

Rebellion in a World of Totalitarianism

Sharīf Ḥatātah's Novel *The Eye with an Iron Lid*

GEULA ELIMELEKH (Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan)

Abstract

Political freedom in the Arab world and rebellion against it underpin the novel *al-ʿAyn dhāt al-jaḥn al-maʿdanī* (*The Eye with an Iron Lid*, 1980) by Egyptian author Sharīf Ḥatātah (1923–). This novel set in 1940s Egypt, a decade of national and social ferment, harshly criticizes British colonialism and the Egyptian governments of the time. The narrative depicts the struggle of the Egyptian national movement as well as the brutal denial of political and individual freedoms that led to the July 1952 revolution. The novel is profoundly autobiographical, and Ḥatātah's life story as a doctor, writer and political activist depicted in his *al-Nawāfiḍh al-maftūḥah* (*The Open Windows*, 2006) contributes valuable background. A wide-ranging analysis of the author and his novel embraces comparative literature, especially within the Arabic prison literature genre, recent critical studies, the existential philosophy of Albert Camus and the psychological elements of fear of death, loneliness and persecution. At its root the article spotlights the adage, the people's fear of the leadership and the leadership's fear of the people, that drives so much of contemporary Middle Eastern conflict and oppression.

Keywords: Sharīf Ḥatātah, *The Eye with an Iron Lid*, Arabic prison literature, Egyptian literature, Modern Egyptian history, totalitarianism

Introduction

Political freedom in the Arab world and rebellion aimed at achieving it underpin the novel *The Eye with an Iron Lid*¹ by Egyptian author Sharīf Ḥatātah (1923–).² This novel set in

-
- 1 The novel has three parts. The first, titled *al-ʿAyn dhāt al-jaḥn al-maʿdanī* (*The Eye with an Iron Lid*) and the second *Jināḥāni lil-Rīḥ* (*The Wind's Two Wings*), were published in one volume entitled *The Eye with an Iron Lid*; the third part, titled *The Escape*, was published as a separate book.
 - 2 Ḥatātah, born in London in 1923 to an Egyptian father and British mother, is an Egyptian doctor, writer and socialist activist. His family was wealthy and his western-educated father owned much property. Ḥatātah studied medicine in Cairo and worked as a doctor in the city's Qaṣr al-ʿAynī Hospital and as a Ministry of Health official. As a young man, upon discovering the difficult conditions in which his father's serfs lived, he committed himself to improving the lives of peasants and workers. He gravitated towards communism and ultimately joined the communist Iskra movement, which in 1947 became part of the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL). In 1948 the regime arrested Ḥatātah during an anti-communist crackdown; he was released only in 1952 after the Free Officers' Revolution. In the 1950s he served as a board member of the communist paper *Ṣawt al-Fallāḥīn* (*The Voice of the Peasants*). Subsequently, he was re-arrested in July 1954 with other members of his movement and was sentenced to ten years' hard labor by military court. He was released in May 1964, during the Gamal ʿAbdel Nasser presidency. Following his release he joined Nasser's party, the Arab Socialist Union, despite his criticism that it was not doing enough to promote socialist democracy in Egypt, and became

1940s Egypt³, a decade of national and social ferment, harshly criticizes British colonialism and the Egyptian governments of the time. The narrative depicts the struggle of the Egyptian national movement as well as the crisis of political freedom that led to the July 1952 revolution. Its historiographic and journalistic style incorporates communiqués, speeches and political statements.⁴

The themes underpinning the author's life and his literary battle against totalitarianism echo some of French philosopher Michel Foucault's (1926–84) ideas and insights, especially as expressed in the theory of the New Historicism, largely based on his philosophy. New Historicism interprets history in terms of forms of oppression whereby people are forced to act out of an ideology whether they agree with it or not, despite the fact that the powers are always watching.⁵ The approach of this discipline is fiercely anti-establishment and champions liberal ideals of personal freedom, celebrating all forms of diversity. At the same time, New Historians seem to hold that these ideals cannot be realized, due to the oppressive presence of the state and its ability to penetrate even the most intimate recesses of an individuals' existence.

For Foucault, this approach is embodied most precisely in the Panopticon prison, conceived by the 18–19th-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). The prison, none ever built exactly according to Bentham's visionary design, was to be a circular building designed to allow one guard to watch all the prisoners at all times from a central tower without their being able to discern when, or if at all, they were being watched. For Foucault, this design epitomized the disciplining power of the state that permeates all aspects of life. The panoptic state maintains its surveillance not only through physical force but also through "discursive practices" that circulate its ideology throughout all areas of society and its institutions, be they prisons, hospitals or schools.

In his essay "Arabic Fiction and the Quest for Freedom," Roger Allen writes that the combination of politics and literature has often proved dangerous, since works that are overtly political and which contain an element of protest against those in power often lead

one of the six communists in this party's 16-member secretariat. BOTMAN 1988: 50, 70–72, 80; BARAKA 1998: 242–243; GINAT 2013b: 26–27. – Ḥatātah is married to the prominent Egyptian writer and activist Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī and is a member of the Arab Association for Human Rights, which she founded. His first novel *The Eye with an Iron Lid*, based on his own experiences in prison, was written in 1968–70. The author tried in vain to publish it in Egypt; finally, it was published in Beirut in 1974.

3 In 1922, in the wake of the 1919 nationalist uprising of Sa'd Zaghlūl, the British officially granted Egypt its independence, and Aḥmad Fu'ād Pasha took the title of king. In 1923 a constitution was declared and Egypt's first parliament was formed, dominated by the Wafd Party, which remained the most powerful political force in the country for many years. However, though Egypt was formally independent, Britain remained heavily involved in its political and economic affairs. It also maintained a military presence in the country until 1954, amid an ever-intensifying struggle by a wide range of Egyptian forces calling for the withdrawal of British troops and for full Egyptian independence. VATIKIOTIS 1969: chs. 15, 16.

4 'ATĪYYAH 1981: 20.

5 COFFEY 1996.

to the persecution of their authors.⁶ And indeed, Ḥatātah's works—which describe political and social situations with the aim of swaying public opinion and influencing public policy—played a role in transforming him into an individual pursued and persecuted by the regime.

Political Freedom

The question of political freedom is central today, not only in the west but around the world. In a lecture he delivered on 16 July 2006, Bernard Lewis argued that the western concept of freedom, i.e., freedom as a political concept and a basis for proper government, is relatively new to the Arab world. In Classical Islamic usage, “freedom” was a legal rather than political term: an individual was “free” as long as he was not a slave.⁷ What the westerners meant by freedom the Arabs called “equality” and “justice”; these were notions they knew, respected, and realized to a large degree.⁸ Conversely, the idea of political freedom emerged in the Arab world in the late 18th century, developed during the 19th century, but was often repressed in the mid-20th century in most Arab countries.⁹ Lewis stresses that Arab ways are different from our ways. They must be allowed to develop in accordance with their cultural principles, but it is possible for them—as for anyone else, anywhere in the world, with discreet help from outside and most specifically from the United States—to develop democratic institutions of a kind. This view is known as the “imperialist” view and has been vigorously denounced and condemned as such.¹⁰

6 ALLEN 1995: 35. – Miriam Cooke notes that criticizing the regime, the leader or the religion, or writing about “taboo” topics in the Arab world can result in censorship or in imprisonment, often without trial. Absolute freedom of speech is rare anywhere, she says, but in some places it is an unattainable dream. COOKE 2001: 237–245. – Government censorship in Egypt was rife under Nasser and writers were arrested, detained and incarcerated for overstepping the bounds set by the regime. Religious authorities also claimed the right to condemn writers and publishers, which resulted in further limitations on their freedom of speech. See STAGH 1993 passim.

7 Slavery was widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia, and continued to be so after the advent of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad and many of his Companions bought, sold and owned slaves. The Qur'an and the major schools of Islamic jurisprudence accept the practice of slavery, which began to wane only in the late 19th century. BROCKOPP 2001.

8 LEWIS 2010: 192.

9 LEWIS 1963: 48.

10 See <http://imprimisarchives.hillsdale.edu/file/archives/pdf/2006_09_Imprimis.pdf>. In his book *Faith and Power*, Lewis quotes a text which demonstrates that in the late 18th century the Ottoman regime was more democratic in some ways than the French monarchy. The text is a letter written by France's ambassador in Istanbul, Count de Choiseul-Gouffier, in 1776 shortly before the French Revolution. When the French government rebuked him for taking too long with some tasks he had to perform vis-à-vis the Ottoman government, the ambassador protested: “Here, it is not like it is in France, where the king is sole master and does as he pleases. Here, the sultan has to consult.” LEWIS 2010: 160.

The Arabic Prison Novel

The Arabic political novel decries the sore lack of freedom in the Arab world. The sheer number of works that address this issue by depicting characters who suffer persecution, imprisonment and torture reflects the depth of the crisis. These works also reflect the aspiration to attain freedom for the Arab citizen and realize his right to live a life free of oppression and coercion, both mental and physical. Political novels protest the oppression, ideological terror and incarceration that are part and parcel of political life in the Arab world, and which limit the freedom and fundamental rights of the citizen.

Ḥatātah's *The Eye with an Iron Lid* belongs to a specific subgenre of the political novel—the prison novel. The genre of the Arabic prison novel—which Mattityahu Peled calls “prison literature” (*abab al-sujun* in Arabic)—describes the system of interrogation and torture carried out inside the jail itself, i.e., not as part of the open judicial system, often against suspects who were never convicted in court. Peled writes, “The new literary wave, which began in the 1970s, at a time when international activities against torture were peaking, dealt with the behavior of the authorities towards those suspected of opposing the regime, who were arrested without due legal process, and whose interrogators subjected them to heinous torture in order to extract confessions of guilt.”¹¹

Allen Roger notes that the prison is an institution where individualism and diversity are mercilessly trampled on, and where individuals suffer intense loneliness, brutality and monotony—which makes this institution a powerful symbol of the denial of freedom. He states further that one must admire those authors who, after suffering incarceration, chose the prison experience itself as a major topic in their works, and made “extremely creative use of fiction to explore this drastic means of depriving writers of their freedom.”¹²

From Physician to Political Activist and *The Eye with an Iron Lid*

During the last two years of his studies in the Faculty of Medicine at Cairo University, Ḥatātah worked in the maternity ward in a Cairo hospital and witnessed heartbreaking situations of miserable women who represented everything his mother had taught him to hate: poverty, filth, ugliness and oppression.¹³ Ḥatātah had grown up in an environment wherein villagers were hard-working, and he learned to appreciate their efforts and to loathe idleness.¹⁴

11 PELED 1998: 69–76.

12 ALLEN 1995: 43, 48–49. Miriam Cooke writes that in the last few decades Iraqi, Moroccan, Egyptian and Syrian intellectuals who spent time in prison started to write about their experiences. She adds, “To write under threatening circumstances is to claim a stake in the public good, and it is this claim that renders the writer important, dangerous. Writers are imprisoned not because their words are demonstrably threatening the public good; rather, they are imprisoned to teach others not to do as they have done.” She stresses that dictatorships are dominated by mutual fear: the people’s fear of the leadership, and the leadership’s fear of the people. COOKE 2001: 239.

13 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 129. This volume is Ḥatātah’s autobiography, which to date has not been translated from the Arabic.

14 *Ibid.*: 90.

When the author was a medical student, one of the students wrote on the blackboard, “You, the British, you are dogs! Get out of our country...!” The lecturer, who was Irish, told the students, “You must know that you will collapse if the British left your country. They taught you everything.”¹⁵ When he worked as a hospital doctor, he continued his political activities and always sought to behave humanely, even as he fought for justice and truth.¹⁶

In the third part of the novel the narrator says, “When man invented the control over the earth, over the state and over prisons, he invented iron shackles.”¹⁷ The crisis of freedom is presented in the persona of the protagonist ‘Azīz, who is a doctor and a revolutionary, like Ḥatātah himself, who campaigns for the rights of the peasants and workers and for the liberation of Egypt from the colonial powers.¹⁸

‘Azīz’s activism eventually leads to his arrest and confinement in a political prison. He is held in solitary confinement and questioned mercilessly by the prison interrogators, who torture him and strip him of his privacy. During the first session the interrogator warns him that he is a single individual pitted against the state, which is stronger than any rebel or dissident and “knows everything about you,” so there is no point in remaining silent.

The novel moves forwards and backwards in time. After describing ‘Azīz’s imprisonment and torture and the feelings and thoughts they evoke in him, the book turns to describing earlier parts of his life: episodes from his childhood and from his life as a revolutionary university student who devotes himself to the liberation of the homeland from British imperialism and the establishment of a just and independent state. ‘Azīz gives

15 Ibid.: 115.

16 Ibid.: 233.

17 ḤATĀTAH 1974: 151.

18 In the interwar period, political and economic developments caused a severe social and economic crisis in Egypt. The rapid growth of the population, mass migration from the rural areas to the cities, rising prices and widespread unemployment caused a drop in per capita income and severe poverty, especially among peasants and workers. A report submitted in 1932 by the Butler Committee, a delegation on behalf of an international labor organization, reflected the dire working conditions in Egypt: laborers worked 14–16 hours a day, often without a weekly day of rest; children under ten were employed in factories, wages were low, and managements refused to recognize the trade unions. – During World War II the economic situation deteriorated even further. This caused an increase in the support for the communist and socialist movements during this period, especially among students, journalists and white-collar workers. The second half of the 1940s also saw the advent of a new generation of socialist activists, many of them intellectuals and authors with Marxist leanings, such as Ḥatātah. In the fall of 1945, radical groups of students and workers began forming in Egypt that combined a program for “liberation of the exploited masses from the capitalist minority” with a program for national liberation, i.e., the liberation of Egypt from the control and influence of Britain, which was seen as largely responsible for Egypt’s economic woes. Marxist and communist agitators joined some of the trade unions and student organizations, and played a prominent role in workers’ strikes and student protests that lasted from February 1946 to 1952, and which often involved violent clashes with the police in which protesters were injured and killed. – The unrest eventually prompted the Egyptian authorities to clamp down on leftist and communist movements. In the summer of 1946, the authorities arrested hundreds of activists and disbanded communist organizations, and passed laws imposing heavier sentences on those found guilty of political dissidence (VATIKIOTIS 1969: chs. 15, 16). These events and developments form the background to Ḥatātah’s novel.

up a promising career as a medical specialist to join the political struggle for freedom and social justice.

The activist doctor leaves Cairo and moves to the suburbs of Tanta, where he pens and circulates political pamphlets. He also travels from village to village, meeting with workers and farmers and spreading the revolutionary message. ‘Azīz wins the affection and solidarity of the villagers, especially when he speaks of giving them ownership over the land and restoring the rights of the workers. Later he remembers how, as a young doctor, he used to care for sick villagers and witness the suffering of many families, and how helpless he felt as he gazed into the eyes of the sick and “read in them a trace of silent condemnation.”¹⁹ He recalls how, one August evening, he entered a home on the edge of a village and spoke with the farm worker who lived there. When ‘Azīz told the villager that he seemed familiar, the following conversation ensued:

- The villager: “[...] All workers resemble one another [...] like coins from the same machine.”
- ‘Azīz: “A man has unique features.”
- The villager: “Coins do not have unique features, Dr ‘Azīz, they are [just] pennies [...] Don’ t be angry, Dr ‘Azīz, you are my friend. You came looking for me, but you have never stood before the machine.”
- ‘Azīz: “[...] What does the machine do?”
- The villager: “It erases the unique features and grinds a man down.”
- ‘Azīz: “A man is not ground down, for it is he who operates [the machine].”
- The villager: “No, it [the machine] controls me, moves me and saps [my vitality].”²⁰

This exchange reflects the author’s Marxist ideology, which holds that, in capitalist societies, a worker is helpless and treated as a cheap commodity.²¹ The villager with whom ‘Azīz converses is aware that workers are controlled and exploited, and that employers treat them like objects, which is why he compares them to coins: inanimate things that are all alike and that can be traded for goods.

19 HATĀTAH 1980: 218.

20 Ibid.: 219–220.

21 Karl Marx (1818–83) held that economic alienation is the result of three factors: a) the private ownership of the means of production, b) the process and division of labor, and c) the treatment of all things, including the workers themselves, as a commodity. Marx distinguishes four aspects of alienation: 1) the alienation of the worker from his product; 2) the alienation of the worker from his labor; 3) the alienation of the worker from nature, which is part of him; capitalist society turns nature into a source of livelihood and physical existence, namely it exploits nature instead of establishing a positive relationship with it; 4) alienation from others, stemming from the fact that labor is performed for the sake of others and not for one’s own sake. The worker’s relationship with others is one of persecution, control and exploitation, and is based on barter and exchange, so that the individual himself becomes a commodity to be traded. In other words, relations are between objects rather than between human beings; the product assumes human attributes whereas the worker becomes objectified. Man’s social reality is one of alienation, since he lacks control over society and since society does not allow for human relationships, which are replaced with relations between objects. MARX 1964: 106–119.

The motif of the machine recurs in Ḥatātah's description of the prison: "Everything in the large [prison] yard moved ponderously, like an ancient, slow machine that sorts, selects and dispenses destinies. Men are mere numbers, and numbers are merciless and without emotions."²²

To the protagonist, putting men in a cage seems like an unnatural absurdity. He feels "like an animal, walking round and round in an endless circle among gaunt blue-clad beings who move through this strange world that men have been creating since the dawn of history."²³

According to Ḥatātah, most crimes are the result of oppression. The anger and despair that build up in the people who become slaves of the rulers eventually explode into physical violence.²⁴

As mentioned, 'Azīz's loss of liberty is manifest not only in his incarceration but in the loss of his privacy. This is evident in the following description:

From this moment, his habits and private life were no longer his own. His movements, his rest, his sleep, his waking, and all the small details of his being, some of which a man conceals even from his wife, were subject to the constant close surveillance of alert eyes, eyes that scrutinize, weigh, evaluate, and try to probe the very depths and, if possible, plumb even concealed and buried thoughts.²⁵

The interrogators warn 'Azīz that he is wasting his life on an illusion, for he is only one man facing the strong state that knows everything about him: who his friends are, what he likes to read, and what his medical problems are. The interrogator asked him, "Don't you suffer from hemorrhoids?" 'Azīz felt as though a burning sword was scorching his forehead and the world started to turn around him madly... Hemorrhoids? How could this man know what nobody but he knew?"²⁶ From that moment, 'Azīz feels the loss of his freedom more acutely, since his life has ceased to be his own. Yet he decides not to cooperate with the interrogators despite his pain, fear and weakness. After he manages to withstand the first interrogation, he feels that he is stronger than his interrogators and torturers. "Even now, despite everything, despite the chains and the walls, he was still the strongest."²⁷

The lack of freedom and the constant surveillance of the panoptic regime are also manifest in the eyes that constantly follow 'Azīz. The motif of the eyes recurs throughout the novel. The inhuman, all-seeing eye of the regime is represented, first of all, by the "eye

22 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 278.

23 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 252. In his observations on punishment and imprisonment, Foucault sheds light on Ḥatātah's statement that there is no difference between the oppression of the young at school, university or in army and the oppression of workers in factories; nor is there a difference between the oppression of hospitalized patients and the oppression of those found guilty and imprisoned by court order. All are manifestations of the same phenomenon. FOUCAULT 1995: 138.

24 ḤATĀTAH 1974: 132.

25 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 21. This echoes Orwell's novel *1984* and especially his notion of the "thought police," a secret police force whose mission is to control the citizens' minds and keep them from even thinking about anything that contradicts the regime's ideology.

26 *Ibid.*: 30–31.

27 *Ibid.*: 32–33.

with an iron lid” of the title.²⁸ Elsewhere in the novel the regime and its representatives are referred to as having “eyes that lie in wait,”²⁹ “frozen eyes,”³⁰ eyes that are “trained to see any resistance,”³¹ and eyes that surround ‘Azīz “for hours, weeks and months ... waiting for him to die like a wounded animal.”³² Describing Prime Minister Ismail Sidqi Pasha, the novel again focuses on the eyes, saying that they are like “two protruding axes,”³³ and another tyrant is described as an old man with white hair, “his narrow eyes a shining gray-blue, as cold and frightening as a steel blade....”³⁴ In another part of the novel the narrator says that the tyrant’s eyes are “the color of lead, and nothing is in them but terrifying and pitiless hardness.”³⁵

The blue color of Prime Minister Ismail Sidqi Pasha’s eyes has become similar to the color of a lead. Ḥatātah’s autobiography *The Open Windows* recalls these threatening eyes when he asked the students’ delegation, “Am I supposed to understand that you still insist to cause a revolt of the Egyptian people?”³⁶

The harsh eyes of the regime are contrasted with the pleading eyes of the prisoners:

Only the eyes are never silent [...] They gaze out of their deep, dark wells, waxing and waning and then waxing again. The struggle between hope and despair, strength

28 The metaphor of the eye with an iron lid is reminiscent of the metallic images in Honoré de Balzac’s novel *Gobseck*. In this novel, Derville describes Gobseck’s death as follows: “He raised himself in bed, the lines of his face standing out as sharply against the pillow as if the profile had been cast in bronze; he stretched out a lean arm and bony hand along the coverlet and clutched it, as if so he would fain keep his hold on life, then he gazed hard at the hearth’s grating, cold as his own metallic eyes, and died in full consciousness of death....” BALZAC [2014] Balzac uses images related to metals—bronze, brass, gold and silver—throughout the work, in order to present Gobseck as a man motivated only by capital: a cold, metallic figure devoid of emotion or conscience.

29 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 316.

30 Ibid.: 317. The expression “frozen eyes” also appears in the novel *Tilka ’l-rā’iḥat* (The Smell of It, 1964) by another Egyptian author Ṣun’allāh Ibrāhīm. He uses it to describe the jailors who enter the prisoners’ cells every morning. “The prisoners’ eyes meet the [jailors’] frozen, expressionless eyes.” IBRĀHĪM 1964: 44.

31 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 382.

32 Ibid.: 149.

33 Ibid.: 316–317.

34 Ibid.: 125.

35 Ibid.: 138. In the novel *al-Ashjār wa-’ghitiyāl Marzūq* (The Trees and the Murder of Marzūq, 1979) by Arab writer ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, the protagonist also speaks of eyes in referring to the tyrannical regime. “What is a homeland? Is it the soil and the naked hills? Is it the harsh eyes that spew hatred, [molten] lead and contempt? Should a homeland make a person starve and wander the streets in search of a living, with the secret police on his tail?” MUNĪF 1979: 22. A similar theme is present in Munīf’s novel *al-Ān hunā, aw: Sharq al-mutawassiṭ marratan ukhrā* (Here and Now, or: East of the Mediterranean Revisited, 2001). The protagonist remembers a long night of interrogations: “Their blood-filled eyes looked at me like mouths of fire and I heard their voices thundering from every direction: You must confess!” MUNĪF 2001: 8.

36 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 36.

and weakness, will and surrender grows stronger within them. One reads in them the question: How much longer? How much longer will it last?³⁷

Ḥatātah could never forget the reality—how his anger increased the longer he remained in prison. The Egyptian authorities held his fate in their hands. They were able to sentence him to life imprisonment and even death.³⁸

Before his imprisonment, ‘Azīz reflects that others probably think he is crazy, because he continues to attend protests, meetings and gatherings and to confront the police despite the danger of arrest. The very act of demanding the inalienable right to freedom, as ‘Azīz and his comrades do, challenges the legitimacy of the regime, and this is the reason for their political arrest. Thinking of his fellow activists, who are disappearing one by one, ‘Azīz observes that in a dictatorship citizens are in fact equal, but only those who are willing to accept the authority of the regime, whereas dissidents are arrested, exiled or murdered. And all citizens are subordinate to the single party and single ruler, whose job is to maintain the social order. “Ultimately it is power that is the tyrant, and power that defends the interests, and the game of interests is a complicated one.”³⁹

‘Azīz’s activism is not only political; he protests tyranny everywhere, including in the family. In the second part of the novel titled “The Wind’s Two Wings,” we discover what drove him to leave his job as a doctor in favor of social and political activism.

From earliest childhood ‘Azīz experienced loneliness and oppression in the home of his aristocratic family. The mansion in which they lived with thick walls and spacious, high-ceilinged rooms was opulent and imposing. It was also full of people, because, apart from ‘Azīz, his parents and his grandparents, it was inhabited by several aunts and uncles and dozens of servants. However, ‘Azīz experienced no love or warmth in it. Materially he lacked for nothing, but nobody cared for him or guided him, and he was noticed only at mealtimes and at bedtime. Wandering around the house, he felt like “a lost soul in a mysterious world.” He discovered life step by step, on his own, feeling like one who had been cast into a dark, stormy sea when he did not know how to swim.

‘Azīz’s mother, when she married into the family, likewise had difficulty finding her place. Marginalized within this busy household, and weighed down by the rules and norms imposed by her husband’s aristocratic family, she was cast aside and her personality faded away. As for his father, ‘Azīz discovers his existence only when the father is bedridden for several months.

Ḥatātah notes in his autobiography that when he was a child, his father had often been absent from home, until he almost did not feel his existence, therefore, “I cannot even recover his face as a young man or remember an event connected with him [...] I was not exposed to paternal authority as other children have experienced.”⁴⁰

Relations between the author’s father and mother were sour and that affected Ḥatātah as a child. His mother’s cold attitude towards her son resulted from the domestic stresses and strains and from the loneliness and alienation that she suffered in Egypt.

37 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 138.

38 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 206.

39 *Ibid.*: 20.

40 *Ibid.*: 34.

Apparently, in the late 1980s or early 1990s, Ḥatātah traveled to London. He writes in his autobiography that he decided to look for his mother's relatives. He managed to find her brother John Taylor, who told him that his grandmother was born into a large and poor Jewish family, the Schneider family, who lived in a town on the Polish-German border. The grandmother fled to England, accompanied by her brother and his wife, and she married the owner of a clothing factory where she worked.⁴¹

But the most dominant figure in both the 'Azīz or Ḥatātah households (where fiction and the autobiography intersect) was the grandfather, a feudal landlord who ruled despotically over his household. The book notes that the house was "dominated by the silence of the tomb" the minute the grandfather entered, and comes back to life when the grandfather left on his large white horse, or sat "fast and proud" in his shiny carriage.⁴² The grandfather was a paternalistic tyrant.⁴³

The relationship between Sharīf and his grandfather (in his autobiography and carried over into the *Eye*) had not been strong; nevertheless, the grandfather's influence on him was great. He remembers his impressive appearance. His grandfather also implanted in his memory as a young boy such events as the peasant uprising and the revolt against British occupation.⁴⁴

In the description of the grandfather in the novel, Ḥatātah again draws his readers' attention to the eyes as the seat of strength and power:

A tall man in a red turban and a white woolen cloak over a blue-grey robe with thin elegant stripes. Above this awe-inspiring sight were two eyes blazing like shiny black marbles, eyes full of strength and power, a long bulbous nose, and a black beard that obscured the entire right half of the face except the wide mouth that would sometimes reveal white teeth.⁴⁵

'Azīz sees his grandfather only twice during his childhood. Once when he and his mother come from England to Egypt by ship, the grandfather meets them at the dock, and another time he enters his grandfather's room when he is on his knees, praying. The scene that ensues—which ostensibly can be seen as comical—is rendered through the eyes of the child 'Azīz, who finds it terrifying, and clearly contrasts the grandfather's brutal strength with the child's helplessness.

41 Ibid.: 14–15. Rami Ginat notes that Ḥatātah only recently had the courage to reveal his mother's Jewish ancestry. See GINAT 2013a: 930.

42 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 27.

43 According to Immanuel Kant, paternalism is the greatest despotism imaginable ... not because it is more oppressive than naked brutal, unenlightened tyranny, nor merely because it ignores the transcendental reason embodied in me, but because it is an insult to my conception of myself as a human being, determined to make my own life in accordance with my own (not necessarily rational or benevolent) purposes, and, above all, entitled to be recognized as such by others. See a discussion of Kant's view, see BERLIN 1969: 157.

44 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 83, 85.

45 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 24.

‘Azīz climbs on the grandfather’s back and, when the latter shakes him off, he runs away. Later, his grandmother brings him to a large chamber where his grandfather sits waiting.

Behind his grandfather’s back tall windows stood open, barred with long bars set into the wooden window frame. [‘Azīz] had never noticed them before, but they filled his heart with a strange feeling, as though he were a small animal caught in a hunter’s trap. He stood before his grandfather on his small legs, his hands clasped behind his back. The child’s eyes noticed eyes like two black marbles examining his face. A tense silence prevailed. The man sat bent on the tall-backed sofa covered with red silk embroidered with gold thread. Both he and the grandmother were surprised when the child’s voice rang out, clear as a bell: “You are a savage.” [...] The man looked at the boy as though he were a strange creature. Then his lips parted in a white smile that suddenly emitted a peal of rolling laughter. His legs emerged from under the wide robe and he moved towards the boy to pat his head affectionately with his hand, large enough to engulf the child. Then he pushed him gently toward the door, saying, “Now get off with you.” [The author then adds in hindsight:] The boy did not know then that the masters crack their whips only over the heads of the poor. There were many things he did not know.⁴⁶

After the death of his grandfather, Ḥatātah notes in his autobiography that his relationship with the grandmother became closer.⁴⁷

The image of the trapped animal, which appears in the scene of the meeting between the young ‘Azīz and his grandfather, recurs in the description of ‘Azīz’s prison cell. ‘Azīz becomes accustomed to the smell of the cell, including his own stench, “the stench of an animal trapped in a closed cage, which goes on producing bodily secretions day after day.” He paces the four-step distance between the door and the wall, the rattling of his chains sounding “like the ticking of a clock whose hands have been removed.”⁴⁸

‘Azīz wishes to live as an independent individual, unfettered and unconditioned by social norms. Like Socrates, who regarded spiritual freedom as the essence of human existence, he rebels against the tyranny of tradition and wishes to carve his own authentic, subjective path, free of all social and political frameworks. Initially, he is uninterested in political activism. This is apparent in a conversation he has at the Badawi coffee shop with his friend Ḥusayn (who, as ‘Azīz later discovers, turned him in to the authorities). Ḥusayn tries to persuade him to drop his medical research and join the protest against the regime, because engaging in medical research is “dealing with dead matters,” and is pointless in a country where the citizen is humiliated and the authorities “trample on our necks with their heavy boots.” ‘Azīz replies, “That is none of my business. Each man has his own business to deal with. I’ll treat patients and you arrange protests.”⁴⁹ At this stage, ‘Azīz also takes the deterministic view that men’s destinies are dictated by their circumstances and

46 Ibid.: 25–26.

47 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 84.

48 Ibid.: 49.

49 Ibid.: 60.

surroundings, and therefore the poor are helpless to escape their fate. Conversely, Ḥusayn insists that the homeland must be liberated, thus putting an end to wretchedness and exploitation. Eventually, despite his declarations, ‘Azīz is persuaded to join the national struggle against imperialism and against the exploitation of the masses. “We are headed for a national explosion,” he says. “The students have begun acting.... The issue of expelling the British is intensively debated by them. Nobody can stand the evasions and negotiations any longer.”⁵⁰

The nationalist and socialist fervor of the activists is evident in a scene depicting a rally, which took place following the Kubri ‘Abbas bridge riots.⁵¹ A worker in a weaving factory stands up and delivers a speech:

We face the ugliest form of exploitation. We face it at the factory, where it is open and unmasked like a wild beast of prey, sucking our blood every day [as we work] at the machines. This exploitation we face affects men and women alike. This exploitation we face is first of all [the fault of] the foreigners and reactionaries. Whenever we request another piece of bread for our hungry children, lead bullets are shot into our chests.⁵²

Another man, with a thick black beard (apparently representing the Islamic forces, which were also involved in the protests), mounts to the podium and warns the audience against starting a civil war. He suggests that the correct course is to right moral wrongs, strengthen religion and fight heresy and licentiousness, since “those who sell and drink wine, and those who open bars and places of entertainment, are the ones gnawing at the body of the nation like worms.”⁵³

One of the organizers then declares the rally over. He proposes to prepare for a general strike and to declare February 21, 1946, as the start of the uprising against the British occupation, since it is clear that resistance is the only way to achieve independence.

‘Azīz also recalls a meeting between the representatives of the students and Prime Minister Ismail Sidqi Pasha. He and his fellow activists find themselves riding the raging revolutionary tide, and eventually become the leaders of this revolutionary movement, all the while motivated by their enthusiasm and awareness of the need to bring about change. ‘Azīz holds that “true youth means renewal and rebellion against the existing reality, whereas old age means stagnation.”⁵⁴ He also maintains that the divine spark within man is

50 Ibid.: 85.

51 In January 1946, over 30,000 textile workers in Cairo went on strike, and the strikes soon spread to Alexandria and other parts of Egypt. Concurrently, student organizations submitted a petition to the king demanding to settle relations with Britain. The unrest came to a head on February 9, as thousands of students marched from Gizah towards the king’s palace to demand a British withdrawal. When they came to the Kubri ‘Abbas bridge over the Nile, they found their way blocked by a large police force, and in the ensuing clashes many protesters were injured. Some fell into the river and drowned. Following these events, student and workers’ organizations proclaimed February 21 British Withdrawal Day, and when this date arrived they again held mass demonstrations, in which many protesters were wounded and some were even killed. VATIKIOTIS 1969: chs. 15, 16.

52 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 128.

53 Ibid.: 129.

54 Ibid.: 141.

what pushes him to challenge, rebel, explore and discover new worlds. At the same time, he believes that the urge to change the world, to rebel and to stage revolutions is a form of madness, for anything that violates the accepted norm is considered mad.

‘Azīz observes that the poor are not afraid to fight for their liberty, because lacking property and any prospects for the future, they have nothing to lose but their physical freedom. The hope for a better life therefore propels them into action. The rich, on the other hand—including his friend Ḥusayn—are afraid of losing their wealth and comfort, and are unwilling to sacrifice their lives for liberty. ‘Azīz believes that the test of a freedom fighter’s sincerity is whether he remains committed to the cause even after facing incarceration. “In the darkness of the cell ... the one eternal question arises, the indispensable question the answer to which casts everything into sharp relief: Do you really believe heart and soul in what you did?”⁵⁵

Thematic Elements: Fear of Death, Loneliness and Persecution

After two months in a dank and narrow prison cell, ‘Azīz begins reflecting on his life as he has never done before, and develops a sense of his own mortality. “For the first time he began sensing the dangers that surrounded him, and for the first time a vague awareness snuck into his mind that there was an end to his life, an end called death.”⁵⁶ Thoughts of death, and the feeling that some people are anticipating his death, begin to dominate his consciousness. When he goes out into the prison yard, he feels reborn, but “feeling alive, he is reminded of death again, remembering it and feeling it like he never did before.”⁵⁷ ‘Azīz tries to overcome his fear by persuading himself that “death is a natural continuation of life” and that he would step calmly and confidently towards the gallows.⁵⁸

A scene in which ‘Azīz gazes at the body of As‘ad, a young friend who died after being wounded during a protest, conveys man’s inability to understand the reality of death and accept the absurd transformation of a living, breathing individual into a lifeless corpse.

The face was As‘ad’s, but at the same time it was not. As‘ad’s face had never been frozen and rigid. It had smiling, laughing lips.... But now this face no longer saw, no longer heard, it was no longer angry, happy or smiling. It no longer moved. It was as pale as wax, the face of a corpse.⁵⁹

After several months in solitary confinement, the loneliness begins to prey on ‘Azīz’s mind, as he tries to “overcome the long silence that continues day after day ... the deadly silence and emptiness.” He has trouble sleeping, and when he does sleep, loneliness haunts his dreams. “When he awakes, he looks about him; perhaps he will find another human being

55 Ibid.: 93.

56 Ibid.: 140.

57 Ibid.: 149.

58 Ibid.: 154.

59 Ibid.: 158.

in the room. He longs for conversation, singing, laughter, human voices.”⁶⁰ The loneliness eventually almost drives him mad. He sings, smiles, weeps, talks to himself and to the flies on the walls, and dances for hours.⁶¹ The loneliness reminds him of his youth. As he dreams about the distant past, he realizes that “his childhood filled him with a deep sense of solitude and caused him to see the world through the eyes of a boy who grew up too fast.”⁶²

In this vein most telling is Ḥatātah’s autobiographical description of the scene of his own birth, as if he were standing and watching it. As he emerged he felt something cold wrap his body and he curled up like a hedgehog. Then he felt as if someone were binding him with cables.⁶³ He comments a few pages later that it was as if his birth foreshadowed the sadness and gloom that prevailed in his family during his childhood.⁶⁴

A central theme in the novel is the sense of persecution, stemming from a prominent characteristic of the panoptic regime: the constant surveillance and stalking of dissidents. During his years as a political activist, ‘Azīz is always on the run, never staying in one place more than two or three days, or in the same city for more than a month. He yearns to experience a different world, even for only an hour or two, a world without persecution, running and narrow streets.⁶⁵ In one of his interrogations in prison, ‘Azīz admits that he used several false names to avoid his pursuers. The interrogator asks, “Why are you persecuted?” ‘Azīz replies, “I don’t know, all I know is that I am persecuted, and when I search for a reason, I cannot find any reasonable explanation [...] I go from cell to cell and from jail to jail, and when I am released, your eyes follow me and your men besiege me.”⁶⁶

For Ḥatātah, persecution means the loss of one’s soul and values, yet he ultimately understands that being persecuted is first and foremost an internal, mental state.⁶⁷ The scenes of persecution in *The Eye* are realistic, but also have fantastic and deeply emotional dimensions. As the protagonist lies thinking and remembering in his cell, the story focuses on his inner journey, giving the reader a glimpse of his thoughts, imaginings and nightmares. For example, he is haunted by the memory of another prisoner, Sayyid, who asked him, “Do you think they will execute us by hanging?” while fingering his neck.

60 Ibid.: 148, 152.

61 Ibid.: 200.

62 Ibid.: 203. Martin Buber in his *The Knowledge of Man* provides some possible causes for mass depression: changes in social life, people no longer living in communities, the status of the family being eroded, and the individual today no longer receiving as much support from the family or social group as in the past, thus increasing one’s loneliness in the world. This solitude creates confusion and a sense of depression. BUBER 1988: 63. – Shlomo Shoham takes a different approach to the notion of solitude. He writes that, according to Kierkegaard, authentic existence is in solitude. “The solitude of the individual is a unique loneliness because his inner core is linked with an umbilical cord to unity. Of this the individual can be aware if only he turns inwardly to his ‘pure-self’. By prodding into his inner self, Man is revealed to truth and to a God, which are synonymous.” SHOHAM 1985: 235.

63 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 7.

64 Ibid.: 9–10.

65 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 228–229.

66 Ibid.: 46.

67 Ibid.: 206, 222.

Lying delirious, ‘Azīz “sees these fingers becoming long ropes dangling from the ceiling, and the ground opening its maw and becoming a deep, dark abyss.”⁶⁸

Ḥatātah and Albert Camus

Sharīf Ḥatātah adopts Camus’ notion of rebellion, as it is expressed in the latter’s novel *La peste* (The Plague). The plague that ravages the town of Oran is an allegory for evil, destruction and killing—especially as manifested by the Nazis in World War II. The character of ‘Azīz in *The Eye* mirrors that of the doctor Rieux in *The Plague*. As a free man ‘Azīz cares for the sick villagers, and while in prison he tries to help his fellow prisoners as much as he can—just as Rieux battles the plague and tries to care for its victims. Both characters rebel against the dictates and norms of the diseased society, and represent the existentialist stream of which Camus was one of the most important authors. According to Camus, the existentialist “rebellious man” is characterized by true compassion and love for the other, courage, authenticity—and also loneliness. Rieux and ‘Azīz exhibit all these qualities. They do not surrender to sickness and selfishness like the masses around them, but choose to heal as many of the sick as they can, feeling compassion for their suffering and refusing to judge them. In so doing, they display loyalty to themselves and to others.

In some ways ‘Azīz is also similar to a very different Camus character, namely Meursault, the protagonist of *L’étranger* (The Stranger). Though ‘Azīz is aware and compassionate while Meursault is alienated and detached, the characters share a stark integrity that refuses to conform to the norms of society. Thus, both serve to unmask the hypocrisy of society and to challenge the sanctity of its empty clichés. Meursault is sentenced to death not for the murder he committed but for his total honesty, which threatens the “decent” and “god-fearing” citizenry, and for rebelling against society’s accepted norms. Similarly, ‘Azīz is not really imprisoned for belonging to an underground organization, but for rebelling against “the established values and eternal truths that are neither true nor eternal, against systems that oppress man and destroy the God that is in him.”⁶⁹ In addition, both are aware—or become aware—of the absurdity of existence, of the “confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” to quote Camus.⁷⁰ Ultimately, both characters formulate an authentic view of the world and bravely face their impending death.⁷¹

Ḥatātah, interested in the theme of rebellion, found inspiration in the works of Camus, the “true prophet of twentieth century,”⁷² whose writings were known in the Arab world and widely published in Arabic literary journals. Rebellion in Ḥatātah’s works is both social and metaphysical. It is a restrained rebellion, stemming from a tragic sense of distress and the absurdity of the human condition. Like Camus’ rebellion, it is more than a

68 Ibid.: 149.

69 Ibid.: 237.

70 CAMUS 1960: 19.

71 GOLOMB 1995: 182.

72 DAVISON 1997: 119.

bold and violent uprising against the “system” or against material culture. In *The Rebel*, Camus emphasizes that rebellion is a spontaneous act and an essential component of the human experience. This is a restatement of Nietzsche’s position that the road to authenticity requires one to constantly overcome oneself, the values of one’s generation and the norms of one’s era.⁷³ For Camus, the very refusal to give up and die is a form of rebellion “which gives life its value.”⁷⁴ Rebellion is the practical expression of authenticity and it gives man a reason to keep on living.

‘Azīz believes that rebellion involves suffering, for the “seed of God” within a man’s soul is “a seed of suffering that rebels against the immobility and silence, against what is common, unchanging, fixed in life.”⁷⁵ The rebel also condemns himself to loneliness: “I was lonely. I lived behind walls that enclosed me within my own soul.”⁷⁶ ‘Azīz is unable to escape the physical walls that imprison him, but he can and does attain a form of mental freedom, at least temporarily. He experiences this while participating in a prisoners’ hunger strike. On the 23rd day of fasting, he feels his body becoming weightless, as though it has evaporated and become a floating cloud. Despite his weakness, he feels he has triumphed over his body, his hunger and his physical needs: “It was as though he was floating above all things, free of the shackles and stronger than all desires.”⁷⁷ The metaphor of evaporating and becoming a cloud describes a state of spiritual freedom, which is portrayed as the highest form of liberty. It conveys the message that the spirit can be free even when the body is in chains. ‘Azīz can attain mental-spiritual liberty by severing himself from the physical, relinquishing earthly struggles and existing on a spiritual plain.

However, his sense of freedom does not last. Even when he is transferred from prison to the hospital for medical treatment, he remains under the constant surveillance of three black-clad guards. The last sentence of *The Eye* conveys his failure to achieve liberty, either physical or spiritual: “The black night descended over their heads, carrying with it an absolute silence like death.”⁷⁸

The third volume of the saga, *The Defeat* describes ‘Azīz’s escape from prison. He manages to escape when the prison authorities transfer him to a hospital for treatment. The book begins with ‘Azīz hidden in the baggage compartment of a car that is smuggling him from the hospital to a safe house in Port Said. However, when he reaches the safe house he finds that he has exchanged one prison for another. The apartment and its furnishings remind him of a coffin. His mental state is conveyed through numerous terms expressing imprisonment, alienation, loneliness and persecution: “barren emptiness,” “metal eyes,” “a prisoner within the apartment,” “petrified silence.”⁷⁹

73 Ibid.: 168–169.

74 CAMUS 1960: 55.

75 ḤATĀTAH 1980: 237.

76 Ibid.: 242.

77 Ibid.: 252.

78 Ibid.: 149.

79 ḤATĀTAH 1974: 8–11.

In real life, Ḥatātah speaks with his father before his escape from the hospital and says, "I can travel abroad and come back when the conditions will improve."⁸⁰

The harshness of the world in which 'Azīz now finds himself is reflected even in the descriptions of nature. While descriptions of the sun and sky, which recur often in the novel, usually symbolize freedom and mental clarity,⁸¹ here they serve to stress the harsh, artificial and oppressive nature of 'Azīz's environment: the sun is described as scorching and the sky as a dome of lead.

The imagery also reflects 'Azīz's yearning for warmth and protection. 'Azīz lying curled up in the baggage compartment of the escape vehicle is compared to a fetus in its mother's womb. This image recurs in the description of the ship that later carries 'Azīz out of Egypt: he feels that the ship is cocooning and sheltering him; at the same time, he is immersed in total darkness that is both physical and spiritual. Upon arriving in Marseille, he feels transformed. "He suddenly realized he was free, and felt life stirring again deep within him, like a sick man returned from a long journey with death [...] He looked up at the sky [...] a clear, blue expanse [...] and let himself think without barriers or chains."⁸² 'Azīz observes, "Men are victims of circumstances that only the strong may escape. Their lives are lived without a taste of true happiness and end with the question: What good did I derive from it all?"⁸³ When he comes to Marseille, he feels that the skies above him are open. He can walk freely towards the old harbor and enjoy the smell of fried fish.⁸⁴

However, Ḥatātah felt alienated and alone in Paris. No one noticed his existence, so he feels "lonely in this vivacious city, ... going aimlessly." But he is aware that he has always suffered from loneliness. His soul is tired from struggles, prison, exile and from the eyes of the police officers that follow him in his dreams.⁸⁵

Ḥatātah records in *The Open Windows* that he was a prisoner in France while the Free Officers revolution occurred in Egypt on July 23, 1952. Its outcome leads him to expect a better future. Ḥatātah returns to Egypt from France, even though he was still a wanted man, with five years in prison with hard labor yet to serve. The new government in Egypt formed after the coup granted amnesty to prisoners from the Muslim Brotherhood, but not communist prisoners, because the "communist crime is social, not political."⁸⁶

Conclusion

Sharīf Ḥatātah's *The Eye with an Iron Lid* is anchored in the rich historical context of Egypt in the 1940s and can therefore be viewed not only as fiction but also as a work of historical documentation. Ḥatātah describes the "panoptic" all-seeing dictatorship of the

80 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 279.

81 The sun symbolizes clarity in Camus' writing as well.

82 Ibid.: 44–45.

83 Ibid.: 87.

84 ḤATĀTAH 2006: 330.

85 Ibid.: 335–336.

86 Ibid.: 102.

regime, which leaves no room for individual freedom. As one who was himself imprisoned for political activism, he presents an authentic account of an individual who struggles against the authorities and suffers their terrible retribution. Through the story of his protagonist 'Azīz, he describes the inhuman conditions in the regime's political prisons and the cheapening of physical and spiritual life. 'Azīz survives thanks to his rare fighting spirit, determination, and desire to help the weak and oppressed. Ḥatātah describes an individual struggling in a world of terror and brutality, who, in rebelling against violence, oppression and cruelty, presents an alternative humanistic approach. Like Rieux in Camus' *The Plague*, who fights the disease that represents inhuman brutality, 'Azīz cares for the poor and for his fellow prisoners and offers them compassion in a world full of hate.

'Azīz also represents a free and authentic human being fighting for his identity. He questions established truths, aspires to self-awareness, and chooses how to live his life, even when in prison. He contends with fear of death, loneliness, alienation and tyranny. He embodies the positive ideal of the heroic and free individual rebel, aspiring to attain true liberty and authenticity.

Though Ḥatātah focuses on oppression and the denial of individual freedom, like Foucault he believes that power does not only limit and oppress, but also engenders new forms of behavior, sometimes the exact opposite of what it means to create. It is precisely the brutality of absolute dictatorship, realized through total mental and physical control, that propels 'Azīz towards the opposite values: humanism, compassion and freedom.

References

- ALLEN, Roger. 1995. "Arabic Fiction and the Quest for Freedom," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 26: 37–49.
- ʿATĪYYAH, Aḥmad Muḥammad. 1981. *Al-Riwāyah al-siyāsiyyah: dirāsah naqdiyyah fī 'l-riwāyah al-siyāsiyyah al-ʿarabiyyah* (The Political Novel: Critical Study in the Political Arabic Novel). Maktabat Madbūlī, Cairo.
- BALLAS, Shimon and Reuven SNIR (eds.). 1998. *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*. York Press, Toronto.
- BALZAC, Honoré de. [1835]. *Gobseck* / trans. Ellen Marriage. Electronic copy at <www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1389/pg1389.txt> (accessed December 16, 2014).
- BARAKA, Magda. 1998. *The Egyptian Upper Class between Revolutions, 1919–1952*. Garnet & Ithaca Press, Reading.
- BERLIN, Isaiah. 1969. *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- BOTMAN, Selma. 1988. *The Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939–1970*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse.
- BROCKOPP, Jonathan E. 2001. "Slaves and Slavery". *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an* (Brill, Leiden), v: 56–59.
- BUBER, Martin. 1988. *The Knowledge of Man*. Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, NJ.
- CAMUS, Albert. 1960. *The Myth of Sisyphus* / trans. Justin O'Brien. Vintage, New York.

- COFFEY, John. 1996. *Michel Foucault and Postmodern Atheism: Life after the Death of God*. [Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. (Cambridge Papers towards a Biblical Mind; 5)]. Electronic copy, Jubilee Center—Biblical Thinking for Public Life, December 1996, <<http://www.jubilee-centre.org/michel-foucault-and-postmodern-atheism-life-after-the-death-of-god-by-john-coffey>> (accessed 16 December 2014).
- COOKE, Miriam. 2001. "Ghassan al-Jaba'i: Prison Literature in Syria after 1980". *World Literature Today*, 75: 237–245.
- DAVISON, Ray. 1997. *Camus: The Challenge of Dostoevsky*. University of Exeter Press, Exeter.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* / trans. Alan Sheridan. Vintage Books, New York.
- GINAT, Rami. 2013a. "Remembering History: The Egyptian discourse on the role of Jews in the communist movements". *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49/6: 919–940.
- GINAT, Rami. 2013b. *Egypt's Incomplete Revolution: Lutfi al-Khuli and Nasser's Socialism in the 1960s*. Routledge, London.
- GOLOMB, Jacob. 1995. *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*. Routledge, London and New York.
- ḤATĀTAH, Sharīf. 1974. *Al-Hazīmah* [The Defeat]. Dār al-Ṭalī'ah, Beirut.
- ḤATĀTAH, Sharīf. 1980. *Al-'Ayn dhāt al-jafn al-ma'danī* [The Eye with an Iron Lid]. Dār al-Thaqāfah al-Jadīdah, Cairo.
- ḤATĀTAH, Sharīf. 2006. *Al-Nawāfīdh al-Mafīūḥah* [The Open Windows] (containing the eponymous novel as well as *Jināḥāni lil-Rīḥ* [The Wind's Two Wings]). Dār Mīrīt, Cairo.
- IBRĀHĪM, Ṣun'allāh. 1964. *Tilka 'l-Rā'ihah*. Dār al-Thaqāfah al-Jadīdah, Cairo.
- LEWIS, Bernard. 1963. *The Middle East and the West*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- LEWIS, Bernard. 2010. *Faith and Power: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. Oxford UP, Oxford.
- MARX, Karl. 1964. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* / trans. Martin Milligan. International Publisher, New York.
- MUNIF, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. 1979. *Al-Ashjār wa-'ghīyāl Marzūq* [The Trees and the Murder of Marzūq], 2nd ed. Al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-dirāsāt wa'l-nashr, Beirut.
- MUNIF, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. 2001. *Al-ān hunā, aw: Sharq al-mutawassiṭ marratan ukhrā* [Here and Now, or: East of the Mediterranean Revisited]. Al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-dirāsāt wa'l-nashr, Amman.
- PELED, Mattityahu. 1998. "Prison Literature". In BALLAS & SNIR 1998: 69–76.
- SHOHAM, Shlomo. 1985. *Rebellion, Creativity and Revelation*. Science Reviews Ltd, Northwood, Middlesex, UK.
- STAGH, Marina. 1993. *The Limits of Freedom of Speech: Prose Literature and Prose Writers in Egypt under Nasser and Sadat*. Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm.
- VATIKIOTIS, Panayiotis. 1969. *The Modern History of Egypt*. Praeger, Westport.