



**Arrays
of
Egyptian and Tunisian
Everyday Worlds**
 An update on the project
*In 2016—How it felt to live in the Arab
World five years after the “Arab Spring”*

edited by

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Clash

Al-‘adāla li’l-jamī‘ (“Justice for all”) runs the slogan of a huge banner in a cartoon drawn by Andeel.¹ However, the Egyptians rallied under it seem to have different views of what “all” should include. Everyone has his or her own exception to the rule. “Except women,” an old man says. “Except my stepdad,” says a veiled girl. “Except child molesters,” a weeping child begs. And the exclusion goes on: “except rich people,” “except taxi drivers.” On the left, a policeman in uniform adds: “except the terrorist sons of a whore,” while stealing a glance at a bearded man wearing a gallabiyyah. “Except the infidels,” replies the latter. The black uniform and the white gallabiyyah, placed next to one another, attract attention as if pointing to a clash within the clash: while the rest of the society seems to engage in a chaotic battle of everyone against everyone, the policeman and the Islamist fight against each other. [↗**Male vs Female**; ↗**Affluence vs Destitution**; ↗**Security vs Fear**; ↗**Security = Fear (Police State)**; ↗**In Islam...**]

In the English translation of the cartoon’s captions, the policeman is called a “policeman,” while the bearded man is labelled an “extremist”. “Extremism (*taṭarruf*) can only be fought through culture,” repeatedly say the organisers of the 47th edition of the Cairo Book-Fair.² Its slogan this year is *al-Thaqāfa fī’l-muwājahā* (“Culture on the front-line”),³ where culture stands for the state’s secularism and the frontline for the war against extremism.⁴ The meaning is constantly explained during the panel discussions hosted by the Book-Fair. “Culture is the key to democracy,” states Nabīl ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ, author of essays on Islamism and former co-director of al-Ahrām Centre for Political and Strategic Studies: “And democracy has to flourish in spite of the people who are convinced that a religious expertise provides the key to hold the truth.” The audience applauds. “Culture is the conviction that there is no such thing as absolute truth,” confirms Sa‘īd Tawfīq, professor at Cairo University and former Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Culture: “Truth is always relative. That is why the Muslim Brotherhood had to be defeated.”⁵ [↗**In Islam...**; ↗**Victory vs Defeat**]

All the Egyptians recall the summer of 2013 when the Muslim Brotherhood was defeated, after massive demonstrations that led to the removal of president Morsi by the army of general Sisi on July 3. Yet, the recollection does not awaken in everyone the same feeling. While institutional voices celebrate it as a victory of democracy and culture, the members of the defeated party see it as an unjust takeover. That summer, they organised a huge sit-in protest in Rabaa al-Adawiya (Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya) Square, in northeastern Cairo, which was violently dispersed by the police on August 14, with at least 817 people killed. “On this day three years ago, my 21-year-old sister was murdered in cold blood. I knew then that I no longer belong here,” reads a post by a 28-year-old man.⁶ Blogger and activist Alaa Abdel Fattah (‘Alā’ ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ) also recalls 2013, saying it was the beginning of “a poisonous polarisation between a rabidly militarised pseudo-secular statism and a viciously sectarian-paranoid form of Islamism”.⁷ [↗**The Police(man) criminal**]

The movie *Ishtibāk* (*Eshtebak / Clash*), too, is set in the summer of 2013, within a police truck where pro-Morsi and anti-Morsi demonstrators are put together after being arrested [↗**Prison**]. The camera never leaves the truck, which comes to contain a sample of the Egyptian population: men and women of different generations, social classes and political affiliations, who usually oppose each other in daily life. Mutual understanding is only possible within the narrow space of the truck, thanks to the intimacy they are forced to. The director, Mohamed Diab (Muḥammad Diyāb), says *Clash* is a call for mutual understanding, beyond the internal divide of the Egyptian society: “I want people to watch my movie without asking what side I belong to.”⁸ He claims to be neither with the Muslim Brotherhood nor with the army, but with the people who stand against polarisation. He explains how difficult it was to take this stand in Egypt: he could hardly find Egyptian investors, afraid of a political subject, and had to turn to European co-producers.⁹

Europe warmly welcomes *Clash*, the only Egyptian film screened at Festival de Cannes. There, on the red carpet, Egyptian Muslim preacher and TV star Moez Masoud (Mu‘izz Mas‘ūd) poses with the cast, revealing through a tweet his financial participation in the production. His followers thank him, talking about a Muslim commitment for the sake of Egypt. “This is the right path (*il-tarīq il-ṣaḥḥ*)!” a lady writes, echoing the title of a successful TV show in which Masoud teaches how to deal with life in the Islamic way¹⁰ [↗**In Islam...; ↗Self-Help**]. On the other side, Egyptian institutional voices manifest their indignation. The TV show *Anā Maṣrī* (“I am Egyptian”), on state-owned Nile TV channel, depicts Diab as follows: “Mohamed Diab is a young man who graduated from a faculty of commerce and worked for foreign banks and, in this period, he presented himself as a political activist (...). In 2005, he suddenly switched to cinema studies at New York Academy,” and in 2010, with his movie on sexual harassment, he started “giving a distorted picture (*ṣūra mushawwaha*)” of Egypt.¹¹ The extent of his contacts with foreign institutions is emphasized to make him look like a suspicious individual who favours anti-Egyptian interests [↗**The Suspect Foreigner**].

In Egypt, many cinemas refuse to screen the movie and a Facebook campaign—*Id‘am ḥaqqak innak tshūf Ishtibāk* (“Support your right to watch *Clash*”)—is launched in response. Mohamed Diab publishes on his Facebook page the photo of a letter of solidarity, signed by Hollywood star Tom Hanks: “Few Americans see Egypt as being anything more than terrorists and pyramids. Your film CLASH will go great lengths to enlighten many.” And he adds in Arabic: “Daniel Craig, hero of James Bond’s movies, also sent me a similar letter, which means the opposite of staining the reputation of Egypt”¹² [↗**Social Media**]. When the movie is finally screened, the Egyptian audience discovers it contains an initial warning that closely recalls institutional propaganda: “After the June 30th revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood provoked bloody clashes to prevent the peaceful transition of power” [↗**The Voice from Above**]. The responsibility for violence is shifted onto the Muslim Brotherhood, while the other side is associated with peace.

An article titled “Mā lā ya‘rifu-hu Tom Hanks” (What Tom Hanks ignores) states that the positive depiction of the policemen, throughout the movie, is a deliberate distortion of reality. It can be mistaken for real by Hollywood, not by an Egyptian eye that saw the police in action.¹³ Another article provocatively asks: “Ma‘a man nashtabik idhan?” (With whom do we clash then?) It also criticizes the positive representation of the police,

exemplified by the officer kindly advising a lady not to join the demonstrations: “Does such a police officer not exist in reality? Of course he does, but when you release a work in which everything becomes a symbol, the presence of a similar model naturally turns into a propagandistic attempt of cleaning up the image of the whole category. Before a cancerous body, do not ask me to notice the whiteness of the teeth!”¹⁴ For the author of the article there is no such thing as a call to overcome polarisation in the movie, only the recommendation to stop protesting and choose the stability granted by the police: “What does distinguish the narrative of this movie from the narrative of the propaganda?” he ends up asking. And the clash over *Clash* goes on, revealing not only the divide between supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and supporters of the state, but also between the latter and the people who, considering it a police state, would not chant (anymore) the slogan “The police and the people hand in hand.” [↗The **Police(man) criminal**; ↗**True vs False**; ↗**Security = Fear (Police State)**; ↗“The System” vs “The People”]

Related Entries

Arrays: In Islam; The Police(man) criminal; Prison; Self-Help; Social Media; The Suspect Foreigner; The Voice from Above ♦ **Codes:** Affluence vs Destitution; Male vs Female; Security vs Fear; “The System” vs “the People”; True vs False; Victory vs Defeat ♦ **Codes collapsed:** Security = Fear (Police State)

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- Anā Maṣrī* [TV show]. Ḥalqat “Fīlm Muḥammad Diyāb *Ishṭibāk*, bi-nakha siyāsiyya wa-thawriyya”, May 15, 2016: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiwWQxmP5WQ>>; see also: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmutjpcBA>>.
- Andeel, “Al-‘adāla li’l-jamī‘.” *Mada Masr*, 11 February 2016: <<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/02/11/cartoon/u/justice-for-all/>>.
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- “‘I was terribly wrong’—writers look back at the Arab spring five years on.” *The Guardian*, January 23, 2016: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/23/arab-spring-five-years-on-writers-look-back>>.
- “*Ishṭibāk*: fīlm miṣrī fī ifṭitāḥ mahrajān Kān [Cannes].” *al-Ahrām*, May 13, 2016: <<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/978271.aspx>>.
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- “Tajribatu-hu ma‘a ‘l-Ikhwān fī ḍayf al-sharaf.” *Akhbār al-Adab*, February 14, 2016: 6.
- al-Thaqāfa fī ‘l-muwājaha*. Round Table discussion, Cairo Book-Fair, Main Hall, January 29, 2016.

“Tom Hanks and Daniel Craig Express Their Love for Egyptian Movie ‘Eshtebak’.” *Scoop Empire*, July 26, 2016: <<http://scoopempire.com/eshtebak-tom-hanks-daniel-craig/>>.

“Al-yawm... inṭilāq ma‘raḍ al-Qāhira li’l-kitāb.” *Al-Shurūq News*, January 27, 2016: <<http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=27012016&id=fe442bc5-e180-45fa-afaa-745f748240bf>>.

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Notes

Introduction: From “Issues” to “Arrays” (S. Guth & A. Hofheinz)

- 1 For a discussion of our approach in the context of others in an “Academia in Transformation” (to quote the title of a research initiative of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities, AGYA), see Barbara WINCKLER and Christian JUNGE, “Opening Up the Text: Arabic Literary Studies on the Move,” Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) – Transformation Group, Working Paper No. 2/2017, available from <http://agya.info/fileadmin/user_upload/Working_Groups-images/Transformation/WPS_Academia_in_Transformation/Paper_7_Opening_up_the_Text_Winckler_Junge.pdf>.
- 2 Free pdf available from <https://monoskop.org/images/9/95/Gumbrecht_Hans_Ulrich_In_1926_Living_on_the_Edge_of_Time.pdf>.
- 3 “atmosphere, mood, spirit, vibe, ...”—a key word in Gumbrechtian thinking that is difficult to translate, which is why the author himself usually prefers to leave it untranslated. See especially his *Stimmungen lesen: Über eine verdeckte Wirklichkeit der Literatur*, München: Hanser Verlag, 2011 (translated into English by Erik BUTLER as *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012). Cf. also the public lecture “The dimension of ‘Stimmung’ in contemporary popular culture,” given on December 13, 2016, in Minsk, available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/t_dajId2BaA>.
- 4 Much of the material was collected in a shared researcher’s notebook, using *Evernote* (<https://evernote.com>).
- 5 The “special dossier” *Living 2016: Cultural Codes and Arrays in Arab Everyday Worlds Five Years After the “Arab Spring,”* edited by Stephan Guth and Elena Chiti, appeared as pages 221-388 of *JAIS*, 16 (2016), and is accessible both at *JAIS*’s previous website (http://www.hf.uio.no/jais/volume/vol16/v16_09_living2016.pdf) and at the new pool of open-access journals hosted by the University of Oslo, see <<https://www.journals.uio.no/index.php/JAIS/article/view/4761>>.
- 6 The list, processed from the data collected in our researcher’s notebook as well as from the studies contained in the *Living 2016* dossier (see previous note), is given on pp. 229-33 of Stephan Guth, “Introduction: *Living 2016* and the *In 2016* project,” *JAIS* 16 (2016): 224-33.
- 7 GUMBRECHT 1997: 434.
- 8 Ibid. (our emphasis, S.G./A.H.).
- 9 Ibid. (dto.).
- 10 Ibid. (dto.).
- 11 Ibid. (dto.).

‘Āmmyya (E. M. Håland)

- 1 My translation – E.M.H.

Clash (E. Chiti)

- 1 Andeel, “Al-ʿadāla liʾl-jamīʿ,” *Mada Masr*, 11 February 2016: <<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/02/11/cartoon/u/justice-for-all/>>.
- 2 Fieldwork notes, January-February 2016.
- 3 “Al-yawm... intilāq maʾraḍ al-Qāhira liʾl-kitāb,” *Al-Shurūq News*, January 27, 2016: <<http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=27012016&id=fe442bc5-e180-45fa-afaa-745f748240bf>>.
- 4 “Tajribatu-hu maʾa ʾl-Ikhwān fī ḍayf al-sharaf,” *Akhbār al-Adab*, February 14, 2016: 6.

- 5 Fieldwork notes, Round Table Al-thaqāfa fī'l-muwājaha, Cairo Book-Fair, Main Hall, January 29, 2016.
- 6 Shahira Amin, "Three years on, wounds of Egypt's deadly sit-in dispersals linger," *Al-Monitor*, August 21, 2016: <<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/egypt-three-year-anniversary-rabaa-sit-in-brotherhood.html>>.
- 7 "I was terribly wrong"—writers look back at the Arab spring five years on," *The Guardian*, January 23, 2016: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/23/arab-spring-five-years-on-writers-look-back>>.
- 8 "Ishṭibāk: fīlm miṣrī fī iftitāḥ mahrajān Kān," *al-Ahrām*, May 13, 2016: <<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/978271.aspx>>.
- 9 Thomas Sotinel, "Clash : après le bus 678, le fourgon de police," *Le Monde*, May 12, 2016: <http://www.lemonde.fr/festival-de-cannes/article/2016/05/12/clash-apres-le-bus-678-le-fourgon-de-police_4917875_766360.html>.
- 10 <<https://twitter.com/moezmasoud/status/730910281442971649>>.
- 11 TV show *Anā Maṣrī*, ḥalqat "Fīlm Muḥammad Diyāb *Ishṭibāk*, bi-nakha siyāsiyya wa-thawriyya", May 15, 2016: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiwWQxmP5WQ>>; see also: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmujpDCBA>>.
- 12 "Tom Hanks and Daniel Craig Express Their Love for Egyptian Movie 'Eshtebak'", *Scoop Empire*, July 26, 2016: <<http://scoopempire.com/eshtebak-tom-hanks-daniel-craig/>>.
- 13 Aḥmad Miḍḥat, "Mā lā ya'rifu-hu Tom Hanks," *Masralarabia*, July 30, 2016: <<http://www.masralarabia.com/المقالات/907-أحمد-مدحت-1180705-ما-لا-يعرفه-توم-هانكس-عن-فيلم-اشتباك>>.
- 14 Sāmih Faraj, "Intībā'āt sarī'a 'an fīlm *Ishṭibāk*", *Za2ed18*, July 31, 2016: <<http://www.za2ed18.com/انطباعات-إذا-نشتبك-من-مع-يكتب-فرج-سامح/>>.

Conversions (M. Lindbekk)

- 1 "Āwiz tighayyir diyāntak fī Maṣr, ibqā qābilnī," *al-Ṣabāḥ*, April 12, 2016, <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=142416>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 2 al-Buḥayrī, Aḥmad, "Shaykh al-Azhar: Ḥurriyyat al-i'tiqād shay' wa-ḥurriyyat al-irtidād shay' ākhar," *al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, June 16, 2016, <<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/965579>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 3 "Āwiz tighayyir diyāntak fī Maṣr, ibqā qābilnī," *al-Ṣabāḥ*, April 12, 2016, <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=142416>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *Egypt Independent*: "Egypt's Jewish community diminished to 6 women after death of Lucy Saul," July 30, 2016, <<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-s-jewish-community-diminished-6-women-after-death-lucy-saul/>> (accessed December 15, 2017).
- 6 *Nmisr*: "Quwwāt al-amn ta'zil anṣār al-ikhwān al-muslimīn ba'd tasabbubihim bi-islām thalāth masīḥiyyīn bi-Ṭurah," *Nujūm Miṣriyya*, January 29, 2016, <<https://www.nmisr.com/arab-news/egypt-news/الامن-تعزل-انصار-الاخوان-المسلمي>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 7 'Abd al-Ḥafīz, Ṣabrī. "al-Aqbāt yatazāharūn li-sti'ādātihā wa'l-muslimūn li-tasallumihā," *Īlāf*, May 7, 2016, <<http://elaph.com/Web/News/2016/5/1087240.html>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 "Āwiz tighayyir diyāntak fī Maṣr, ibqā qābilnī," *al-Ṣabāḥ*, April 12, 2016, <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=142416>> (accessed November 1, 2017).

Dual Identities / Masking (S. Guth)

- 1 English *mask* is from Middle French *masque* 'covering to hide or guard the face' (16c.), from Italian *maschera*, from Medieval Latin *masca* 'mask, specter, nightmare,' which is perhaps from Arabic *maskharah* 'buffoon, mockery,' from *sakhira* 'be mocked, ridiculed' – <etymonline.com> (as of 09Dec2017).
- 2 Quoted in: <http://www.venice-days.com/FILM.asp?id=9&id_dettaglio=552&lang=eng>.
- 3 Khādījah is a traditional Islamic name in reverence for the Prophet's first wife.

Satire (on YouTube Channels) (M. Mohamed)

- 1 *yiʔallish*, on the other hand, is the common term among Egyptian youth for all kinds of verbal practices that stimulate laughter, like puns, parody, and irony.