other hand, cares more about

his physical body than his spiritual one. He is concerned about the what food he will eat at night, and once that meal is secured, he will fixate on finding tomorrow's meal. The narrator, ME, believes in instructing his daughter in "grammar, mythology, history, geography, a bit of drawing and a lot of ethics" (Diderot 28), all part of the skills that enlightenment advocates find worthy and essential. HIM, on the other hand, finds these skills useless, even dangerous. ME holds reason, while HIM withholds it. The narrator reasons and voices his opinions rationally, while Rameau rambles on between ideas and performs irrational scenes in the public space of the café. Nonetheless, Rameau contains genius within him; even the highly rational and virtuous narrator admits it, asking HIM, "but with such enthusiasm for brilliant things and such a *fertile genius*, haven't you invented anything yourself?" (46, emphasis added). So what message is the text trying to send from the entangled and confusing dialogue taking place between these seemingly polar opposite characters?

The narrator is the embodiment of enlightenment, whereas Rameau the nephew is its criticism. The narrator is within society, part of the public body, and he feeds society by being a rational man who acts upon his reason and moral compass in all things. Rameau, on the other hand, is an outlier. He is an outsider to the public body even when he is within it. He questions the importance of reason, and even more, the possibility of achieving truth through the use of reason, an ideal deeply entrenched in Enlightenment philosophy. He does not believe in the power and knowledge of the virtuosi, for, according to him, no one can achieve full knowledge and skill of a subject—that is, become a true virtuoso—except after years and years of dedication to that single skill alone. "You need a profound understanding of any art or science to have a real grasp of the basics. Textbooks can only be done properly by men who have grown

old and white-haired on the job. It's the middle and the end that illuminate the darkness of the beginning" (Diderot 29). To know anything at all, we must know everything completely, that is what Rameau holds as truth. "There are so many of them [ideas] that if you don't have the whole lot, you might as well not have any…In truth, we might as well know nothing at all as know as little as we do, and know it so inadequately" (29). To him, reason is fake, pretentious, and ultimately useless. Therefore, as a result of our limitations, truth is not an agent of freedom, as eighteenth-century enlightenment so heavily popularized. It is rather a form of active subjugation that pushes human beings further down instead of moving them upwards towards enlightenment. Reason does not illuminate truth, and absolute truth is difficult to attain—and one does not achieve it through the use of reason. Instead, people might attain a version of non-absolute truth, or a pretense of truth. Rameau is of the belief that "superior truths, morality, and the officially recognized values are no more than useful pretenses and constitute masks to be worn when the occasion demands" (Racevskis 136). These masks—reason, truth, value and morality—are worn in public, for in private there is no need for them. Rameau lacks the hypocrisy and dual—or multiple—identity that other people display in public settings. As the narrator expresses early on in the text, he was taken by surprise with Rameau's public display of thoughts that all other people think but suppress to the privacy of their own minds. Rameau's belief in the difficulty to reach absolute truths is the reason why he does not attempt to do so, and his strong distaste of hypocrisy prevents him from pretending to speak truths. However, by claiming that reason is false and that most truths are only lesser versions of the absolute truth, isn't Rameau making these declarations in the name of truth? In the end, as much as he tries to conceal it from himself and from readers, we make the realization that Rameau is

also a hypocrite according to his own definition of the word. He attempts to justify his hypocrisy by masquerading it as a societal epidemic which only he has a choice in contracting or avoiding. "Be a hypocrite if you like," he tells himself, "but make sure you don't speak like one," he declares (51). He claims to have control in when he acts ridiculous—a hypocrite—and when he doesn't. He transforms hypocrisy into a choice, a role that he puts on whenever societal encounters require it of him.

The hypocrisy of public life and people's desire to transmit a better yet inauthentic version of themselves allows for the dual function of the café as a meeting place and as a theatrical stage. People could perform different identities; this did not entail a complete shedding of the identities that belonged to them outside the realm of the café, it simply created an unprecedented opportunity to attune those identities to personal desire. What was once the role of theatre and the privilege of the actor became accessible, inside the café, to all people. Rameau's criticism of the hypocrisy of public society and its belief in a false, ineffective and pretentious practice of reason falls crushingly on the coffeehouse setting. The characteristic opposition between the narrator and Rameau reflects the questionable value of the café in the second half of the eighteenth century in Paris. The café's popularity is not under investigation. However, among the masses of self-proclaimed virtuosi and behind the lengthy discourses that provoked spending hour after hour in the café, what light did the conversations bring about?

The increasing force of public opinion and public spaces did not necessarily increase reason and truth. The café witnessed rambling as much as it experienced reason. It bred rumors perhaps more than it transmitted truth. It provoked violent arguments as much as it stimulated intellect and thought. This brings us back to the

relationship between literature and café talk, and the dangerous liaison formed when the two intersect. *Rameau's Nephew,* as a literary and philosophical work—according to Derrida, it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other—reveals that the power imposed by free discourse and expression is dangerous, threatening and ultimately revolutionary. The revolutionary aspects of café talk and café literature will be discussed in the following section, in light of understanding the café as a free yet dangerous public setting. As exemplified by Rameau, the café is a space in which anything and everything can be said. Expression can become out of control, whether through the masks worn by people, or through Rameau who sometimes voices truths, genius at other times, but always says anything/something.

B. From Enlightenment to Revolution

Did Enlightenment result in the French Revolution? This question has occupied historians and researchers for several years now. We still do not have a solid answer; various scholars accept different explanations and interpretations of what exactly caused the French people to finally erupt in a revolution. The French Revolution does not necessarily need to have only one cause, however. As with any monumental change that affects society and nation as a whole, not to mention that shapes history, the causes are many.

      The eighteenth century in France was tense and in a constant flux. King and court lived lavishly, while the peasantry and working classes starved and grew poorer under increasing inflation. France was highly populated at this time and, under the Ancien Régime, functioned on an unfair system of taxation that took from the poor leaving the rich nobles and bourgeoisie richer. Following the Seven Years' War and its

involvement in the American Revolution, France was highly in debt. This dismal situation of the country, however, did not seem to affect the monarchy and its lavish lifestyle. Louis XVI and his infamous wife, Marie-Antoinette, resided at the Versailles Palace and spared themselves no expense in food, parties and opulent fashion. Their luxuries collided with the famine hitting the people outside the gates of Versailles. Prices kept increasing, especially the price of bread—an essential component of the French diet. Furthermore, as a way to solve France's debt, the state constantly increased taxation on people who were already struggling with the old taxes, and continuously issued new laws in a frenzy to control the depletion of the state's treasury. Many historians regard the decadence of courtly life and the poverty of the commoners as the driving force for the revolution. Others, like Simon Schama, credit the famine, taxation and poverty as viable causes for revolt, but they stress the inefficiency of the state as the prime force. To Schama, the downfall of the monarchy was the number of careless policies it undertook but was unable to see through to the end (Schama 62).

French Enlightenment is credited as a leading cause for the Revolution. Enlightenment went against the basic ideals that buttressed the Ancien Régime. It encouraged people to think and rationalize everything rather than passively accept ideas. Especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, and due to the emerging role of intellect, more and more people—of the nobility and the bourgeoisie—were beginning to question and rethink the traditional norms and social structure of French society, and the laws, policies and rules under which it operated. Reassessing social hierarchy and the reasons for its categorization affected monarchical absolutism and aristocratic precedence. The bridge between the political changes of the eighteenth century and the progression of enlightenment is literature.

Eighteenth-century French literature combined art and practicality as it sought to embody the social and political realities experienced by eighteenth-century writers. The literature of the seventeenth century was strict and restrained, a literature befitting and describing the monarchy (Hannoosh 452). The French Academy condensed literary experts into elite aristocratic body, restricting their combined efforts into uniformity in an attempt to conserve the status of high literature and the exclusivity of its practitioners. The Academy enforced certain privileges that limited the official publication of books. As a result, many genres were disregarded as unworthy, thereby restricting *official* literary diversity (Hammond 343). Furthermore, exclusivity meant that many writers were excluded from the Academy's circle. Diderot, for example, with his enlightenment philosophy and anti-monarchical thinking, did not belong. Therefore, the important conclusion to take is that non-conservative literature continued to exist even with the Academy's efforts to harmonize art. The salons of the seventeenth century exhibit the survival of the form of literature looked down upon by the Academy. The salons, much like the cafés in the eighteenth century, greatly defied the uniformity and compliance enforced by the Academy through audacious literary conversations and criticisms. In the salon, every detail of the art of writing was being questioned, overturned and criticized. Café culture differs from the salon in its rawness. The café is more public, open to intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike, and ultimately more "wild" and diverse. In fact, café culture and the people who engaged in discussions there resembled eighteenth-century literature in their vivacity.

French literature of the eighteenth century was anything but static. It was full of life and detail, dynamically moving with the descriptions of life in France. It lacked the artificiality enforced by the simple and uniform literature of previous years, and it

attempted to mirror the reality of life in France. Writers began expressing different, even opposing, ideas rather than remaining tied to what was accepted by the Academy. The *Philosophes* or men of letters of the eighteenth century resembled more of an "assemblage of individuals who speak a common language rather than sharing one philosophy or the same ideas and values" (Leigh 352). These eighteenth-century writers wanted to draw a representation of French society and court to the public, as they saw them to be, in the spirit of causing national transformation through public opinion, ultimately fomenting a social change, revolution even. Through writing, the *Philosophes* impelled change and reform. Therefore, French Enlightenment, such as the work of Rousseau, was distinguished in its necessity for action—dangerous action that led to persecution by authorities and often exile (353). One of the greatest accomplishments of the *Philosophes* is the compilation of the Encyclopedia.[5] The Encyclopedia reflects the propagation of reason and thought throughout the French public and its growing desire for knowledge.

The French Revolution, then, rooted its causes in several different soils. The decadence of courtly life starkly contrasted against the hungry peasants, many of whom faced the threat of starvation. In fact, as Hunt highlights, popular obsession and belief in conspiracies, especially those on the inflation of grain prices, further infuriated the lower classes (Hunt 40). The economic and financial circumstances of the common people were also dire due to the absurd increase in taxation. To further aggravate matters, the state was so desperate for money that it even withheld the privileges conferred on certain social bodies—primarily the nobility—until those could provide the needed money to enjoy these liberties (Furet 7). Therefore, public power was for

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[5] Denis Diderot is credited to having initiated the first Encyclopedia. Along with d'Alembert, he edited and contributed to it.

sale, and as such, state servants had to pay for the privilege of working in public offices. Access to nobility through money and power created a sense of instability in aristocratic society, in which hereditary nobility and privilege could easily be dismissed by order of the king, further amplifying the latter's tensions with the monarchy (8-9). These factors were spearheaded by the intellectual ideals spread by enlightenment and the literature produced out of it.

Accompanied by the development of public opinion, enlightenment literature was becoming increasingly accessible to greater numbers of people from different ranks. Noble and bourgeois elites opposed isolation and separation by reading the same literature and meeting in cafés, among other social institutions, in order to discuss new ideas and thoughts. The café become a cite of intellectual privilege that depended on knowledge of enlightenment ideas and the ability to discuss. The world of people and ideas forming inside the café became a world "capable of criticizing everything, including and not least itself; it was unwittingly presiding over a tremendous reshaping of ideas and values" (14). The combination of these economic, social and intellectual circumstances urged an aggressive reconsideration of the rules and norms under which French society functioned. Throughout the eighteenth century, but especially towards its final years, the outlines of what we now know as civil society were beginning to take their clear shape in France. The absolutism of monarchy, seen as the king's divine right[6]—and his alone—ever since the seventeenth century was being called into question.

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[6] Louis XV once expressed in a speech: "We hold our Crown from God alone." Schama, Simon. *Citizens.* P.100.

Up until the Old Regime, a sense of public opinion and civil man existed theoretically, only in the minds of the people. In actual governance and politics, however, the public was ineffective and inexistent. The king was the only one who held any power, for "there can be no useful discussion of political questions, since there is no public apart from the person of the king" (qtd. in Van Horn Melton 47). National representation was a fictitious imagination. The Estates General had no actual power and their role was simply to advise the king on state matters—advice that he was free to ignore as often and continuously as he pleased. The following paragraphs will review the historical events which strengthened the will and power of the Third Estate until it broke down King Louis XVI's hold on political control. Gaining power and forming the National Assembly was the first step towards realizing the Revolution.

When the Estates General met in 1789, after demands that took the shape of an early national will (Furet 44), it was their first meeting to be held since 1614. The three estates were the clergy, the nobility and the commoners. Many of those belonging to the second estate, the nobility, were in fact ennobled commoners who had bought their way into privilege and rank (41). The Estates General of 1789 assembled with national unity against despotism and monarchical absolutism. The Estates, mainly the nobles, bourgeoisie and other commoners represented by the Second and Third Estates, unanimously demanded "individual liberty, property, intellectual and religious tolerance, compulsory voting on taxation by periodic meetings" (58). Though the Third Estate, the commoners, were the largest in number, they actually held the least power. Therefore, in addition to the former demands, the Third Estate further stipulated that their representation in the assembly be equal to that of the other two estates. They demanded that each man's vote be equal to one, whether he belonged to the First,

Second or Third Estate. The equalization of votes would eliminate any polarization between the estates, effectively abolishing the class distinctions that categorize aristocratic society (ibid.). Although many of the nobility were sympathetic to the cries of the Third, most nonetheless supported this separation of verification which would preserve their social authority. It must be noted, here, that the group of people belonging to the Third Estate and demanding sociopolitical economy were not peasants or workmen; instead, they were a "group of bourgeois, educated and earnest, unanimous in their desire to transform both state and society" (61).

The Third, realizing the power they held in their numbers, in their "social weight" (63), refused to settle. Their fight for one collective body in legislative proceedings echoes the forcible power of citizenship that they held as an ideal. To them, as Schama describes it, citizenship was indivisible. Citizenship and the notions it held under its umbrella —equality, public opinion, public body, liberty—do not depend on class or blood or wealth. The "authentic voice of the Revolution" (353) was rooting these ideals of collectivity, belonging and equality as the political emblems of the coming Revolution. In June of 1789, this representative body of the majority assembled, and, joined by certain nobles with revolutionary vision, such as Mounier and Mirabeau, as well as a few priests they established themselves as the National Assembly (354).

In what can only be understood as an attempt to subdue and break apart the National Assembly, King Louis XVI shut down the assembly's meeting hall in order to set it up for a royal ceremony. Rain fueled their fury, and, refusing to revert back to the Third Estate, the National Assembly gathered in a tennis court. Under these circumstances, nothing held them together except the powerful bonds of collectivity. They were "stripped down to elemental citizenship and brotherhood" (358). Instead of

subduing the people's voice, the King had escalated their revolt. It was their reaction at that moment, more so than the dissolution of the Third and the formation of the National Assembly, that would set the course of history for France in the years to come. With grandiloquence and sheer performativity that defined French politics and governance, Mounier proclaimed that the National Assembly was "never to be separated until we have formed a solid and equitable Constitution as our constituents have asked us to" (qtd. in Schama 358). The exhilaration of revolution overtook the spirits of every one of the six hundred assembled in that court.

The particular events of the Revolution—the storming of the Bastille, the exile of the king and queen, their subsequent guillotining—, although of magnanimous historical importance, are sidelined here. I am more concerned with the reasons that lead to these events rather than their historical timeline alone. What amassed the fervor and explosive passion that allowed the masses to surmount an absolute monarchy, to defy their king and convene on their own, proclaiming themselves the revolutionary leaders of a democratic monarchy and then of a Republic? The answer is simple, yet, as in every other circumstance of its involvement in the history of humanity, unbelievably powerful. Words. Words are always the people's fuel. Words drove the French people to revolution.

The words that conquered the minds and hearts of the French in the final years of the eighteenth century varied in form. They included speeches, pamphlets, newspaper articles, books, songs, poems and letters. Enlightenment ideals through the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau and others were already instilling a revolutionary instinct in people's minds. However, more was needed in order to bring the people to action rather than just

metamorphosing their thoughts and rationale. During this tense moment in French history, the café assumes the role, once again, as *the people's* harbinger of revolution.

Parisian cafés affected the Revolution in two ways, depending on the type of establishment. There are the cafés were all the *philosophes* gathered. Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, Mirabeau, and d'Alembert—leaders of Enlightenment—would sit in places like the Café Procope or the Café de la Regence conversing and discussing. Many of the most stimulating works of these writers were conceived in the café between conversation and a sip of coffee. Diderot arrived at the idea for the Encyclopedia among the tables and chairs of Café Procope (Haine, *World of the Parisian Café* 209). These upper class cafés intellectually buttressed the early days of the Revolution, when an uprising against the monarchy was but an embryonic idea in the minds of intellectual elites. However, radical concepts must be accompanied by radical action in order to achieve any form of change at all, especially social reform. In the 1780s, the quality of cafés began to transform. Cafés were no longer upper-class spaces, and they were no longer dominated by the intellectual genius of minds such as Rousseau. Instead, the political charges of the café began attracting a new type of clientele, the working class and the grub street writers. It is in these cafés that action took place.

The transformation of the café into an attractive space for the lower classes occurred along with the population of the Palais Royale and its gardens. Around 1780 and onwards, the Palais Royale became a commercial establishment open to the public. Aristocrats, bourgeois and commoners combined frequented the various establishments of the Palais, which included operas, theatres, and restaurants, all catering towards entertainment. Cafés were particularly popular, and of these, the Café de Foy was the most prominent (Isherwood 240). These cafés offered much as entertainment and for the

passing of time. Newspapers and pamphlets were abundant for people to read—or pretend to read—, and there were always conversations taking place between different people. Isherwood notes that "more than any other show, people came to see the concourse of humanity" (242). Accurately so, that is what the cafés lining the Palais Royale offered. The commercialization of the Palais and its accessibility to the entire public of Paris manifested the results of merging the elite and the popular. These cafés became more prevalent than the elite cafés of Voltaire's generation of intellectuals due to the allure of publicness inherent in the culture of the café ever since its beginnings. The café no longer housed a bourgeois public sphere. Instead, it became a more dynamic and complicated space that did not demand classification by rank. The openness of the Palais's cafés to people from different social classes resulted in an "unprecedented fusion between philosophic, political, and popular speech" (Haine, *World of the Parisian Café* 209).

These cafés housed anything but innocent conversation. In the few years preceding and succeeding the Revolution, idle café talk was substituted by ideas that threatened the state and the nation's peace. The people were anxious, and the atmosphere in cafés reflected this nervousness and anticipation. In these socially hybrid cafés, newspapers, pamphlets and speeches steadily built up anticipation until it erupted in revolt. Haine notes that "on the eve of the Revolution, some twenty-five cafés had displaced the café Procope and other Left Bank establishments as the most dynamic in Paris" (ibid.). The café was the tangible site of the notions and ideals that Robespierre heralded in his speeches. In the late eighteenth century—and well into the nineteenth century—to be in public meant to be in a café. The cafés of the Palais Royale unnerved

the political restrictions of private life, operating instead in absolute publicity and thus adhering political undertones to every thought made public by pen or mouth.

Yet, not everybody who spoke in cafés had the education and talent for words that figures such as Maximilien Robespierre had. Café culture is imbued with idle talk, rumors and gossip. Many of the newspapers that were read in cafés contained falsehoods. It is remarkable how threatening empty prattle and fake news can be, as seen in the French and English cafés thus far. Indeed, government officials were just as fearful of idleness and gossip in cafés as they were of activists and intellectuals who collected and distributed their ideas there. Again, the café is set up as a dangerous and threatening space because of its allowance of all forms of expression. Freedom to say anything and everything applies to the revolutionary café and further politicizes its space.

As was the case with London coffeehouses during the restoration, pamphlets played an important role in the diffusion of revolutionary ideals to the public. The French Revolution and the distribution of literature in cafés provides a more critical, and therefore, a more powerful example of how literature participated in political and social reform through the café and its habitués. In May of 1790, a pamphlet was being read in the Café de Foy. Its message was strong and clear: the government is feeding on the people and the people must not accept that fate anymore. The pamphlet was titled *Les Mangeurs de Peuples au Diable*, or "The People Feeders to the Devil." It addresses, in specific, the "citizens of the Palais Royale" who are sitting in the Café de Foy. The subject of the pamphlet was the *Declaration of the Rights of War and Peace,* which limited the power of deciding on peace or war to the National Assembly alone.

Using compelling diction, the pamphlet directs its message to the entirety of those sitting in the café, showing no hesitation that perhaps part of the audience might not be a supporter of the Revolution, signifying the magnitude and power of café culture as an essential component of the Revolution. The café was known as a meeting place where one can discuss anti-governmental ideas. In a café, unless you are suspected of being a spy, you are taken as a sympathizer for the people's cause. The pamphlet builds on the overwhelming joy and adrenaline that the first successes of the Revolution have aroused:

> The intoxication of joy which absorbs you in this moment could not have a greater and more beautiful cause. This decree, which has rendered the faithful Representatives of the French People, or rather, the genius of Liberty that has been proclaimed by them, secures the Revolution forever, and will change the entire world. (1-2, translation mine)

The pamphlet reflects the predominance of the National Assembly, in its own eyes, and its deadly conquering of the old royalist state. The Nation becomes in control, and the old state is regarded as dependent on the "Representatives of the French People." The reader, Bailio, declares that any plots of counter-revolution have been "stifled in their germ" (2). The old state only exists as a "contre-révolution", no longer an entity on its own. Bailio blazons the end of the "ravages" of "ministerial tyranny" of this state that is no longer a state, which has "finally been dealt its death blow" by the Revolution (ibid.).

> Soon, they will no longer be able to conspire against the blood and sweat of the peoples […] and their massacres will be annihilated along with their power.

Bailio addresses the listeners at the Café de Foy as "mes amis" (3), my friends, reflecting the camaraderie that grows, not only out of fighting for the same cause, but out of doing so in the café which groups of people frequented on a daily basis. The Revolution flowered in the cafés of Paris, where people were bound together by a safety net that allowed them to express their ideas and thoughts in any manner.

The pamphlet makes two requests of the people in order to showcase their support of the Revolution and its leaders in the National Assembly. Bailio appeals to collective identity of the gatherers and to the sensitivity of belonging to a historical fight for freedom—if the revolutionaries were sure of anything, it is, as this pamphlet makes clear, of the historical permanence that their revolution will effect:

> I ask you, citizens, citizens who are finally free! Which man can reject these two motions and still dare to call himself French? (4)

Indeed, the citizens respected and followed through with the demands of the motion, turning the Palais Royale and the entirety of Paris into a show of revolutionary support. This pamphlet emphasizes the power of words in uniting Revolutionary France against its common enemy: the monarchy. By circulating pamphlets such as this one, the café participated in the formation of a politically aware and publicly driven revolutionary sentiment which aimed at national unity and sovereignty through democracy. Having established the café as a site of political activity and an agent of change, it must be noted that the democratic ideals dispersed in the café following the Revolution were never properly enforced. As the following section discusses, these ideals became corrupted before the Republic even had a chance of democratic governance.

C. Revisiting the Past: The Café in Hugo's Novel

Following the success of the Revolution in 1789, the 1790s witnessed the

transformation of the Republic into a dictatorship sustained by blood and execution.

Before looking at the history of France's spiraling into the Terror, we will look at the

literary transformation prevailing at the time. Literary production in the nineteenth

century in France also shifted between two seeming dichotomies across the century,

between Romanticism and Realism. The early years of the nineteenth century witnessed

a transition from Enlightenment—the ideals of which had encouraged the Revolution—

into Romanticism. French Romanticism of the eighteenth century acted "in accordance

with the political, philosophical, and social values associated with the newly formed

nation (Hannoosh 453). In fact, a popular approach to early nineteenth-century

Romanticism is as a discursive formation that emerged in reaction to classicism and its

strict, "classical rules of composition and style" (Lowry and Sayre 3-4). Romantics

introduced changes into the literary field that ripped the rules of the institution apart and

forced it to regenerate anew, with more life and vigor than ever before. Writers such as

Victor Hugo, perhaps the greatest of the French Romantics, forsook the traditions of the

Classical Age and dared to write using new rhythms and meters. They implemented

excess rather than restriction, often mixing between low and noble languages, vulgarity

and proper rhetoric, and even tragedy and comedy in the same works (Hannoosh 454-

455). Romantic writing became an expression of freedom, highly influenced, perhaps

even born out of, the political turmoil of the period and the French Revolution.

There are many definitions for Romanticism. In their attempt to conceptualize

one definite understanding of Romanticism that comprehensively incorporates these

myriad definitions, Lowry and Sayre establish Romanticism primarily as a criticism of

modernity (17-18). Modernity, in this context, is directly linked to capitalism and

material economy in a post-Industrial Revolution modern society. Romanticism began

in the eighteenth century in Germany, France and England. Although many scholars

consider the earliest years of the Romantic movement in France as pre-Romantic, since

it preceded the French Revolution, Lowry and Sayre emphasize that pre-Revolution and

post-Revolution Romanticism are one and the same (44-45). In other countries, the

movement arose in the 1820s, thus establishing a precise proliferation of Romanticism

in the first half of the nineteenth century (49). The themes that characterized the

movement included "sensibility, melancholia, dreams, mal du siècle, the urban desert,

idyllic nature and savage nature, the return to religion," and, of course, a "nostalgia for

the past" (53). French writers of pre-Revolution late eighteenth century took up

Romanticism in varying degrees. Denis Diderot, for example, valued imagination, a

Romantic quality, although he is not considered a characteristically Romantic writer.

Other writers, pupils and adherents of Rousseau, fall under a definite Romantic category

(53-54). In the first half of the nineteenth century, Romanticism's leading figures

included Alfred de Vigny and Victor Hugo. This section will focus on exploring

Romanticism through the historical novel in Victor Hugo's *Ninety-Three,* in order to

understand the role of the café in the Romantic vision of Republican France.

   The historical novel, as its name suggests, necessarily deals with the past.

Looking back—and idealizing—the past is a prevalent concern in all forms of Romantic

perspectives. Romantic writers regard the Revolution not as a singular event in itself,

but as the culmination of "youthful errors" following several years of struggle against

aristocracy and absolute monarchy (Lukács 75). The Romantic historical novel, then,

presents a "retrospective glance at the errors of history," in the hopes that by revealing these errors they might be avoided in the future (ibid.). Lukács agrees with Pushkin's criticism of Hugo's historical writing as being artificially centered on certain historical leaders, thereby manifesting "hollow Romantic theatricality" (72). Lukács separates between the historical novels of Walter Scott and those influenced by him—Pushkin, Gogol, Manzoni and Cooper—on the one hand, and Vigny and Hugo on the other. Nonetheless, Hugo's historical works remain important and necessary since Hugo "goes far beyond the reactionary aims of his Romantic contemporaries" (77). He advances the aim of his historical novels by setting real—historical—figures during real—historical––events in a fictional—non-historical—narrative, and, using the principles of "decorative subjectivization and moralization of history," permits a reconsideration of history from an ideal gaze and under "changed political and social content" (ibid.).

Therefore, although Lukács criticizes Hugo for not producing historical writing in the same way as Scott, he nonetheless credits Hugo—and French Romantic writers in general—as establishing the "decisive steps" in the progression of the historical novel (74). "On the one hand the historical novel of the Romantics in France produced more important figures than elsewhere in Europe, and the theoretical formulation of the Romantic historical novel also belongs on a more fundamental level than in the other countries" (75). I apply this exception to Hugo's novel and treat it as a historical novel that stands up to contemporary claims of modernity which protest against the Revolution. Hugo glorifies the Revolution specifically by writing about 1793, the apex of the Terror (254). By projecting the glories of 1789 onto the horrors of 1793 as well as the violent defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871—which provides the historical context under which Hugo was writing this novel—, Hugo questions the relationship between

violence and revolutionary ideals. He looks to a future defined by "a revival of revolutionary democracy" (257), one which had failed in application after the formation of the Republic in 1793.

In Hugo's novel, *Ninety-Three,* the space of the post-Revolutionary café is pitted against its previous image in the years prior to 1789. The café shifts from a pro-revolutionary political space into a threatening hub that is silenced by the leaders of the new nation. What was wrong with the years following the Revolution, that writers felt the need to look back and idealize a past before its events? The Revolution established a new kind of nation that restricted access to the aristocrats who sat at the top of the social hierarchy under the monarchy (Furet 103). According to Furet, the hatred expressed by the Revolution and the revolutionaries towards aristocrats was the fuel and the "secret of its violence," which would ultimately lead to foreign war, civil war, and the Terror (ibid.). Prior to the Revolution, Enlightenment ideals had guided the minds of the nobility and bourgeoisie against the monarchy. However, after 1789, "national sentiment" drove a publicly pervasive desire, felt by different levels of the society, especially the peasants and the sans-culottes, towards democratic glory and national unity under a free republic (104). Revolutionary France was further united in its fears of counter-revolutions and aristocratic conspiracies, both foreign and domestic, that would jeopardize the Revolution and reinstate the monarchy. However these same fears, which kept increasing throughout the 1790s, generated a political dismemberment that divided those in power.

One of the major decisions to cause a rift between political groups was the decision on war against the rest of monarchical Europe. Louis XVI was quick to support a declaration of war, no doubt believing that battle against European powers would lead

to the loss and destruction of the Revolution and all of its proponents, thus restoring his throne (106). A majority in the Assembly also supported war, fearing a counter-revolution by exiled aristocrats and royalist enemies hiding within the state. This left a minority, headed by Maximilien Robespierre, in an antagonistic position to a war declaration. Robespierre regarded the choice of war as a dangerous, excessive and radical decision. He feared that a powerful European army will crush the French army, stripping France of its newly instituted liberty (ibid.). Nonetheless, war was declared in April 1792, which produced consequences contrary to everyone's expectations: "war would be the undoing of Louis XVI. It would break Brissot[7] and his friends. It would bring Robespierre to power, before leading him to the scaffold, like the two others" (107).

A new French Republic was born only after the execution of King Louis XIV, which took place on 21 January 1793, following prolonged debates on whether he could be tried or not. Finally, his trial was taken up by the Convention and culminated in a majority vote for execution by guillotine (119-121). The voting was public and by name, which threatened to mark sympathizers as royalists. Along with the execution of Louis XVI, an age of bloodshed and rampant capital punishment began.

Jacobin extremism increased in 1793, emphasizing that revolutions cannot take place without bloodshed. To counter foreign and domestic threats, many revolutionary ideals were corrupted as suspicion pervaded the Republic's government and led to swift executions. The clash between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary was augmented by civil wars, marked by the Vendée insurrections. Uprisings in rural Vendée began with peasants who rebelled against the suppression of Catholicism. Vendée became a

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[7] Brissot spoke for the group of Jacobins who supported the war.

stronghold of a counter-revolutionary civil war against secular government in Paris. In response to these wars, the Republic became more violent in its actions against any dissenter, sending hundreds and thousands to execution. Citizens lived in fear of the guillotine, and the Revolution turned into a dictatorship of terror. Furet adequately summarizes this transformation into Terror: "Revolutionary government was inseparable from ideological orthodoxy, which forbade plurality of opinions" (135).

Victor Hugo's novel, *Ninety-Three,* published in 1874 and set in 1793, offers a Romantic reading of the historical events of the time, primarily the counter-revolutions and uprisings in the Vendée and Chouannerie. The novel narrates the story of Lantenac, a royalist traveling by sea to Brittany in order to lead an insurrection against the Republic. Lantenac, like all the other characters in the novel, is an ideologue and a staunch believer in his royalist cause. His ideology makes him a terrifying threat to the Republic. Although Hugo shows definite Revolutionary support throughout the novel, he nonetheless presents Royalist supporters as committed to their ideologies, thereby invoking a sense of respect for them.

In the middle of the novel, the setting shifts to Paris, where Republicans voice their growing concern over Lantenac and the counter-Revolution. This part of the novel, which separates Lantenac's journey in the first section and Republican attempts to capture and execute him in the third section, is what concerns us in this thesis. The interludium takes place in the backroom of a famous café in Paris, where powerful men used to meet in order to speak free from any watchful eyes. Currently, three men occupy the dark room, barely lit by one lamp hanging from the ceiling. The narrator informs readers that these men were none other than Robespierre, Danton and Marat, all major

Republican actors involved in the social and political transformations of later eighteenth-century France.

The men are engaged in a heated discussion, enveloped by the privacy of the café's backroom. They are discussing the threat on the Republic. Danton argues that the biggest peril France is facing is a foreign threat of war from Europe. Robespierre, on the other hand, insists that France's threat is an internal one made manifest by civil war and the activities of counter-Revolutionaries and Royalists—in effect, anybody standing against the Republican government. The only solution Robespierre finds to this internal threat is to "exterminate it," for "one does not drive away an internal enemy" (107). Robespierre details the escalating events of the Vendée insurrection which, accelerated by an imminent English invasion, will be able to reclaim the whole of France from Republic hands and restore the monarchy: "It needs fifteen days to expel the stranger, and eighteen hundred years to eliminate monarchy," he concludes sarcastically (109). This early scene reflects the violence that has overshadowed Robespierre's previously tranquil attitude prior to the Revolution. After a short quibble between Robespierre and Danton, Marat finally voices his opinion in a bleak tone: "it [threat] is everywhere, and you are lost," he addresses his companions. To him, the threat on the Republic is a central one located in the heart of Paris. It is found in the public space of the café, where traitors meet and develop their plans to destroy the Republic:

> You do not perceive the real peril: it is this—the cafés and the gaming-houses. The Café Choiseul is Jacobin; the Café Pitou is Royalistl the Café Rendez-Vous attacks the National Guard; the Café of the Porte Saint-Martin defends it; the Café Régence is against Brissot; the Café Cortaza is for him; the Café Procope swears by Diderot; the Café of the Théâtre Français swears by Voltaire; at the Rotunde they tear up the assignats; the Cafés Saint-Marceau are in a fury; at the

Café Foy uproars and fisticuffs; at the Perron the hornets of the finance buzz.
These are the matters which are serious." (111)

The beginning of this scene contrasts the café to the public and open setting it commanded prior to the Revolution, which was similar to the London coffeehouses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1793, the Parisian café is no longer a public space where civic people come to discuss and express political ideas, and where public opinion is fostered. The café, especially by harboring a secret and private backroom, signifies the repression of public opinion by state authorities under the Republic. This same government was supposed to represent a free people. Instead, it has become similar to its monarchical predecessor in its suppression of political plurality and any form of expression that might be considered as dissent. Marat's short speech, which shocks and insults Danton, further delimits the café by painting it as an anti-Revolutionary hub that is crawling with traitors. However, counter-Revolutionary must be understood from Marat's perspective. In his understanding, counter-Revolutionary includes any person, activity or place that poses a threat to the unity of the nation. By disagreeing on how to govern the Republic, Robespierre and Danton—as well as all other revolutionaries in government—are disrupting the national unity that ties new France together and strengthens it against foreign kings, exiled Royalists and domestic counter-Revolutionaries. "It [threat] consists in the absence of unity; in the right of each one to pull on his own side, commencing with you two; in the blinding of minds; in the anarchy of wills" (113). The solution, which he posits to Robespierre, is a dictatorship under himself or under Robespierre: "Let us seize the dictatorship," he urges the latter (115).

Even while proclaiming the need for unity, Marat defies his own words by arguing with Danton and Robespierre. Much like Rameau, he becomes a hypocrite by acting against his own advice. He throws accusations at Robespierre, questioning the latter's commitment to the Revolution. He threatens Danton with the guillotine, responding to his shrugs by: "Sometimes a shrug of the shoulder makes the head fall" (120). Sitting in the dark room of the café, the three men, supposedly representing the leaders of the new Republic, engage in a war of verbal "fratricide," to use Danton's term.

Hugo's novel presents a new kind of café, one that did not exist in London nor in Paris before 1789. The café during the time of the Republic has transformed into a space where discourse equals squabbling and arguing. Opinions are not accepted by those engaging in its discourse. Instead, everybody sees only their point of view, their understanding of the Revolution, and their belief of how the Republic should be governed. In the café, realizations are made that, in order to destroy the counter-Revolution, the Republic must become a dictatorship. Indeed, France's Reign of Terror in 1793 transformed nationalism into subdued freedom and forced pseudo-unity. Hugo's text looks back at this dark time in French history in order to underscore the deleted values that existed before the Terror, before the Revolution even. By illustrating the café as a dark, gloomy repressive space, the novel criticizes the repulsive mutation of Revolutionary ideals that drove the citizens to unite against a common enemy only a few years before the Terror. The enemy, once again, has become the state itself.

Corruption of revolutionary ideals is a theme that connects the French and Cairene revolutions of 1789 and 1952 respectively. In this thesis, we experience this corruption through the changing café culture that reflects the struggle between state and

civil society. After successful revolutions, the men who had led the national labor against the monarchy—as well as foreign occupation in Egypt's case—suddenly receive magnanimous amounts of power as the new state leaders. In order to manage the new state and its people, these leaders resort to the suppression of their people in order to control their actions and strengthen their state's immune system. As represented in Furet and Hugo's narratives, this suppression eventually materialized into a dictatorship known as the Terror. In Egypt, as will be discussed in what follows, the revolutionary leaders blocked and punished political pluralism to maintain order within their state. We explore both of these histories from literary narratives that describe the public sphere of the café. Especially in Cairo, the café becomes a complex space caught between freedom of expression and fear of spies and police terror.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSMUTATION OF THE CAIRENE CAFÉ

A. A Historical Overview

The year 1919 was a critical one for Egypt. The country was being pulled in three different directions at the same time. There was the British occupation, which controlled Egypt's political, economic and governmental activity; there was a tyrannical monarchy supported by the British and which acted according to their requests; and there was the Wafd party, a self-declared secular national delegation that was raising questions about the occupation and about monarchical legitimacy and authority over Egypt and its people (Whidden 19). Perhaps it can be said that the Egyptians tolerated British presence in their land for some time. However, World War I brought with it adversity, increasing British presence and tighter control over the country (Botman 25). Many Egyptians were forced to enlist as soldiers while others suffered from inflation and starvation (26). The people found themselves, more than ever before, unable to express themselves and were forced to suppress their hatred of the occupation and their desire for independence. The war also revealed the true objectives of the occupation, and those were far from an altruistic purpose geared towards preparing the Egyptians for self-governance (Rifai 117). These circumstances revived a strong nationalist sentiment that had been active in varying degrees ever since the beginning days of the occupation. Even under censorship laws, a nationalist voice rang strong and clear, demanding that the Egyptians govern and represent themselves without any form of British interference.

This was primarily the voice of the Wafd party, the nationalist liberal party under the leadership of Saad Zaghlul (Botman 26).

The Wafd's—and by extension, the people's—demands for independence began as peaceful ones. After the war, Zaghlul wanted to represent his country in the Paris Peace Conference in order plead their case for independence. He was met by rejection and was thus unable to travel. Although the Wafd was made up of a selection of rich and educated young men, their nationalist political agenda and Zaghlul's "eloquent and heart-felt, uncompromising attitude encouraged activism in the country" (Botman 27). Consequently, the first spark of the 1919 revolution was lit when British authorities rounded up and arrested Zaghlul and a few others of the Wafd party (Rifai 117). Indeed, the people took to protesting faster than the occupying forces could imagine. The revolution surprised the colonialists and spread like wildfire from its elite and educated leaders, to the bourgeoisie, and then to the farmers and workers who had suffered the most under the occupation (117-118).

The 1919 revolution showed the British that the Egyptian people were not willing to forgo their natural right to independence and self-representation. As anti-British activity persisted over a period of three years, the British searched for a way to turn the revolution against itself. Finally, on February 28 1922, the occupying forces announced a unilateral declaration of Egypt's independence under four conditions that maintained British strategic interests in the area (Rifai 123). The hope was that in the process of establishing their own constitution and parliament, the Egyptians would drown in internal political conflict (ibid.). The British changed the title of Sultan to King, thus turning Egypt into a monarchy under King Fuad who, unlike his fellow

Egyptians—the Wafd members and the majority of Egyptians— accepted Britain's declaration (123-124).

The Wafd, albeit being the only party that managed to rally the entire support of the Egyptian people, was not the only one to fight for national liberation. Many other minor parties played significant roles in Egypt's nationalist plight as well. Botman refers to these parties as "little more than splinter groups of the Wafd" (65). These included the Liberal Constitutionalists, the Ittihad party, the People's Party, and the Saadist Party (34). There were also religious groups that regarded the struggle for nationalism as a necessary component of the country's Islamic fulfillment. Unlike the other parties who fought for secular nationalism, the religious groups used Islam, which later developed into pan-Islam as exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood, to recruit national support. Of these groups I mention the Muslim Brotherhood under al-Banna's leadership, Young Egypt, and the Young Men's Muslim Association.[8]

The years between the 1919 revolution and the 1952 revolution were Egypt's only years of political pluralism. Botman emphasizes that never in Egypt's past or future after 1952 did such active and diverse pluralism exist (54). This diversity in political expression signifies people's increasing awareness of the sociopolitical conditions of their country. The organization of various parties and groups working under different political orientations and agendas marks the years in which Egypt's civil society produced views that were distinct from and incompatible with the state's views. According to Calhoun, in this type of civil society, "the essence of freedom lies in the right of people to form such self-organized efforts" (314). In this case, political

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[8] For more information on each of these religious groups, see Selma Botman. *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919-1952.* Syracuse University Press, 1991, pp. 116-125.

pluralism is an essential tool for public opinion, which, in itself, best serves the collective good (313).

Although acting with varying degrees of radicalism and—secular or religious––agendas, the groups struggling for actual independence, after realizing that the 1922 declaration increased British power rather than restricting it, held one thing in common: elitism. From the Wafd to the minor parties, the leaders and active participants of nationalism were upper middle class and upper class people that, apart from rallying the lower classes' support for elections, strikes and protests, never incorporated them into the actual politics. Although some scholars argue that the Wafd was an anti-elitist organization whereas the Liberal Constitutional Party functioned in accordance with the interests of the elite alone (Whidden 30), Wafd membership, it must be noted, remained an elite privilege. Leadership in the Wafd party did not "activate peasants, workers, and members of the lower middle class, preferring instead to recruit and then satisfy the more upper-class constituents" (Botman 32). This is further evidenced by the Wafd's sole focus on nationalism and reclaiming total power from the British, disregarding any reformation towards social mobility, economic advancement, or mass critical and political rationale. Similarly, the other factions and groups participating in Egypt's political tug of war maintained leadership roles to elite members only. Botman establishes that "the Muslim Brotherhood, Young Egypt, and the Communist movement were also controlled by small vanguards, and when the Free Officers took power, they demonstrated the concept of elitism par excellence with revolution from above" (60). However, in her classification of the nationalist struggle as an elite-directed revolution, Botman disregards a prominent aspect of Egyptian society: the middle class.

What distinguished the 1919 revolution is its elitist roots. These groups of elites were native Egyptians, and not of Ottoman descent—who were sympathetic to the colonial rule—(Gershoni and Jankowski 40). However, the national struggle for independence did have its middle class component as well. The middle class is absent from many historians' analyses of modern Egypt. Such "traditional" historians regarded the middle class as too weak, and anybody who empirically belonged to the middle class—characterized by a notable income and effendi culture—was, in fact, considered as upper class (Ryzova, *Age* 11). A new wave of historians, however, understand the middle class as permeating society through culture, both intellectual and popular culture (ibid.). This middle class component of the twentieth century are known as the *efendiyya.* Ryzova warns against understanding the efendi as a purely class position: "The efendi is first and foremost a cultural concept signifying a stance towards modernity in a particular historical context and cannot be reduced to a class with empirical boundaries" (8). The cultural dependence of efendis allows them a class malleability that isn't available to upper and lower class citizens. The effendi is defined by his Western-style modernity, articulated through education and dress code. "Being middle class was a cultural prize created around the efendis, as people who should be middle class by virtue of their cultural capital—their education, consumption, and modern habits" (16). This qualified the efendi for social mobility that would otherwise be difficult for the traditional middle class or the poorer lower class. According to Ryzova, the efendis were responsible for the national political movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (18). They were the educated and active reformers working towards a public goal, a fully independent Egyptian nation. Thus, it is an overstatement to constrict Egypt's national struggle to a limited group of elites, for

independence found its way to the surface through efendi culture, as ideally embodied by al-Bana and Gamal Abdel Nasser. "Both forces [the Muslim Brotherhood and Nasserist regime] had a holistic plan to remake society and claimed exclusive authority, or absolute power, to carry it out" (246).

B. Listening Publics and the Writer's House

What separated the elite members of society from the lower classes was made tangible through education. In Egypt's pre-Nasser era, education was limited and the levels of illiteracy were high. Under the British protectorate, education and the organization of an educational system were never prioritized. In fact, before 1922, literacy levels were as low as 7.9% (Ikeda 218-219). After Egypt's partial independence in the early twenties, the organization of education and free public schooling began again, and the numbers of students (both boys and girls) enrolled in primary, secondary, and higher education drastically increased.[9] The educational differences between societal classes were made manifest culturally through language. There were those who could speak, read and write in Fusha, and those who did not understand it, nor could they read or write at all, and who depended solely on oral communication in 'Ammiya, or the colloquial dialects. The distinctions between those who used Fusha and those who used 'Ammiya were culturally and socially apparent. In Egypt, social class was considerably dependent on level of education, and therefore, can often be determined by one's knowledge of Fusha or lack thereof. "Fusha is reified as a clear (pure) and eloquent language with a Qur'anic and classical pedigree, whereas 'Ammiyya is regarded as the common language of the

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[9] For numbers and statistics, see Misako Ikeda. "Toward the Democratization of Public Education." *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952.* The American University in Cairo Press, 2005, pp. 218-220.

masses and everyday life" (Fahmy 5). Many intellectuals and academics argued against the use of 'Ammiyya in written texts, including Taha Husayn and Naguib Mahfouz (7). Nonetheless, colloquial dialects, and in particular the Cairene dialect which dominates Egyptian Arabic (8), emerged as the primary expressions of a middle-class Egyptian culture and, in effect, of a national Egyptian culture (13).

As already noted, the majority of the Egyptian population during the early years of the twentieth century could not read or write. Nonetheless, the Egyptian public actively participated in cultural expression and the creation of an Egyptian identity. The public had many options apart from print culture. Most of the time, national cultural expression took place in social institutions, the most popular of which is the coffeehouse. The coffeehouse is so central to the political events that shaped modern Egypt that no study of the modern country can afford to gloss over it. This chapter examines the role of both academic literary works written in Fusha, and colloquial forms of cultural expression—newspapers, reading out loud and public discussion of events and ideas—in order to better understand the role of the coffeehouse in the formation of Egyptian identity and the Egyptian modern state. Cultural expression did not depend on academic discourse which, for the large part, was written in Fusha and thus restricted to intellectuals and elite members of society. Rather, cultural expression in Egypt primarily manifested itself through colloquial dialects and heavily depended on visual and audiovisual presentation (Fahmy 13), even on academic rhetoric. The transmutation of academic rhetoric into a popularly accessible form—oral and nonprint, through reading out loud and discussing academic works in the café—the non-educated groups of society gained access to intellectual revolutionary ideas, even without being able to read academic works on nationalism (14). Through its translation into popular

media, academic rhetoric fueled the public's understanding of and ideas on revolution and independence.

   As with the Parisian and the London coffeehouses, Egyptian coffeehouses were always crowded with people who gathered to hear newspapers and periodicals being read out loud and to partake in the discussion of events and ideas. The Egyptian public sphere also arose in these coffeehouses where people from different social classes interacted and participated in activities that concerned society. The public sphere grew out of open debates between different people, in the salons, cafés, universities and even religious institutions. In fact, the café also formed a translational space linking religion and sociability. Hassan al-Banna adopted the café as a secular, non-spiritual place from which he could preach to a larger public than that provided in the mosques. Outside the spiritual circle of the mosque, Banna's mission was to "bring the faith to the people" (Mitchell 5). Café preaching, therefore, not only takes on social, intellectual and rational habits, but also a religious one. These spaces belonged to different social classes and, especially in the café, were essential spaces for popular expression and reaction to current events. The transformative spatiality of the coffeehouse allowed for the expansion of print culture into the oral form. This relationship between print and oral cultures is central to Habermas's formulation of the public sphere in the west (Habermas 45; Fahmy 35). However, as Fahmy mentions, the Cairene coffeehouse contributed to a counter movement from the oral to the written (36). The elite intelligentsia that occupied the seats of coffeehouses such as Café Riche communicated in writing what they consumed visually and audiovisually in the café. The Cairene café offered writers an in depth view of people going about their daily lives. Theatre, in

particular, was a major presence in the coffeehouse (132). Playwrights almost lived in cafés, seeking inspiration from the people there, learning their languages and habits.[10]

In the year 1887, a survey conducted by Ali Pasha Mubarak concluded that Cairo had three times as many coffeehouses as it had mosques (Fahmy 145). To say that the coffeehouse was more involved in the events that lead to the revolution of 1952 than religious institutions were is, then, no exaggeration. During the 1919 revolution, Cairene coffeehouses were always cramped with urban masses reading or listening to newspapers being read out loud in order to learn the most recent events (145). Ideas were exchanged there, speeches were made, and most significantly, anti-British sentiments were communicated. British reports of the time all warn about the seditious information being passed around in cafés (146), which reached many people and extended even further through discussion and conversation. It comes as no surprise, then, that British officers frequently raided coffeehouses in search of seditious material, secret pamphlets, and the persons responsible for their printing and dispersion. Egyptian historian Abd al-Rahman al-Rafai discusses several occasions in which British troops and inspectors went into coffeehouses and harassed customers under pretenses of searching for revolutionary pamphlets or even weapons (al-Rafai 1:209-210; 2: 27-28). Other measures taken by British occupation leaders dealt directly with the press and newspapers. All newspapers were censored, in order to ensure that no threatening, anti-British news was being published. However, that did not stop secret newspapers from circulating. One such newspaper was formed by students (*Free Egypt)*, and even had its own secret printing house (al-Rafai 2:44). Censorship, however, while suppressing

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[10] The most popular playwrights' cafés were Qahwat al-Fann (The Arts Café), Qahwat Barun (The Baron Café), and Qahwat Misr (The Egypt Café). See Fahmy, Ziad, *Ordinary Egyptians* (2011).

controversial newspapers and magazines, only drove people towards writing and distributing more and more secret pamphlets, weekly periodicals, and circulars (Fahmy 151-152). Many of these revolutionary documents and political flyers, or the "illicit press," as Fahmy refers to them (151), were printed in secret by members of the official newspapers. These documents, still warm from the printing press, circulated in the coffeehouses and clubs (Fahmy 152).

The use of the café as a site for the dispersal of anti-British, anti-state sentiments and political reform ideas reoccurred during the events of the 1952 revolution as well. In fact, this thesis uses the political history of the 1919 revolution as a backdrop in order to better situate and understand the role of café literature in the 1952 revolution and the political events that ensue. The 1952 revolution had its share of secret pamphlets and flyers, periodicals and newspapers, and spontaneous speeches all displayed in the café social and public sphere. The Free Officers plotted the revolution in the seats of Café Riche (Bieber-Roberts and Pierandrei 7). The café combined social space with intellectual ferment and political activity. A lot of the Free Officer's pamphlets were directed towards the masses, appealing to their growing sense of nationalism. The first pamphlet signed using the name "The Free Officers," called out to all Egyptians who were at a loss from wars that they had no role in. The pamphlet read: "Look at the houses that have been ruined, the children who have been orphaned, the women who have been widowed, and the mothers who have been wronged. […] The people now stand with hearts full of sorrow because of what this cause has come to" ("First Pamphlet", translation mine).[11] In another pamphlet from October 1951, the Free Officers again emphasize the importance of a collective national identity that ties

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[11] All translations of the Free Officers pamphlets are my own.

Egyptians together and strengthens them in their struggle against foreign and domestic oppression. Entitled "A call from the Free Officers," the pamphlet emphasizes the importance of Egypt's political events that will determine the country's destiny for the years to come. Egypt's destiny, it continues, "requires from [Egypt's] sons an alertness that never sleeps" (Free Officers Pamphlet, "A call" 1951). The officers promise to keep fighting for their rightful freedom until they finally "realize the people's goal in obliterating colonialization" (ibid.). The pamphlet urges that the people and the army unite in power, so that the British have no chance of intervening or defying them.

On July 26 1952, in reaction to news that, in a confrontation, British troops had killed around fifty Egyptian policemen, leaving others injured and many more taken prisoners, the infamous Cairo fire of 1952 ensued, in which hundreds of buildings—cafés, cinemas, operas, restaurants, shops, casinos, etc.—were burned down by rioters in downtown Cairo (Kerboeuf 198-199). After allegations accused the army of not doing its job in preventing and restricting the rioters, whose identities were inextricably concealed as a result of their mixing with the masses protesting peacefully (199-200), a new pamphlet appeared, titled "the army is with the people." In the pamphlet, the Free Officers addressed "the traitors" conspiring against their mission, which is solely "achieving and preserving the nation's independence." The officers also refused to "shoot a single bullet in a popular protest," nor to "apprehend loyal citizens." With a commanding rhetoric, the pamphlet declared that "everyone must understand that we are with the people now, we are with the people always, and we will only respond to our nation's call." This stress on unity is reflected in all of Egypt's revolutionary discourse, and is magnified in the space of the coffeehouse where, ideally, all are united under equality, acceptance and tolerance. The reading out loud of these revolutionary

pamphlets in coffeehouses and other social institutions threaten the security of oppressive regimes by undermining their unilateral control and subversion. By hearing revolutionary speeches in cafés, the common man comes to learn of possibilities and chances that contradict the Occupation's depreciation of self-governance and independence.

The role of the café in Egypt's political history exceeds that of a space for the dissemination of revolutionary ideas. The café itself is an active political agent with a transformative and heterogenous spatiality. Al-Rafai names Café Riche, the most popular café amongst writers and intellectuals, as one of the primary sites through which the purposes of the 1919 revolution were drawn out (1:231). It is even suggested that a hidden printing machine, found in the cellar of Café Riche, was used to print revolutionary documents (Bieber-Roberts and Pierandrei 4). The conversations that took place between intellectuals in Riche were a mixture of political and social discussions that later influenced the works created by writers. Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz's novel, *Karnak Café*, attests to the influence of the real café on his fiction. Poet and playwright Naguib Surur also pays tribute to the ubiquitous and palpable influence of the Café in his iconic line "the whole world is Café Riche" (qtd. in Bieber-Roberts and Pierandrei 6). Ideally, cafés are meant to be liberal and accepting public spaces that participate in inspiring reform. However, the relationship between the public and the café is rendered complex due to the public's limitation at the hands of leading political figures. The Free Officers, as evidenced by the pamphlets, call for the unity of the people in revolution; however, they do so in the name of a people that is represented by not present. Consequently, this inexplicit subversion of the public, disclosed only in

retrospect, complicates the cafés manifestation of unity between people, space, and revolution.

C. The Egyptian Café in Literature

Naguib Mahfouz loved cafés. We know this because Mahfouz used to go to Café Riche, Cairo's most famous intellectual café, every day. In an interview, Azer Farag Azer, a patron of the café, discussed Mahfouz's religious attendance, elaborating that "he used to come at six o'clock exactly…and if he came between five and six, he would not enter because he is so punctual" (Bieber-Roberts and Pierandrei 6). Mahfouz would lecture at the café every Friday from six to seven pm, and people would gather around to listen to him (ibid.). Aside from his obvious attachment to the café setting, Mahfouz also used the cafés convivial and politically tense setting in many of his novels. In particular, the café plays a central role in his novel *Karnak Café.*

Karnak is more of a political commentary than a novel focused on plot and character development. Instead, the developments that take place within the novel describe the downward spiraling of the Nasserist state, supposedly built on the ideals of reformation and nationalism. The novel takes place in the few years preceding the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, or the June war, which erupted almost a decade after the Free Officers Movement's successful coup d'état against the British and the Egyptian king. However, *Karnak Café* centers its political comments in a historical novel, much like Hugo's *Ninety-Three.* The time span between the writing of the novel and its setting is much shorter than the time difference separating Hugo's setting and the actual writing of his historical novel. In fact, Mahfouz experienced the history recorded in *Karnak Café* first hand. What prevents *Karnak Café* from being labeled as a purely Modern novel is the

lack of the narrator's character development amidst the political revelations taking place

in the novel. Instead, the narrator functions as a subjective journalist, involved in and

sympathetic to the effects of police terror occupying the café community, but more

focused on a retrospective understanding of these events as revolutionary

disappointments. Much like Lukàcs' description of the post-Revolutionary French

historical novel, *Karnak Café* creates the possibility for individuals affected by the

political events of Egypt's twentieth century, for all of civil society and not just soldiers

or political leaders, "to see in history something which deeply affects their daily lives

and immediately concerns them" (Lukàcs 24).

Before looking at the novel, a bit of historical context on the Nasser era is

necessary. The different views on Nasserism can be placed under five categories, as

identified by Podeh and Winkler in their introduction to *Rethinking Nasserism*.[12] In the

first category, is regarded as an anti-imperialist, pan-Arab nationalist and Arab-socialist

ideological movement, albeit an inconsistent and often incoherent one (1-2). A further

branch of this interpretation describes Nasserism as a psychological phenomenon, a

state of mind experienced by a whole generation of Arabs that gave them "a feeling of

confidence in themselves and largely counterbalanced the psychological shock of the

loss of Palestine" (2). The second category places Nasserism under the banner of a

modernization project carried out by a new and modern ruler, Nasser (3). In this

interpretation, nationalism is achieved through the modernization of the Egyptian state

"under new revolutionary leadership" (ibid.). The third category formulates the years

under Nasser's regime as a "protest movement" countering imperialism and the West,

whereas the fourth category defines the era as a diffusion of populism, in which Nasser

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[12] This introductory chapter offers a detailed explanation of the subcategories that arose
from each of the five different interpretations on the Nasserist regime.

attempted to appeal to numerous distinct social groups in the building of a post-revolutionary independent state (4-5). The fifth and final category evaluates Nasserism as a branching of its charismatic leader himself. This "giant-leader phenomenon" was particularly prevalent among the intellectuals who described the regime as an autocracy established through direct contact with the masses (3). Close reading of Mahfouz's novel will take place in the context of this fifth category.

There exists and overwhelming amount of information—scholarly and other—concerning Nasser, his achievements, and his legacy. The purpose here is not to present an accurate portrayal of the leader and his rule, but, instead, to view Nasserism from the perspective of intellectuals who experienced his regime, and to do so through their literature. In fact, *Karnak Café* is considered as one of the prime representations of Nasser's cultural harming and his "brutal suppression of civil rights" (Binder 46). In our interpretation of Nasserism, Nasser's characteristic charisma paved the way for his autocratic rule. His charisma allowed him to "address the masses directly without the mediation of institutions" (50). Criticism of Nasser, therefore, was not legally prohibited; instead, the general public felt uneasy criticizing him as a result of an "overwhelming popular desire" (Greer 655). This resulted in an authoritarian regime that restricted public freedoms of expression and participation, as well as the accumulation of power by any group except the state. Following the coup d'état of 1952 and up until 1959, Naguib Mahfouz did not publish anything at all (El-Enany 74). As an excuse for his absence from the writing scene, Mahfouz claimed that he had nothing to say, since Nasser's regime had remedied the shortcomings of society that Mahfouz previously discussed in his novels. However, as one critic notes, perhaps his absence is

more telling of Nasser's restriction of freedoms. Perhaps Mahfouz was "unable to say what he wanted to say" (qtd. in El-Enany 75).

In this reading of *Karnak Café,* the café institution responds to Nasser's bypass of any mediating institution acting between him and his people. This unilateral mediation, as enforced by the café, disperses a political consciousness that, although not publicly criticizing Nasser himself, realizes, nonetheless, the many deficiencies of the post-revolutionary state. The story is told from the perspective of the narrator, who stumbles into the Karnak Café by chance one day, and who, ever since then, began frequenting it at a nearly daily basis. The narrator, who used to be a writer himself, develops a familial bond with the café and its small group of regulars. "I became part of the Karnak Café family. The entire group felt like an integral part of me, Qurunfula gave me her friendship, and I reciprocated… I also made the acquaintance of the young folk, especially Zaynab Diyab, Isma'il al-Shaykh, and Hilmi Hamada" (Mahfouz 7). Qurunfula is an ex-dancer and the owner of the café. It is the narrator's recognition of Qurunfula's past fame and glory that first guided him into the café. The three young students, Zaynab, Isma'il and Hilmi, are as integral to the café as they are to the narrator's café life. The students, far from coming from affluent families, have received good educations thanks to the free public school reformations carried out during the Nasser era. In its amalgamation of customers, the Karnak Café is yet again represented as a social setting that disregards the confines of age and social class, combining together the old and the young, the modern middle class, the traditional middle class, the working class, and the efendis (which often conflates with the modern middle class represented by the students).

The events of the story, which take place within the café, unfold in a stream of consciousness style as the narrator struggles to understand and make sense of what is happening around him. The group of students who used to gather and chat in the café disappear all of a sudden on three different occasions. They are kidnapped by the intelligence unit under false charges, and are tortured and interrogated mercilessly. After each subsequent kidnapping, the surprise and anxiety that overwhelm the rest of the café-goers decreases. They become accustomed to the terror, and with escalating political tensions, the café's atmosphere is immersed in a cloud of nervous expectation. The arrests obliterated whatever faith the younger generation still had in their state and its independence. Without civil rights and freedoms, what use was independence to the quotidian lives of the general public? Zaynab is raped by the intelligence authorities and Hilmi is murdered. The June 1967 war acts as a catalyst that culminates in the loss of a sense of national belonging and unity. The narrator interviews Zaynab and Isma'il in separate chapters, and they recount their personal journeys from faithful believers in the revolution to their revulsion at what its leaders have turned it into. By the time the demonstrations on the final days of the June war took place, Zaynab had already lost every shred of revolutionary faith and value she had. "It [faith] has been completely uprooted from its foundations. I've come to believe that it's a castle built on sand" (83). This loss of faith as experienced by the younger generation informs the novel's overall attitude towards the goals achieved, or rather, not achieved, under Nasser's rule. These youth were initially described as the "real children of the revolution," since they were born in the midst of its successes and the public's elation at its achievements. "As far as they were concerned, history began with the 1952 Revolution" (ibid.). Why, then, did the revolution double-cross its own sons and daughters? The novel seems to suggest that

the fruits of nationalist struggle, under Nasser's regime, were not committed to national unity. Under this light, the novel explores the effects of police cruelty and oppression on the "dignity of the individual" and on the collective identity of the Egyptian nation (El-Enany 79). After withstanding years of occupation under Ottoman, French and finally British powers, the Egyptian nation made independence and sovereignty its primary goals. The dignities of the Egyptian people could only be salvaged through a united and independent nation. The appeal of Nasserism is strengthened by this demand for restoring dignity, as he was the first Egyptian to gain full control of and authority over the state without foreign interference and manipulation. As Sela declares, national unity was "a prerequisite for the restoration of Arab self-respect and dignity" (182).

Failure to produce national unity implies a lack of dignity. Nasser's regime, in its interpretation as an autocratic rule, failed in restoring the people's dignities because of its inability to move from ideology to practice. In the final chapter of the novel, a new character joins the café community. It is none other than a reformed Khalid Safwan, head of the intelligence agency that had kidnapped, tortured, raped, forced into espionage and murdered the budding youths of Egypt. After serving three years in prison, Safwan seems to have discarded his old ways and his thoughts on Egypt's, and the Arab world's, war are surprisingly peaceful. His reformed principles, which he believes are the only road to the country's salvation, depend on

> a total disavowal of autocracy and dictatorship. Secondly, a disavowal of any resort to force or violence. Thirdly, we have to rely on the principles of freedom, public opinion, and respect for our fellow human beings as values needed to foster and advance progress…Fourthly, we must learn to accept from Western civilization the value of science and the scientific method, and without any

argument. Nothing else should be automatically accepted without a full
discussion of our current realities. (96)

Safwan blames the regime's downfall on the failure to transform nationalist ideology
into a set of actions that can be practiced by a secular state and a secular people (Greer
658). "The novel seems to imply the need for a practical sociology while
acknowledging that none of the novel's characters, including the narrator, knows how to
construct it" (ibid.). This lack of practicality and practice ultimately clashes against the
sense of dignity purportedly provided through Egypt's 1952 independence, *Karnak,*
much like Mahfouz's other novels that discuss Egypt under Nasser's regime, evokes a
discouraging representation of Egypt and the "national sense of loss and humiliation at
the defeat, the irreparable damage to the dignity of the individual following years of
repression" (El-Enany 78). El-Enany continues to categorize *Karnak* as "a refutation of
the classic argument often used by repressive regimes to justify their excesses and
which consists in sacrificing the individual for the good of the nation as a whole" (79).
Furthermore, *Karnak* plays a much more important role than criticizing the deficiencies
of a failed system. The novel presents the café as a space in which these deficiencies
were realized. Although no solutions to these deficiencies were presented, this
nonetheless reflects a growing political consciousness in café goers, and the rest of
society at large, that is uncovered and developed through critical discussion in the
public sphere.

The novel only allows readers to experience the repressive political culture and
its ensuing social—public and collective—and private consequences through the
coffeehouse. Although the violence and injustice experienced by each of the students
under police cruelty were individual and private incidents, they were nonetheless

connected through repetition, similarity, and expression within the coffeehouse. Thus, Mahfouz represents the coffeehouse as a space of anti-oppression, anti-silence, and anti-subservience. The coffeehouse becomes the polar opposite of the jailhouse where the students are subdued and solitarily confined. The testimonies of Isma'il and Zaynab, for example, typify the testimonies "of Muslims living in Cairo, which [are] full of turmoil and undergoing many changes in response to a loss of old Cairene culture, the presence of colonizers, and the loss of hopes and dreams for the future" (Afridi 10). All of these experiences are summed up and expressed in the public space of the coffeehouse. It is important, therefore, to admit that the coffeehouse, as exemplified by Karnak during the Nasser era, is an active and politically engaged public space. It extends beyond quotidian communication and fosters political discourse that criticizes, and, if publicly needed, incites against governments and oppressive authority. This political consciousness, however, remains limited to the space of the coffeehouse. It does not transform into anti-regime acts outside the café. During the June demonstrations mentioned earlier, Zaynab, even after losing all faith in the revolution and its leaders, still participates in the protests. Why does she do that, when, in the café, she had admitted to hopelessness? Perhaps the answer lies in a survivalist tendency to preserve the pretense of dignity that virtually existed before the uprooting of revolutionary optimism by the regime's reality. Internally, however, Zaynab acknowledges that there is no dignity in what the revolution has done to the people. By becoming a harlot after her rape by the police authorities, Zaynab willingly becomes immoral, as a reflection of the revolution's immorality.

The coffeehouse also promotes a counter-censorial movement that otherwise prevents freedom of expression and news dissemination. With that being said, the

coffeehouse is also a place where expression is closely monitored by certain groups and freedom comes at a high price. After the students return from their second imprisonment, the narrator cautions the rest of the Karnak habitués, "let's assume […] that this café is one gigantic ear!" (Mahfouz 28). Therefore, the café adopts a provocative standpoint that is constantly shifting between public freedom, politically critical and transgressive expression, and a politically conscious attitude fearful of authoritative institutions and their far-reaching powers. This fear of the spy has palpable effects on café society and café friendships. It threatens the familial bonds that develop within the walls of the café, and it affects every individual there. "Someone around here is passing information," Qurunfula, the coffeehouse proprietress, mutters miserably (24). "Nothing in this world is safe any longer," she concludes (ibid.). The days following this realization, during which the students remained absent from Karnak, were clouded with inexhaustible suspicion and weariness. The tension between the café relationships mirrored the nation-wide terror that occupied the Egyptians. The narrator commiserates the situation of his beloved home-land, in which people found themselves "not worth a fly," living with "no personal rights, no honor, no security, […] crushed by cowardice, hypocrisy, and desolation" (25). The atmosphere in the café becomes gloomy and the interactions lacking in energy. "Personal relationships are seen to be destroyed through fear of spies and informers and the characters' shared sense of powerlessness robs them of spirit and vitality" (Le Gassick 154). The lines separating café life from other forms of social life become blurry; even the narrator stops distinguishing between his thoughts on the life within the café and life outside. "We were all living in an era of unseen powers—spies hovering in the very air we breathed, shadows in broad daylight" (Mahfouz 19). Is he referring to the atmosphere in the café,

or that of Cairo in general? The novel makes it very clear that no distinction is needed, for the fear of police tyranny occupied every aspect of life. No one was safe from the reach of authority.

Karnak Café places the Egyptian coffeehouse in a far more affectionate position than that represented by English and French coffeehouses in previous chapters. Amidst the disappointing misery brought about by a supposed glorious revolution, the coffeehouse still manages to create familial bonds between its patrons. After Hilmi is murdered by the police forces, an "unforeseen tidal wave" of suffering overwhelms the characters (36). The Karnak community, much like a family who had just lost a beloved son, mourns together and finds comfort only in the café itself. Bound through coffee and a shared space, these café relationships are strengthened into a manifesto of sorts:

> Against the blows of the unseen we would cling to each other; in the face of potential terrors we would share our opinions; when confronting overwhelming despair we would tell grisly sarcastic jokes; in acknowledging major mistakes we would indulge in torrid bursts of confession; faced with the dreadful burdens of responsibility we would torture ourselves; and to avoid the generally oppressive social atmosphere we would indulge ourselves in phony dreams. (37)

Here, the perception of the coffeehouse as a place for trivial social gatherings is abruptly uprooted. The Karnak community represents the strong bonds that people form within a coffeehouse as a result of shared suffering. The relationships are born out of communal sorrow as well as conviviality. To protect themselves and each other from the destructive reality of their situation, they make jokes and create phony dreams. The nation's independence was supposed to grant the people freedom as well as dignity. However, under Nasser's autocratic rule, they found little of each. Café talk imparts a

sense of dignity that, in reality, is inexistent. The people have no personal or civil freedoms, and their participation is limited to rallying in protests to support Nasser. Granted, Nasser had many affectionate followers. However, in the novel's context, and in the interpretation of Nasserism as an autocracy, Mahfouz reveals that a whole other segment of society, as represented by the café, had lost faith in their leader. Consequently, this loss of faith ushers a loss of dignity and freedom. To compensate, people immerse themselves in discussions and debates within the coffeehouse, where café talk becomes metonymical with phony dreams.

From Mahfouz's novel, the Egyptian café of the twentieth century emerges as a physical manifestation of the many contradictions afflicting society. It is a dichotomous space that connects and forms relationships between people who have shared in post-revolutionary national disappointments. As a reformed Khalid Safwan proclaims in the final pages of the novel, the Karnak Café is "a place to which we have all been driven by a combination of ostracism and crime" (96). The café, then, not only allows for political discourse to take place publicly and out loud, it also acts as a cathartic space, purging the afflicted through discourse and familiarity. However, this role is opposed by the fear of surveillance which, after every arrest, inhibits political dissent and threatens anti-state and anti-revolutionary discourse. Contradictory state of existence of the café prevents it from acting as a transformative space.

The habitués of Karnak care about each other as much as they care about the cause of their country. Even though he was inspired by Café Riche, a hub of elite members, Mahfouz's Karnak creation appears to be a middle to low class coffeehouse frequented by people from different stages in life. Another representation of Café Riche exists through Naguib Surur's poetry collection entitled *Protocols of the Elders of*

Riche. Surur's poems consist of a satirical description of the pretentious intelligentsia that often frequented coffeehouses, using as an example Café Riche. As it has been in the previous chapters, discourse in the coffeehouse is a double-faced coin. During the 1970s, downtown Cairo became less elite and increasingly bohemian, and its intellectual culture became almost synonymous with political dissent (Ryzova, "Strolling" 13-15). A literary elite formed in the cafés and bars of Downtown, developing in closed circles and belonging to a selection of different cafés. Their presence and activities in these cafés became ritualistic. "They were certain to be 'found' there, without fail; established writers, or icons of the rising cultural counter-elite, had 'their' regular tables and times" (ibid.). These circles prided themselves in a philosophy based on the contestation of government politics. Resistance was their aesthetic. Ryzova remarks that it was this "rejection of ideology" that characterized a writer, journalist, playwright, or artist as belonging to the late twentieth century generation (16). These groups used the urban space of the coffeehouse to defy state hegemony; however, in their valuation of place over ideology, they ran the risk of superficiality as well as an excessive sense of self-importance. "Sitting in the company of certain people bestowed an aura on those invited to join, just as frequenting this or that place constructed hierarchies not just within this world, but on a national scale" (ibid.). This created a form of "social capital" that restricted the public coffeehouse to certain groups only. Even though physically, any person could walk in and take a seat in these cafés, interacting, discoursing and belonging to these closed circles of non-elite yet elitist intellectuals depended on degrees of political dissent and social connections.

The post 1970 literary elite café circles provide an interesting contrast to the group of —mainly—middle class circle that formed in the Karnak Café. In fact,

Karnak's circle is adequately described using singular terms, whereas Srur's description of Café Riche necessitates the plural. Surur's *The Protocols of the Elders of Riche* (1974) takes the form of eight protocols, whereby each protocol might be considered as a poem. The protocols are the creations of the groups of intellectuals, as represented by Surur, that frequented Café Riche. The poems discuss these intellectuals who proclaimed themselves the authors of an oppositional culture. Their philosophies are inspired by the years of Egyptian struggle against tyranny and police terror, yet Surur ironically criticizes their superficiality. The poet introduces these groups as composed of "poets, storytellers, painters.." of "amateurs searching for fame../ and at any price../and experts in all types of 'crises'.." (262, translation mine).[13] They declare themselves the wise elders of Riche and begin stating their protocols:

> The first protocol :
> Do not read anything..be a lumberjack
> And carry a ton of books..
> Place it beside a bottle of beer..
> Or over a seat..
> And drink…and wait for the knights..
> They will come one after the other..
> Carrying a ton of books!.. (263)

The first protocol begins by ridiculing the pretenses of the group. These intellectuals flock into the café at their usual timings, carrying with them their knowledge like a stack of books—or perhaps, some actually came in with a number of books. They sit in the café, waiting for their fellow intellectuals, the so-called knights, to arrive. The poem

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[13] The translations of Surur's poetry is all my own.

is instilled with a mocking tone that shapes the intellectuals as idle drinkers who prefer to showcase false knowledge instead of taking the time to actually become what they profess to be. The second protocol further illustrates the false knowledge of many: "Do not understand anything from what you read../understanding does not matter today.." "No one is going to ask you../what do you mean by saying (…)!" (265). The intelligentsia of Riche discourse with deaf ears, not stopping to ask questions. They perform the art of nonsense in their discussions, each one assuming the other knows what he is talking about. According to the third protocol, they speak only to be heard, and are quick to join any trend only for the sake of it: "Never be quiet.. for silence is ignorance.." and "waves come one after the other../ be quick and catch any wave.." (268-269).

The protocols that follow all reveal some form of the café intellectual's hypocrisy. The final protocol, the eighth, ends the collection with a gloomy outlook:

This world is spherical..
Even words are spheres..
Going round and round is a law that is lawless..
For all the words got mixed up.. they rotated..
In mouths and in ears..
Like objects in the head of the fool and the drunk..
[…]
What is the point of any dialogue..
When the sane one amongst us is idiotic?! (285)

In this final protocol, the poet seems to be speaking in general, and not only to the café community. The fate of the word is determined by the cyclic nature of café discourse, which is comparable to the cyclic nature, both structurally and metaphysically, of the

world. Everything in the world moves on a cyclical trajectory only to come back to the same initial point. Similarly, the fate of words, whether spoken or written, is to be stuck in a perpetual cycle of repetition, making any law that governs them obsolete. The mouths that speak these words and the ears that receive them have no true purpose, for spoken words fall on deaf ears. We are all foolish, all unwise. There is no purpose in the exchange of words that occupies our world. The café becomes the perfect metaphor for the world and the role of language in it. in fact, established this relationship between the café and the world in the first protocol of his collection: "The whole world is Café Riche," he writes (263). The café survives on dialogue and conversation as much as it depends on people drinking coffee. However, the poet questions, what is the point of this discourse if it will lead nowhere except the same point it started from?

Karnak Café and *The Protocols of the Elders of Riche* illustrate two differing views of the coffeehouse as a space and of the type of people who frequented it. In Mahfouz's novel, the coffeehouse acts as a limited political agent that simulates a sense of dignity for those who have been injured and betrayed by their nation's revolutionary cause. The injustices suffered by people under Nasser's rule, from political suppression to police terror, unified people, with this union being visible in the coffee house more than any other social institution. The narrator notes this quality of shared life experiences from the beginning of the novel: "All the people sitting there inside the café had buried deep inside them some kind of bitter experience, whether humiliation, defeat, or failure" (10). The community is constantly threatened by police terror and surveillance, which limits the transforming potential of café discourse, as opposed to café talk which often survives on "phony dreams". Although their nation had achieved its independence, Egyptians still found themselves distraught between several opinions

and arguing over the details of a post-revolutionary war. In the final pages of the novel, the Karnak community discussed not only the war with Israel, but more importantly, their country's own clash between society and state. As Le Gassick makes clear, the group reaches no consensus on how to achieve social reform (159).

In contrast, Café Riche, as depicted in Surur's poetry, is similar to a vacuum. Its space is littered with intellectuals who carry their pretensions of knowledge as badges of social elitism when, in reality, they lack the critical qualities necessary for rational self-governance. Surur's groups ignorantly attach themselves to political dissent. However, if anybody is to question their lengthy speeches given in the café, they would not be able to explain or defend their words. Their ideas are not their own.

Café culture in Cairo went through three main changes. In the early years of the twentieth century, the café provided a space for the circulation of anti-British revolutionary pamphlets. Read out loud in the café, these pamphlets urged the Egyptians to unite under a nationalist cause against the occupying forces. Café culture became equivalent to the unification of Egyptians under a liberal identity. However, following the revolution of 1952 and under Nasser's regime, the café became a space in which the Egyptians questioned their liberties and freedoms. In the café, they maintained a false sense of freedom which belied a sense of dignity. However, the people had very little political freedom which stunted the growth and development of a free public sphere within civil society. By the time we get to Surur's poems, the café has been occupied by groups of self-proclaimed intellectual elites who deter inclusivity and make the space a highly exclusive one. In this sense, the café becomes a vacuum; it retains the space of a café, but on the inside, it becomes devoid of any substantial matter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The larger part of this thesis project has been devoted to the analysis of the nexus between the coffeehouse and the literary and public sphere over a long period of history. One outcome of this research is strikingly evident: coffeehouse culture, which encapsulates both political and literary products, has not had its final conversation yet. Tracing the coffeehouse in three different cities over a four-century period frames the historical changes that these cities and nations witnessed. However, of momentous importance is how such a project allows the mapping of the history of the coffeehouse itself. By comparing the development of coffeehouse culture from the mid seventeenth to the twentieth century, and its varying roles in civil society as a result of literary production, we are able to better understand how these spaces acted throughout history.

The coffeehouse movement witnessed significant changes in terms of effective societal and political changes. In Restoration London, the coffeehouse played an imperative role in the emergence and operation of a public sphere. For a long time, literature remained a reflection of the court and king (Habermas 32). However, as establishments such as the coffeehouse became ubiquitous in the English towns, literature took over a more societal and public function. The use of the word public here emphasizes a separation from court life, and the development of a more aware and critical town life—namely a bourgeois public awareness of social and political affairs. Coffeehouses became "centers of criticism—literary at first, then also political—in which began to emerge, between aristocratic society and bourgeois intellectuals, a

certain parity of the educated" (ibid.). I emphasize that this transition from a literary

context to a political one that Habermas refers to is an expected when looking at the

type of literature that was coming into existence during this period. Much of the

literature being produced at the time, such as Steele's *Tatler,* dealt with sociopolitical

news and state affairs. Therefore, this literature generated room for political discussion

in the first place. This discussion also applies to the early Parisian cafés of this same

time period. However, the difference between the two spaces is that the Parisian café

scene transformed political awareness and discussion into sustained and effective

political action. Thus, the class consciousness that developed in English and French

coffeehouses by means of literary production differed in the end result brought about by

this consciousness. Whereas London coffeehouse culture—i.e., the culture

encompassing political conversation, news circulation and literary production—lead to

the emergence of a public sphere, and thus, a rational and critical public body, its

Parisian counterpart assumed these changes but also fermented actual political change

through sustained political action.

As expressed in the second Chapter, the highlight of these changes was the

establishment of republicanism and the—failed—attempts at democratizing French

society. Interestingly enough, the symbol of the Parisian café as a sphere of political

action did not limit itself to the bourgeois cafés alone. Beginning in the 19th century,

working-class cafés subsumed politics as well. The inclusion of the working-class as

participants in the effective political activity of the Parisian café further highlights the

role of the café as an active agent of political change in comparison with the more

discursive bourgeois public sphere of the London coffeehouse. As examples of such

proletarian café consequences, I cite Scott Haine's *The World of the Paris Café:*

Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914. In Chapter 8 of the book,

Haine delineates specific cases where working-class cafés participated in effectuating

political change. He credits the mobilization of the proletariat during the 1830

revolution to a combination of factors which included political songs, a constitutive

activity at goguettes, which were working-class cafés known for singing (212-213).

These songs were also popular in the July Revolution. The development of café

sociability into a coherent political orientation was admired by many, including the

English. In *The English Defence of the Commune,* a letter directed to the Editor of

Reynold's Newspaper expressly celebrates the superior involvement of the Parisian

working-class in the governing of Paris: "The working class, if left to themselves,

would prove to the world how easy it is to govern a country without kings or nobles,"

the anonymous writer of the letter expresses ("Letter" 147). Therefore, the importance

of the Parisian café, in comparison to the London coffeehouse a century earlier, is that it

managed to bypass one-dimensional sociability and conviviality and to transform into a

hub of distinct and sustainable political activity.

The London coffeehouse generated a public sphere where public opinion based

on the reception of news, rational debate, and subsequent literary production thrived.

The pre-Revolutionary Parisian café transcended the dimensions of the London café to

become a space for sustained political change. The nature of the Cairene café is a

dichotomous duality. It is a duality that cannot be restricted to one form of existence, or

to one group of thinkers, or to one social class. It is a space that transforms as its

occupants change. More importantly, however, it is a space that transforms its

occupants in varying degrees. The English coffeehouse during the Restoration saw the

emergence of a public—of civil society—away from court life. In France, the café acted

both as a subversive anti-monarchical space politically active with dissent, and as a limited public whose freedom of expression is policed and subdued. This suppression and transformation of the post-Revolutionary Parisian café into an oppressed public sphere under the Terror asserts that revolutions without blood cannot take place. In order to effect change and to substantiate the power of a few leading groups, people need to be silenced and blood has to be shed. However, the political activities and the revolt of the working class which developed in the café evidence that the public managed to overcome state oppression. In Egypt, this does not seem to be the case. *Karnak Café* ends with uncertainty as to how the Egyptian public can regain individual and personal control, freedom and dignity. Therefore, the Cairene coffeehouse plays a limited transformative role. Due to the revolutionary disappointments and political restrictions imparted by Nasser's regime, the café becomes a liminal space stuck between a historically oppressed citizenry and a politically aware, yet still subdued, peoples.

This thesis has explored the transformative spatiality of the café in its varying degrees and across different regions and periods. Throughout the different chapters, the café emerged as a stimulant of civil society and the public sphere, as a politically active space with a revolutionary role, and as a space of suppression that maintains a critical discourse on the state. Café culture also comments on the anti-feminist and xenophobic discourses entrenched in sociability, as evidenced by the early English public sphere. These varying themes that occupied literary and café spaces throughout the thesis also reflect the shifting fortunes of the state itself. In Restoration England, the popularity of the café signifies the growing distance between the monarchy and its people. As the public cemented social life in the town, away from the court, dependence on the court

and the "godification" of the monarchy declined. In France and Cairo, the café played a substantial role in the Revolution as a political agent. In this context, the café witnessed and participated in the abolishment of monarchical rule.

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