Civil and the Limits of Politics in Revolutionary Egypt

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Raymond Williams argues that "keywords" signify concepts with "active histories" and multiple meanings, although they are often used as if listeners share a definition.[1] I examine *civil* (*madani*) as an adjective that modifies a number of important nouns in contemporary Egypt. Since the Arab revolutions in 2011, the word has also taken on the life of an ambiguous noun, *madaniyya*. *Civil* is an unstable meaning-space for distributions of power and definitions of community in tumultuous times. Its registers and genealogies imply competing distributions of real bodies in space, time, and relation to each other. I am particularly interested in the implications of different uses of the term for freedom and containment based on *jins*, or kind/genus/sex. I argue that *civil* stood in as a rhetorical placeholder in a time with few secure ideological positions, little agreement about the content of the good society, and wide recognition of the enormity of obstacles to transformation.

In examining registers of the *civil* in post-2011 Egypt, I draw on Jacques Rancière's understandings of "politics" and "police." Police describes forms of power that "partition . . . the sensible" by "separat[ing] and exclud[ing]" as well as "allow[ing] participation"; Rancière describes this form of power as "consensus."[2] In a policing status quo, "society consists of groups dedicated to specific modes of action, in places where these occupations are exercised, in modes of being corresponding to these occupations and these places."[3] All bodies, voices, ideas, and spaces are arranged to maintain separation, hierarchy and control. While the "police-principle" is "at the heart of statist practices," it emanates from many locations.[4] The "essence" of politics, in contrast, is emancipatory "dissensus," or "to disturb this arrangement. . . . Political litigiousness/struggle is that which *brings politics into being* [my emphasis] by separating it from the

This article was made possible by the Egyptians who generously made time for me, despite their extremely busy lives, between 2011 and 2014. Those I can name include Shahinaz Abdel Salam, Dina Abouelsoud, Siham Ali, Doaa Abdel Ayaal, Morice George Ayman, Maissan Hassan, Mozn Hassan, Fatma Naout, Rasha Sadek, Sara Nagib Sedrak, and Azza Suliman. I am very grateful to them. I am thankful as well to Dr. Dalia Abdelhadi, who motivated me to write the first iteration of this paper for a presentation at Lund University in May 2012 and hosted my visit. Thank you to Lila Abu-Lughod, who encouraged me to develop it for a May 2014 workshop at the Columbia Global Center in Amman. Diala Alqadi, my energetic, bright, and conscientious undergraduate research assistant at Duke University, deserves thanks for excellent work. Atef Said, as always, was generous in listening to my ideas and connecting me with activists. He also turned out to be an insightful and very quotable double-blind peer reviewer! Zeinab Abulmagd is an unstinting friend and intellectual ally. Miral al-Tahawi offers analysis, friendship, and poetry in worrying times. I am grateful for the incisive comments and suggestions of all three *CSSAAME* reviewers. Fieldwork in 2011 was made possible by research funds from Duke University and fieldwork in 2014 was funded by a 2013 Duke Arts and Sciences Council Committee Faculty Research Grant. All English translations of interviews are my own.

1. Williams, *Keywords*, 14–15, 87–93.

2. Ranciére, "Ten Theses," Thesis 7.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

Vol. 35, No. 3, 2015 · DOI 10.1215/1089201x-3426445 · © 2015 by Duke University Press

police that is, in turn, always attempting its disappearance either by crudely denying it, or by subsuming that logic to its own."[5]

In light of Rancière's earlier magisterial *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*, this definition of politics may be understood to refuse totalizing ideological and sociological formulations in favor of an anarchist utopian individualism that recognizes individuality and disagreement as constitutive of any "class."[6] Rather than lodging "politics" in parties, institutions, and governments, Rancière views it as individual or collective *emancipatory* rupture that emerges to challenge arrangements of time and space, social consensus and regulation. Politics includes the carving out of space and time to think, be creative, play, have a leisure life, and affirm a whole self.[7] In this understanding, *political* subjects and spaces are produced *through* "scenes" of enactment, movement, and action rather than "preconstituted" along identitarian axes. There is no "positional incapacity" of any individual or group to maximize freedom.[8]

Spatial dimensions and metaphors are central to this account. "Police" partitions, separates, excludes, allows, arranges, and distributes bodies and voices in space and time. "Politics," in contrast, ruptures, transgresses, and refuses such distributions and arrangements through emancipatory enactments. This is an evocative approach given the ubiquity of embodiment at multiple scales in the Arab revolutions. Among the essential lessons of these revolutions, however, is that ideological differences and material inequalities do not easily melt away, even in emergent, pluralistic, and nondoctrinaire revolutionary politics, because it is difficult to erase positional and embodied differences in the scenes where politics are made.

This article is based on analysis of scholarly and primary sources that include July 2011 and January and February 2014 fieldwork and interviews in Cairo with feminist and Coptic activists and analysts. The section that follows discusses why the term *civil* emerged to signify the ideal relationship between citizens and the state in Egypt since 2005 and its instability as a sign. Registers of the *civil* imply different relations between government and religion, government and military power, and government and people. The second section examines post-2011 campaigns for civil marriage and divorce in Egypt and the implications for citizenship, religious identification, and sectarianism. The final section foregrounds the sexually and ideologically differentiated body in Egyptian revolutionary activism, showing the difficulty of overcoming sensibilities of police.

Civil as a Sign of Struggle

In Egypt, *civil* refers to competing arrangements of power: it is used by Islamists who advocate their own civilian rule; liberals and leftists who oppose clerical and military rule; and authoritarian militarists who oppose clerical rule. The term emerged as a capacious sign for consequential struggle since 2005 and especially between 2011 and 2013, when its meanings proliferated and vacillated in light of a fast-moving revolution whose epitaph has yet to be written. *Civil* was perceived by many Egyptians in the eighteen days of revolution in early 2011 as a solution to the exclusions of militarism, Islamism, and sectarianism, as well as the authoritarian baggage of postcolonial "secularism" in the region. In one register, *civil* rejects such repressive associations and forms of police, whether they are imposed by outsiders or enacted from within the country. It expresses, in contrast, a positive radically plural and emancipatory politics. This register of the *civil* exceeds the possibilities offered by

5. Ibid. In Thesis 8 Ranciére writes: "The essence of politics is *dissensus*. Dissensus is not the confrontation between [pre-constituted] interests or opinions. . . . [Rather], politics makes visible that which had no reason to be seen, it lodges one world into another." Politics redistributes dominant orders of the sensible by challenging through emancipatory enactments where and when particular bodies, voices, and actions belong. For a lengthier discussion of Ranciére's use of dissensus, see Ranciére, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 7, and Tanke, *Jacques Ranciére*, 15–22.

6. See Donald Reid, introduction to Ranciére, *Proletarian Nights*, xxiii–xxvi. On Ranciére against "ideologists and all the vanity of the master thinker," see ibid., 12. Ranciére understands Saint Simonian worker activists to imagine "a bourgeois civilization without exploiters, a chivalry without lords, a mastery without masters or servants. In short, the emancipation of the workers" (ibid., 48).

7. Ranciére, "Revisiting 'Nights of Labour,'" Part 6. See also Ranciére, *Proletarian Nights*, viii–xi.

8. Ranciére, "Ten Theses," Thesis 8. Also see Ranciére, "Revisiting 'Nights of Labour,'" Parts 3 and 4.

"civil society" as associational life in what Frédéric Vairel calls its "Tocquevillean, Lockean, Marxian, or Habermasian forms." Civil society in liberal and neoliberal terms had been widely promoted in the region since the end of the Cold War and before the 2011 revolutions as a docile form of political engagement by Western "donors, journalists, diplomats, and academics."[9] Its main proponents remain part of a neoliberal democracy industry that cultivates status quos to serve Western capital and geostrategic interests.[10]

Civil substantially took the place of the loaded term *secular* (*'ilmaniyya*) in Egyptian discourse in the 2000s. *Secular* is freighted with the contradictions of colonial and postcolonial history. Western colonial rhetoric had touted its superiority over the colonized through claims of secular modernity and advanced civilization. Twentieth-century nationalists, leftists, and revolutionaries in the region, who established authoritarian militarized states, often described their projects as secularist, nationalist, and modernizing. (Their militarism is perhaps predictable given the violent technologies of colonial and imperial extraction and control.) The founding moment of Egypt as an independent republic was the 1952 Free Officers revolution by military coup, which overthrew the British-supported King Farouk and a partly independent parliament and was co-led by the nationalist anti-imperialist Gamal Abdel Nasser. The two Egyptian presidents who followed Abdel Nasser until 2011 were military officers installed to their positions, Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. They too led nondemocratic and often repressive secular states. As Hussein Ali Agrama argues, the right of sovereign power allows the state "to ultimately decide the central questions that constitute the problem-space of secularism." It gets to "draw a line between religion and politics," and by definition, it stands "prior to both of them."[11] It delimits or expands its capacities however much it can get away with doing so.

There are furious debates on the relationship between Islam and government among Islamists of different ideological persuasions that I can only lightly engage in this article. Those who articulate a "discourse of unity" argue that Islamic democracy is possible in a civil or secular state, but they do so by abstracting Islam and democracy from what Nimer Sultany calls their "concrete historical materializations."[12] Islamists who articulate a "discourse of disunity," in contrast, contend that Islam and democracy are incompatible, democracy is synonymous with secularism, and a civil state requires an unacceptable separation between religion and state. Ergo, a civil state is un-Islamic.[13] Islamists commonly describe "secularism" and "secular" as anti-Islamic, Western, and foreign, although the terms are unstable, plural in meaning, and contested in Western and Eastern settings.[14] As Sindre Bangstad argues, the secular/nonsecular divide insisted upon by Talal Asad and many of his scholarly adherents reproduces an abstract Western/non-Western binary that is disconnected from "vernacular practices" and multiple genealogies.[15] Such a divide ignores contestations over power and influence by culture actors strategically invested in reproducing the "authentic" in a given setting.[16]

The same instabilities and contestations attach to the term *civil*: it draws on various genealogies and captures multiple meanings ultimately best understood historically, ethnographically, and discursively. Mohamed Waked argues that *civil* in its recent registers became part of public debate in Egypt during the 2005 parliamentary elections, when the Muslim Brotherhood "emerged as the only serious contender" to Mubarak's National Democratic Party and used the term to describe its advocacy for a nontheocratic political Islam.[17] Based on a series of interviews with Brotherhood leaders in 2006, Chris Harnisch and Quinn Mecham contend that the "heart of contemporary Brotherhood political ideology is the concept of the [Islamic] 'civil state,' which upholds civil liberties and constitutional government within the boundaries of Islamic law, broadly interpreted."[18]

9. Vairel, "Protesting in Authoritarian Situations," 33.

10. See Salime, "Securing the Market."

11. Agrama, "Reflections on Secularism," 27.

12. Sultany, "Against Conceptualism," 441–42.

13. Ibid., 445–47.

14. Al-Ali, *Secularism, Gender, and the State*.

15. Bangstad, "Contesting Secularism/s."

16. Narayan, "Essence of Culture."

17. Waked, "The Scared Islamists."

18. Harnisch and Mecham, "Democratic Ideology in Islamist Opposition?," 189.

This vision was explicated in the 2007 Muslim Brotherhood draft program, which "uses Islamic language in discussing common political issues."[19] Not surprisingly, "Coptic Christians and women" were the most skeptical about the limits of this Islamic civil state and the sincerity of statements that equality in political rights and individual liberties would be protected.[20]

The hundreds of thousands of Egyptians who gathered in many cities for a "Day of Wrath" on January 25, 2011, chose "National Police Day" to protest authoritarian rule, economic injustice, and routine beatings, imprisonment, torture, and killing by the Central Security Services, the institutional framework of the national police force. To quote Atef Said, during the eighteen days between January 25 and February 12, 2011, use of the word *civil* emerged out of the "Tahrir consensus," or an agreement among participants in a Midan Tahrir coalition of "Islamists, liberals, and revolutionary youth" who decided that "this may be the right term to calm down different actors' anxieties and worry about the future." In this use, *civil* expressed a vision of a future state that would be "asecular" and "democratic" in order to assuage "Islamists' worry that secularism is anti-religion."[21] During those eighteen days, one of the "animating principles" that developed was that "no one—no one person, group of people, social or economic class, religious or secular political orientation—should have a monopoly on power."[22] Said argues that "civil was a tactical slogan, and all agreed to it. It may inherently mean being against religious rule and against military rule, but nobody dared to say this explicitly since this was a moment of unity in Tahrir."[23] This "asecularity" expressed what Agrama calls the "pure popular sovereignty" of the revolutionary mobilizations, where "protests expressed every potential language of justice, secular or religious, but embraced none." These initial protests "stood outside the problem-space of secularism."[24]

After Mubarak was forced to step down on February 11, 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) held executive and military power in Egypt until June 30, 2012. During the seventeen-month period of SCAF rule, conflict swung between three gravitational forces: democratic and radical elements arguing for social justice; Islamists repressed by the authoritarian state and eager for political power; and *fulool* (remnants of the Mubarak regime), oligarchs, police forces, and the SCAF who aimed to limit fundamental transformation. By March 2011, when the SCAF-organized constitutional referendum took place, the first major "polarization" emerged among "opposition" forces in Tahrir and elsewhere. Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood used *civil* to describe antimilitary rule, although they were allegedly coordinating behind the scenes with the SCAF. Secular parties and groups used *civil* to express their opposition to Islamic rule only. Revolutionary youth used the term "to describe being both antimilitarist and anti-Islamist rule."[25]

This context and struggle frames the radical register of the *civil* articulated through the first half of 2011 by twenty-four-year-old Ramy Essam in performances of his soulful guitar-accompanied song "Madaniyya," whose words were widely memorized and repeated:

> All of us, united (one hand), have made one demand:
> *madaniyya*, *madaniyya*, *madaniyya*, *madaniyya*!
> Down, down with military rule!
> Down, down with military rule!
> The people want the fall of the regime
> The people want the fall of the regime
> I am occupying Tahrir
> I am occupying Tahrir
> Because I do not feel the change
> Because I do not feel the change!
> We will not leave.
> We will not leave.[26]

19. Ibid., 198.

20. Ibid., 199–200.

21. Atef Said, review comments on file with the author. I greatly appreciate the thoughtful "insider" analysis offered by Atef Said, who agreed to be named in the article.

22. Agrama, "Reflections on Secularism," 30.

23. Atef Said, review comments on file with the author.

24. Agrama, "Reflections on Secularism," 29.

25. I am again indebted to Atef Said for these nuances.

26. Video clips of Ramy Essam's performances of the song may be viewed online: YouTube video, 1:31, performance of the song in a BBC studio, posted by Ramy Essam, July 24, 2001, www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=m3Swd3jHe6A; and YouTube video, 2:24, performance in Midan Tahrir, posted by Galal Kerdani, May 27, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6vqLIS77T6g.

On June 30, 2012, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood took office as the first nonmilitary and elected president of Egypt.[27] Samuel Tadros argues that among other things, non-Islamists in the election lacked "ideological common ground" or "any coherent program, particularly a coherent economic program," where they might have won. Instead, "They played into the Islamists' hands and made this a battle of identity—whether the state would be 'Islamic' or 'civil,'" which he argues was shallowly and trivially defined by politicians. It is "a meaningless term, but the non-Islamists were too scared to use the word 'secular.'"[28] But as Maha Abdelrahman argues, collaboration against a repressive ruling regime across ideological differences including the secular/nonsecular divide was already the modus operandi in Egypt in the five to ten years before the revolution and was a strategic tack taken by liberals and leftists more than Islamists.[29] Moreover, as already indicated, *civil* referred to at least three different visions by the time of the mid-2012 elections. Clarity did not exist because there were serious nontrivial ideological differences among the opposition.

Morsi appointed General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to the position of defense minister. Sisi was one of twenty-one senior military leaders who had composed the SCAF. This appointment was widely read as evidence of behind the scenes deal making. During Morsi's tenure, activists were unsuccessful in holding accountable senior military and security leaders for violence and corruption committed during the Mubarak and SCAF periods.[30] Polarized meanings of *civil* continued to circulate. Mubarak supporters now used the term to describe anti-Islamic rule. From the seat of power, the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists insisted that Islamic rule is civil by definition in Egypt since it followed constitutional requirements. Revolutionary youth who persisted with an antimilitarist and antireligious definition of the *civil* were marginalized and even blamed for instability.

Writing in November 2012 during Morsi's presidency, Waked contends that in the previous year, "secularists" of many ideological persuasions used the adjective *civil* to describe opposition to "a theocratic Islamic state" because the "environment . . . doesn't allow them to pose as 'secular.'"[31] He argues that Islamists were "generally antagonistic to this camp, often conflating it with . . . the 'liberals' (in the strict sense of the word), who do comprise the largest constituency of the 'civil' camp, but are nevertheless not an overwhelming majority of it." Islamists strategically marginalized advocates of a broadly inclusive notion of the civil as out-of-touch elites to divert attention from evidence that support for political Islam is overestimated in Egypt. The most prominent rallies and demonstrations of an inclusive "civil camp," Waked contends, have "been staged by lower-middle-class youth and not at all the elite." The Brotherhood and its allies, he insists, "are actually afraid of 'the people,' even if they formulate their fears as hostility toward the 'civil' camp."[32] Ultimately, that fear is based on the fact that "the ruling Brotherhood regime attacked practically every social segment of Egyptian society that tried to struggle for its economic rights and protect its interests." It assured "economic elites" in and outside Egypt that "their interests will not be harmed."[33]

Direct military rule of Egypt was reestablished after the widely supported military coup that overthrew Morsi in July 2013. It was led by General Sisi, who later won an election and at this writing is the fifth president of the Republic of Egypt. Despite the fierce revolutionary intent to take down "the national security paradigm"[34] and popular anger at deeply rooted corruption and violence by the Egyptian military police state, the latter effectively uses state media to represent itself as crucial for preserving Egypt's stability and territorial and national integrity against enemies, real and imagined. After the 2013 coup, the term *civil* lost its salience in the Egyptian context.

My fieldwork in early 2014 in Cairo indicates

27. For a compelling explanation of the win grounded in knowledge of electoral system rules, "retail politics," and strategies preceding the elections, see Tadros, "Egypt's Elections."

28. Ibid., 35.

29. Abdelrahman, "With the Islamists?"

30. See, for example, Kortam, "The Fight for Justice."

31. Waked, "The Scared Islamists."

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Agrama, "Reflections on Secularism," 30.

widespread support among regular Egyptians for a law-and-order government if it can offer some economic security. But many other Egyptians—Copts, leftists, labor activists, feminists, anarchists, intellectuals, and artists—remain deeply resistant to the subordinations embedded in Islamism, clericalism, and militaristic nationalism and committed to a broad "social justice" framework and expansive notion of the *civil*. Militarism is inconsistent with feminist politics committed to inclusion, equality, and nonviolence. Militarism is historically attached to ideologies that legitimate violence toward bodies, subjectivities, and lives that are deemed dangerous to the status quo. State-sponsored militarism is the formal instantiation of police in Rancière's sense of the term. Sara Sedrak, an Egyptian feminist activist of Coptic background, shared her analysis of the *civil* question in revolutionary Egypt during an interview in July 2011:

> Look, there are many discussions among Egyptians about the word *civil* and this also occurred in Midan Tahrir. The discussions involve Islamists, non-Islamists, poor people, the not poor, the educated and the unlettered. *Civil* has more than one meaning. Each individual discusses this term but means something different, except for people like us. When we say *civil*, we mean civilian laws, freedom for citizens, full democracy. And our understanding of democracy is full. And even citizen freedom—people interpret this differently. If you sit with an Islamist, he will say "I am for citizen freedom, but to the degree that it does not challenge Islamic sharia, and I am with a civil state that does not violate Islamic sharia." There are some Egyptians who have no trouble with military [rule]. . . . For the Islamists, *civil* means "not an Islamic caliphate." They see the current civil state as a stage that allows them to function and produce an Islamic system through existing state institutions. And this differs from the Islamists of Afghanistan. The Egyptian Islamists are, rather, affected by Turkey's experience. And in terms of the international order, the Muslim Brotherhood knows well that they must—even if they succeed in gaining power in Egypt—they must exist within an international system that will not accept them coming to power at this moment. . . . So in the end, they tell you, we are for "civil, civil." But when you focus on the word and you discuss it on the street . . . for example, all except the educated elite say that a Christian cannot become president of the republic because we are an Islamic state.[35]

As Sedrak frames it, "This is the crux of the current conflict, the nature of the state. Will it be a military state, a religious state, or a civilian state?" For her, a civil state requires "full citizenship [*muwwatana kamila*] for women and men and minorities."[36] Four years and many more devastations later, this expansive notion of the *civil* and the promise of emancipatory politics seem ever out of reach. The article turns next to the realms of the body and intimate life, in order to illustrate the stakes of the *civil* and the difficulties of constituting radically pluralistic inclusion.

Civil Intimacies and Violent Partitions

Sectarian and sexualized violence and exclusion have been prominent in a number of Arab revolutionary settings and reemerged early in Egypt, calling into question the nature of the communities envisioned. For example, dominant discourse with respect to gender and family life quickly devolved—or returned to its masculinist form—soon after the heady early days of the revolution. In April 2011, the president of the family appeals court drafted a proposal to the transitional prime minister requiring changes to family and divorce law that decreased the rights of women and mothers. Divorced husbands had formed two new groups, "The Revolution of Egyptian Men" and "The Association for Saving the Egyptian Family," holding demonstrations, a hunger strike, and a meeting with the Azhar Grand Sheikh to push for such changes.[37]

As part of its plural life and genealogies, *civil* was often invoked as an adjective by feminists and Coptic activists who challenge existing marriage, divorce, and personal status law based on religious rules. The word *civil* in such accounts refers to a social order where laws, policies, and practices related to citizenship and intimate life do not discriminate on the basis of religion, ethnicity, or sexual difference. By definition, *civil* in this register requires recognition of marriage and divorce by

35. Sara Nagib Sedrak, interview by the author, Cairo, Egypt, July 19, 2011.

36. Ibid.

37. Gómez-Rivas, "Women, Shari'a," 29–30.

a secular state. Many Copts and feminists are in fact neutral as to whether such a civil legal order is established under autocratic, leftist, or liberal rule because they understand Islamic and Coptic options as worst in their sexual and sectarian rules.[38] Notably, even the "secular" Egyptian state constitutes women of any religion as legally lower than men in their group when one takes into account marriage, citizenship, and guardianship rules.

Coptic Church and Egyptian state marriage rules require people to choose a religious category and place significant barriers before Christian and Muslim women in relationships that transgress religious boundaries. The church makes it practically impossible for Christians to be approved for divorce unless they formally change religious affiliation or claim adultery, and makes it difficult for divorced Christians to remarry. Restrictive rules on Christian divorce and remarriage date to a 1971 ruling by Pope Shenouda III, the leader of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church, who argued that the Gospel allows few justifications for divorce. The 1971 ruling canceled a list of nine possible divorce justifications agreed to in 1938 by a Christian millet council and adopted by Egypt's postcolonial civil courts in 1955. The Coptic patriarch argued that the 1938 millet council comprised "secular people" and thus the list was invalid.[39] This 1971 ruling is a historical marker of what Paul Sedra argues is a "shift in influence away from the [Coptic] laity and toward the clergy" since the establishment of the Arab Republic of Egypt in 1952. Sedra views this as an aspect of a "modern millet partnership" between Coptic patriarchs and Egyptian presidents.[40]

The 1971 revocation of the list reduced the ostensibly civil state's ability to approve or register divorce for Christians except in cases of fornication. However, the government did not firmly apply this ruling until 2008, after years of pressure from the Coptic patriarch, when it issued a document called "Reform of the List of '38" that allowed Christians to divorce on only two justifications: fornication or changing one's religion. The ruling also required government registrars to acquire church permission before recognizing a marriage between Copts.[41] The church does not recognize divorce of Copts granted by state authorities, which means such people are not allowed to remarry in the church. This is significant in a legal context where religious institutions are necessary for any marriage or divorce to be recognized by the state. Interestingly, a church lawyer, Naguib Gobrael, insisted in 2012 that the "only way out" is for "the state to permit civil marriage for Copts."[42]

State and church marriage and divorce rule are sources of hardship for many Egyptians of Coptic background.[43] There have been several well-known incidents of sectarian violence related to these rules in recent years. A prominent example is that of Abeer Talaat/Fakry, a Christian woman from Assiut in Upper Egypt who could not gain a divorce from an abusive husband. She converted to Islam in September 2010 in order to file for such a divorce in Egyptian family court and hid in Cairo. It was said she had promised to marry a Muslim man following the divorce, was reported to the Coptic Church, and taken captive in different "church-owned properties across Egypt before ending up in Imbaba," where "priests and nuns tried to convince her to re-embrace Christianity and return to her husband."[44] Following sectarian violence in early May 2011 fed by Salafi activists and others in Imbaba that left twelve people dead and over 240 injured, Talaat/Fakry turned herself in to the SCAF (!) for protection. Many Egyptians blamed "remnants" of the Mubarak regime or Talaat/Fakry herself for the violence rather than gendered and sectarian restrictions on marriage and divorce reproduced by the rules of Muslim and Christian institutions and the state.[45]

38. I do not have systematic data on these questions.

39. Ayman George Morice, with Rasha Sadek, interview with the author, Cairo, Egypt, July 23, 2011.

40. Sedra, "Reconstituting the Coptic Community," 34–35.

41. Siham Ali of CEWLA, interview by the author, Cairo, Egypt, July 20, 2011; Azza Suliman of CEWLA, interview by the author, Cairo, Egypt, July 20, 2011; Morice interview; and Shams El-Din, "For Copts, Marriage in the Church."

42. Shams El-Din, "For Copts, Marriage in the Church."

43. Hassan, "Egypt: Coptic Church Rejects Second Marriages."

44. Head, "Egypt Christians Protest."

45. See "Woman at Centre of Imbaba Violence Appears on TV"; "Woman at Centre of Imbaba Sectarian Violence Turns Herself in to the Army"; and El Sirgany, "Abeer." For a scholarly analysis of class and ideological cleavages among Coptic Egyptians and sect-based state restrictions in secular Egypt, see Sedra, "Class Cleavages."

The 2011 Egyptian revolution marked a rise in lay Coptic politics that refuses to be contained by accepted modes of being and action, including being forced to work within the frame of the church. This sensibility by no means attaches to the majority of Copts, since they are distributed within every ideological strand, socioeconomic class, and sector of Egyptian society with the exception of Islamism. Copts were active in the revolution and were and remain involved in the debates and ideological conflicts discussed in the previous section. As a minoritized group, however, fighting for a democracy that may seek to subordinate others within versus relying on a strong militarized and police state for "protection" is a dilemma they share with ideologically diverse feminists and queers.

With the 2011 revolution, Egyptian Copts in marital difficulty increasingly took their protests against church control to the streets, government offices, and the inner offices of the church to "demand a civil law that recognizes the idea of marriage and divorce among Copts" without recourse to the church.[46] Such actions were part of increasing rejection of political passivity and engagement solely through church leaders by younger Copts. For example, activists in the Maspero Youth Union, which was formed in 2011, argue for a "civilian, non-religious government" and "draw a line between church and state."[47] An aspect of my field research in 2011 focused on Coptic activists calling for a civil marriage law that allows Egyptians to marry, divorce, and remarry outside the control of the Coptic Church without having to accuse a spouse of adultery or convert to Islam. This would give them the option of using *khul'* divorce if women, or registering the divorce in Egyptian family courts if men.[48] For Ayman George Morice, who in June 2011 founded the "Right to Live" movement of Copts for civil resolution of personal status matters,[49]

> *Civil* means that religious law, whether Christian or Muslim, should be separated from the state. Of course, as a Christian, I cannot speak about the issue of the Islamic nature of the state because they will say that you are challenging Article 2 of the Constitution. So I cannot speak of this. I am speaking regarding the specific issue of personal status for Christians. We want church and government matters to be separated. We want a civil law to govern Christians. The second meaning of *madaniyya* is the idea that individuals have the freedom to behave as they like as long as they do not hurt others. They should have full freedom of choice. That, to me, is *madaniyya*.[50]

Article 2 articulates Islamic sharia as the main source of law, which allows religious institutions to rule over the intimate lives of members of minority communities. In late May 2010, Father Armia, Pope Shenouda's secretary, reiterated this agreement between church and state when he announced the Coptic Church's refusal to abide by a ruling from the Higher Administrative Court to allow divorced Copts to remarry: "Islam allows Copts to resort to its Shari'a, . . . in turn, no one should interfere in the Church's own practices and decisions."[51] Beyond the implications for the very practical matters of love, marriage, divorce, and pregnancy, this arrangement produces significant crises of belonging and representation for Egyptians of Christian background, irrespective of their piety,[52] because it establishes them in a legally subordinate form of citizenship in relation to Muslim Egyptians.

In September 2011, members of Right to Live publicly resigned from the Coptic Church to pressure state authorities to treat them as Egyptian citizens first.[53] In the seven months that followed, 4,000 Copts were reported to have "left the church and filed lawsuits in Egypt's Family Court for divorce."[54] Coptic 38 is another group calling for liberalization of divorce laws by the church, with "38" referring to the nine allowed bases for divorce from 1938 that activists want reestablished.[55] Activ-

46. Morice interview.

47. El-Faizy, "Egypt's Young Coptic Christians Energized."

48. Hasso, *Consuming Desires*, 142–53.

49. In September 2011, the Facebook page of this group had roughly 700 members. See Carr, "Egyptian Copts to Leave Denomination." I was informed that the Facebook page has since been hacked by an activist in the group. Private conversation with Rasha Sadek on Facebook, November 16, 2013.

50. Morice interview.

51. Hassan, "Egypt: Coptic Church."

52. Morice interview.

53. "Coptic Christians Call."

54. Ibid.

55. See ibid., and Shams El-Din, "For Copts, Marriage in the Church."

ists challenge control of the Orthodox Church over their intimate lives. But they also carefully challenge an Egyptian state whose civil personal status laws are organized around the patriarchal millet logic of Article 2 of the 1971 Constitution.

Church and state often work in a certain violent (rather than pastoral) patriarchal harmony in relation to intimate life, however. For example, Coptic authorities released security dogs and called in Interior Ministry forces to control a June 17, 2011, protest at the Coptic cathedral in the 'Abbasiyya neighborhood. The protestors were Christians who had received registration of a divorce in civil court but for many years had been unsuccessful in receiving church permission to remarry.[56] A press spokesman of the clerical council attributed the emboldened protesters to "the negative results of the January 25 Revolution."[57] Indeed, Sedra argues that the increasing activism of Coptic Egyptians against clergy and state with the toppling of the Mubarak regime indicates a "specific rejection of the millet partnership" that had restricted them "from both communal and national politics," even as sectarianism has intensified.[58]

Some feminists whisper of radical possibilities for all Egyptians if Coptic Egyptians succeed in gaining the right to civil marriage. An informant from a well-known NGO working on women's legal rights, CEWLA, explained that while members of the organization's secretariat would prefer to demand "civil marriage" for all Egyptians, most would understand such a call as against Islam.[59] Azza Suliman, the lawyer who founded CEWLA, added with only some hyperbole that while many Egyptian Christians call for a civil law to govern marriage and divorce, most Muslims "will spit on you" for using the term.[60] Conservative Muslim religious forces are as committed to Coptic ruling authority in "personal status" domains as is the Coptic Church. As Rasha Sadek, a journalist active in the Right to Live movement, explains:

> You will find Muslims who will support a civil personal status law for Christians to grant them the freedom and dignified life they are seeking. But you will find Islamists who are going to stand against a Christian call for a [civil] personal status law because some Muslims will then voice the same call, that is, a personal status law for Muslims that is of course based on full constitutional citizenship and equality. Islamists can never allow civil marriage for Muslims because civil law based on equality would only allow monogamy whereas in sharia a man is allowed to marry four women; this is one thing Islamists do not want to be deprived of. Another reason [Islamists would be against] civil marriage for Muslims [is because it] will allow a Muslim woman to marry a Christian man. To many Islamists, Christians are *kafer* [unbelievers], and when a Muslim woman bears the child of a Christian man, the child will be Christian.[61]

Examining the "civic virtue of tolerance," Saba Mahmood reminds us that while principles of religious liberty and state sovereignty were constituted together in Europe,[62] secular Western powers often apply a double standard that violates sovereignty in colonial and postcolonial regions for the stated purpose of protecting Western citizens, subjects, and indigenous Christians. In the process, they constitute the latter as "minorities" in their countries.[63] While this is a valid critique of Western geopolitical machinations, Mahmood's argument overestimates the impact of external forces on "local" forms of sectarianism in Egypt and elsewhere in the region. In a short intervention on sectarianism and family law in Egypt, for example, Mahmood argues that secularism has "exacerbate[ed] . . . religious hierarchy and gender difference" in Egypt because it "renders difference problematic."[64] But religious and gender differences were problematic before modern nationalism and Western colonialism. Indeed, religions (certainly Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) and modern nationalist and statist formations rely on similar sexualized and racialized rules to produce communities and boundaries. Inclusion by definition requires categorical exclusion, which occurs through sex and marriage rules that preexist

56. Morice interview.

57. Ibid.

58. Sedra, "Reconstituting the Coptic Community," 35, 36.

59. Ali interview.

60. Suliman interview.

61. Private conversation with Rasha Sadek on Facebook, March 26, 2012.

62. Mahmood, "Religious Freedom," 418–19.

63. Ibid., 420–22.

64. Mahmood, "Sectarian Conflict," 56.

and coarticulate with colonialism, secularism, and "modernity."

Many lay Coptic Egyptian activists and feminists view *civil* as a mechanism to resolve the deeply sectarian and sexist institutional structuring of marriage and intimate life by religious and state institutions. Although the urgency of producing discourses and spaces of nonviolent radical inclusion are clear, it is unclear that civil marriage will reduce misogyny or democratize family and intimate life. Civil government does not resolve the patriarchal or religio-ethnic exclusions often attached to modern states and nationalism.

The Egyptian constitution approved by referendum in January 2014 and produced by an appointed committee of fifty that included five women, expresses individual rights, such as freedom of belief and women's ability to pass citizenship to a child irrespective of the nationality of the father. But it also reinforces military power and maintains the status of Egyptians as "subjects" rather than "citizens," to use the language of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.[65] On religion and marriage, Article 2 reiterates "the principles of sharia" as "the main source of legislation," and Article 3 continues to assign the "personal status" and "religious affairs" of Egyptian Christians and Jews to their religious institutions.[66] The major religious institutions in Egypt are either part of the state or work in degrees of collusion with it. Pope Tawadros II, elected in November 2012 following the death of Pope Shenouda, has encouraged independent political engagement by Copts, rejecting the millet logic of his predecessor *except on matters of marriage and divorce*.[67] With the military overthrow of Morsi in 2013, there were new scapegoating attacks by Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers on churches and Coptic homes and businesses. Coptic activists were increasingly divided about street protest, especially since many Christians favor military rule as a stabilizing "lesser of two evils" for the community.[68]

The Sexed Body in Revolutionary Politics and Space

Masculinist policing of women in public space threads through militarist registers of the *civil* that legitimate control as protection and religious discourse that legitimates control as moral requirement. But masculinist policing is also enacted by leftist and liberal activists who trivialize and exclude women's bodies and voices. That is, gendered and sexual partitions, occasionally violent but more often normalized in everyday life, have a distributed quality that blurs the distinction between politics and police, as indicated in my interviews with feminists and revolutionary activists in their twenties and thirties. *Civil* in its use by feminist revolutionary activists refers to expansive forms of community that require the demilitarization, declericization, and depatriarchalization of public, social, and intimate life. Feminist imaginaries of the civil expect unrestricted mobility and access to a variety of spaces in the commons without fear of assault.

Many Egyptian women and girls, in contrast, were pressured to remain home and avoid demonstrations in 2011 by rumors that the streets "were full of kidnappers and rapists."[69] Gendered ideologies of protection and respectability challenge women's inclusion as full-fledged users of and participants in a variety of spaces[70] and frustrate women activists who become vulnerable to accusations of immorality and sexual impropriety if they become involved in gender-mixed spaces and projects. Maissan Hassan of the Women and Memory Forum and the Nazra feminist group sees women activists struggle with the ubiquitous "idea that a woman . . . whose body is involved in politics, would not be accepted by a man. . . . We are all suffocated by and caught up in this."[71] Sedrak described a scene in central Cairo in the first half of 2011 where women activists hid in a mosque during widespread shootings and men created a "cordon of protection around them."[72] While many women in the demonstration were comfortable with protection, such models are challenged by feminists who refuse binary understandings of male and

65. Mansour, "Egypt's New Constitution."

66. "2013 Draft Constitution."

67. Doss, "A Civil Coptic Movement."

68. Ibid.

69. Hamdy, "Strength and Vulnerability," 45.

70. Ilahi, "Gendered Contestations."

71. Mozn Hassan, Maissan Hassan, and Doaa Abdel Ayaal, group interview with the author, Cairo, Egypt, July 24, 2011.

72. Sedrak interview.

female bodies and subjectivities. These refusals recognize all subjectivities as socially constituted and all bodies as vulnerable to violence (they are equally so to bullets!).

Sedrak has been involved in leftist formations since her teens and was a student activist at 'Ain Shams University in the 1990s. She reported joining the revolution with full knowledge and experience in "confronting bodily violence and bodily attacks and such."[73] Mozn Hassan, a founder of Nazra, similarly states, "Women engaged in all revolutionary events knowing there was no chance for protection and they are fully responsible for their bodies, life and security. We need to discuss not only the society and cultural issues but also how women see their bodies and how they could work to remake the state, and to gain space and not to lose it."[74] Sexualized forms of violence are understood by feminist activists to be dispersed "techniques" of control and partitioning rather than random or the behavior of bad apples.[75] Such violence diminishes street participation by girls and women, feeds into protective approaches toward them, and translates into nonrepresentation at the tables where decisions are made. Violence is understood by many feminists to be consonant with the patriarchal sentiments of all masculinist social formations in Egypt, including judicial and policing bodies, Muslim Brotherhood organizations, Ultras soccer fans, labor unions, and most leftist and liberal groups.

State-sponsored actors are not the only sources of the dirty work of gendered and sexual violence that partitions space and limits the horizons of emancipatory politics. In a private conversation on Facebook in 2011, Shahinaz Abdel Salam, a well-known blogger from Alexandria, maintained that "harassing women is deeper in the society and is used as a strategy by many groups." It is an "Egyptian social illness," and thus "banal," requiring minimal incitement, which is "horrible and sad."[76] Dr. Aida Seif al-Dawla, an established activist and psychiatrist who directs the Al-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, challenges a hegemonic sensibility that "deals with the woman as if she is a sexual object who moves" (*ka'in jinsi mutaharik*).[77] Mozn Hassan of Nazra similarly contends that "this is a society that too often treats women in the public sphere as if they are prostitutes."[78]

Many revolutionary and liberal activists project gendered and sexual restrictions onto Islamist discourse and "the bearded men," whom Sara Mourad calls an "easily-identifiable target."[79] As Sedrak explains, however, "While the principles of [leftist and liberal] political programs are acceptable and these parties are full of women at the base and middle secretarial levels, it is all men in the policy committees."[80] Such formations support the "rights of women and minorities" in rhetoric, but the assumptions are often patronizing, like "when you get on the bus in Cairo and you read the small notice: for pregnant women, elderly, or handicapped. Those categories are on the margins in defining who belongs."[81]

These critiques apply to most of the revolutionary youth formations that emerged in 2011, including those committed to nonmilitary and nonreligious civil forms of rule. The Revolutionary Women's Coalition (*i'tilaf nisa' al-thawra*) was formed on February 14, 2011, by a handful of women activists in their thirties, including Abdel Salam and Dina Abouelsoud, who became frustrated with the exclusion of activist women in Tahrir by Revolutionary Youth Coalition men in their twenties and thirties.[82] The Revolutionary Women's Coalition met regularly in Tahrir Square until the encampment was cleared on March 9, 2011.[83]

73. Ibid.

74. Amar, "Turning the Gendered Politics," 323.

75. Shahinaz Abdel Salam, telephone interview with the author, Cairo-Alexandria, Egypt, July 26, 2011.

76. Private conversation on Facebook with Shahinaz Abdel Salam, November 29, 2011.

77. Badawi, "Aida Seif el-Dawla."

78. Hassan et al. interview.

79. Mourad, "The Naked Bodies of Alia."

80. Sedrak interview.

81. Ibid.

82. A February 12 press conference held by the Revolutionary Youth Coalition included only one woman, an attractive Egyptian of Coptic background who had not been particularly active, Sally Toma. An examination of the Revolutionary Youth Coalition Arabic Facebook page on April 25, 2012, shows that all but one of the fifteen members of the executive committee are men (the exception is Toma) and the three official spokespeople are men. Arabic Revolutionary Youth Coalition Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Revolution.coalition/info.

83. Abdel Salam telephone interview; Dina Abouelsoud, interview by the author, Cairo, Egypt, July 26, 2011; Sedrak interview.

Demands to include women in revolutionary leadership were dismissed by young men who said that activism is not women's work and will put them in situations where they can be raped or imprisoned.[84] While revolutionary men often stated their support for gender egalitarianism and representation, "they excluded women" in practice.[85] A recurrent response of young leftist men was, "We don't want to use women's quotas like the old regime."[86]

Many women revolutionaries came to realize that it would be necessary to struggle on specifically feminist rather than vague revolutionary platforms such as "dignity" and "social justice." The "million woman march" was organized for March 8, 2011, in Tahrir Square, by both well-established and new Egyptian feminist organizations to mark International Women's Day. Hundreds of women participated, as did a contingent of supportive men. A banner in Arabic demanded, "A civil constitution, not a religious or military one," with *civil* referring to nonmilitary rule and revocation of constitutional Article 2 making sharia the principal source of legislation in the country. Activists insisted on "specifically women's demands," with Arabic banners that read, "Our Rights Now, and Not Tomorrow," "Social Justice," "Women, Men, One Hand!," "No Bargaining on Women's Rights," and "We Want a Civil State!"[87]

The event was disrupted by hundreds of men who argued with participants and shoved, grabbed, and eventually chased women out of the square. The men chanted, "Illegitimate!," "Men are men and women are women and that will never change," "Go home, that's where you belong," "The people want the fall of women," and "Find a conference hall to state your demands, not Tahrir." Egyptian graduate student Ethar El-Katatney, who left the square as the confrontation escalated, believed two factors explain why only a few hundred attended the 2011 International Women's Day event: women expected they would be physically assaulted and "shouted down," and many activists chose to attend a competing protest outside the Maspero state television building that highlighted state security responsibility for violence against Copts.[88] Some Egyptian leftists and liberals, not exclusively men, dismissed the women's rights focus of the March 8 demonstration and the gendered and sexualized attacks on participants as insignificant in the face of battles against economic inequality, sectarianism, and militarism.[89] While there are valid critiques of women's rights projects that encourage security state interventions and reproduce neoliberal logics, revolutionary feminists in Egypt have generally not turned to the state for such "protection."

The events of March 8 were overshadowed by the violent clearing of the Tahrir Square encampment the following day by security forces.[90] On March 9, 2011, Essam, the lyricist and singer of "Madaniyya" referred to earlier, was arrested with scores of other protesters. In the four hours he was held at a temporary location in the Egyptian National Museum annex, soldiers stripped, bound, beat, and stomped on him, cut his long hair, and repeatedly shocked and burned him with electric prods.[91] He was released only when protestors refused to allow his transfer to a military jail. In all, about 170 activists were arrested and abused for hours before most were transported to a military prison ("C28 station") in Haikstep Military City, northeast of central Cairo in the Helwan Governorate. Men and women were handcuffed, beaten, stomped on, spit on, dragged, doused with water,

84. Abdel Salam telephone interview.

85. Ibid. The Revolutionary Youth Coalition, which included younger Muslim Brotherhood activists, was dissolved in July 2012 when Muhammad Morsi won the presidency. Bayoumi, "Lack of Unity Stalls Egypt's Youth Revolution." For comparison: On April 25, 2012, the Arabic Revolutionary Youth Coalition Facebook page had over 196,000 "likes" and the Revolutionary Women's Coalition (which is largely in Arabic and does not host a separate page) had 4,251 "likes." On December 20, 2013, the Revolutionary Women's Coalition had over 6,000 "likes" and the Revolutionary Youth Coalition had 226,000 "likes." See www.facebook.com/Revolution.coalition/info, and www.facebook.com/RevolutionaryWomensCoalition.

86. Abouelsoud interview.

87. See "Video: Celebration of Women's Day in Tahrir," and "Coalition of Egyptian Feminist Organisations."

88. "Ethar El-Katatney on World News Int. Women's Day March 8th 2011 (CNN)," YouTube video, 5:54, posted by Ethar El-Katatney, March 15, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKLNsndBJmY, and "Ethar El-Katatney on In the Arena (CNN)," YouTube video, 5:22, posted by Ethar El-Katatney, March 8, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ-pSR1YQBo.

89. See, for example, Amar, *The Security Archipelago*, 228–31.

90. "Tahrir Attack Cairo March 9 5.15 p.m," YouTube video, 6:04, posted by "Kikhote," March 9, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=sK2jNRyt_ZE.

91. McTighe, "Out of Protest."

subjected to electric shocks, and photographed with Molotov cocktail bottles. Men were stripped of most clothing upon detention and called thugs.

Of eighteen women arrested, seventeen were held at Haikstep for four days, accused of working in brothels and called prostitutes (*banaat da'ara*).[92] At least seven never-married "girls" forced to divide themselves from ever-married "madams" were individually taken to a separate room and subjected to a "virginity" test by military physician Ahmed Adel. Adel examined each woman's vaginal canal for approximately five minutes while a woman and male soldiers watched for the stated purpose of determining which of them could be charged as "prostitutes."[93] Three of the women filed a rape charge against Adel, but a military court changed the charge to disobeying orders and public indecency. In March 2012 the physician was "acquitted . . . even of 'public indecency,'" as the exams were deemed to be "medical" and conducted in "an open space."[94]

The "virginity" examination is a technology of power that demonstrates the sexual "excess" of civil rule over insurgent bodies.[95] Such practices, Khaled Fahmy argues, are primarily concerned with "tightening the hold of the modern state over the bodies and lives of citizens."[96] Beyond this, they inscribe and affirm the categories man/woman, prostitute/virgin, insurgent/obedient, and ruler/subject. In Begoña Aretxaga's words, such violence, unnecessary for control or security and thus irrational, illustrates the degree to which the state relies "on fantasy for an authority it cannot fully justify."[97] Like the 1992 strip search of imprisoned Irish Republican women in Belfast analyzed by Aretxaga, the 2011 virginity tests conducted on Egyptian women in a Cairo military prison are sexualized enactments and penetrations of police.[98] Like the virginity exam, the strip search is designed to contain the collective social body. The efficacy of these enactments in producing shame and fear depends on the fact that bodies are "already invested with the meanings of sexual difference and ethnic domination."[99] These dynamics reinforce the degree to which the sexed, classed, racialized, and gendered body is a nexus of power, to modify Michel Foucault's claim,[100] as well as the relevance of embodied and psychic partitions that quickly emerged as central at the scenes of revolutionary politics.

While Egyptian senior military generals initially denied the virginity tests, a general who asked not to be identified admitted to CNN that they had occurred and "defended the practice" in late May 2011: "The girls who were detained were not like your daughter or mine." He continued: "These were girls who had camped out in tents with male protesters in Tahrir Square, and we found in the tents Molotov cocktails and (drugs)." "We didn't want them to say we had sexually assaulted or raped them, so we wanted to prove that they weren't virgins in the first place. . . . None of them were (virgins)," he declared.[101] Fully coinhabiting space really is "dirty" for girls and women on this account since sexual purity is expected and all women active in the city or the public square are potential prostitutes subject to penetration and regulation,[102] although the poorer are certainly more vulnerable. Physical attacks on girls and women in urban Egypt have become public and brazen to a degree that in early 2014 when I was in downtown Cairo, streets within a mile of Tahrir Square could only be safely occupied by men after 11:00 p.m. Such policing redefines public space and the embodied experiences of manhood and womanhood.

Rancière's "police" and "politics" framework builds on arguments he developed in earlier work

92. "Samira and the Army: The Story of an Egyptian Girl," YouTube video, 22:44, posted by "tahrirDiaries," November 15, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=c29CAXR141s.

93. For more accounts of the virginity tests in Haikstep, see ibid.; Amnesty International, "Egyptian Women Protesters"; Amin, "Egyptian General Admits 'Virginity Checks'" (see embedded video); and Amnesty International, "Egypt: Admission of Forced." See also Ahmed Tharwat, "Belahdan and the Virginity War . . . March 9th, the day the Egyptian," May 24, 2012, YouTube video, accessed December 10, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_qET3vM4L4 (link inactive).

94. See Hussein, "International: Tahrir Square Women," and Seikaly, "The Meaning of Revolution."

95. Aretxaga, "The Sexual Games of the Body Politic."

96. Fahmy, "The Revolution of the Body."

97. Aretxaga, "The Sexual Games of the Body Politic," 2–4.

98. Ibid., 6.

99. Ibid, 6–7.

100. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 103.

101. Amin, "Egyptian General Admits 'Virginity Checks.'"

102. See, for example, Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

on "workers' dreams" in Paris wards in the first half of the nineteenth century, including that repression rests on the hierarchical organization of voices and bodies in space and time; freedom refuses such distributions and partitions; and totalizing categories such as the "working class" do not hold together and in fact should be "decomposed," which he does by excavating "hidden images and broken dreams" in the words, art, and lives of Saint-Simonians.[103] The emancipatory impulses that drove the Arab revolutions challenged existing ideological categories and institutional politics. The revolutions were pluralistic, even anarchist and utopian, which drew me to use Rancière to understand them. Rancière's anti-identitarian orientation in *Proletarian Nights* and "Ten Theses on Politics" remains relevant to the collective conscience of these revolutions, it seems to me. But his notion of "politics" is less attentive to the ideological, embodied, and positional partitions people bring into the "scene" in politics. Moreover, embodied and positional differences (can we even say "identitarian"?) are crucial to the trajectories of politics and the forms of policing that develop, as shown by many examples in this section.

Conclusion

This article discusses the paradoxical and vacillating meanings of the civil in contemporary Egypt and shows that all imaginaries of the civil presume a certain distribution of bodies and voices in space and time. *Civil*, an abstract and capacious keyword, often implies exclusions, for example of the poor, the uneducated, the noncitizen, the woman, the terrorist, the prisoner, and the prostitute. Carole Pateman famously argues that the liberal social contract in Western political theory is really a fraternal sexual contract.[104] An expanded notion of this critique may be applicable to notions of the civil. It connotes an imagined contract, often fraternal, that relies on various exclusions. The ambiguity of the term begs the question of why it was so widely deployed, including by feminists. The answer, I suspect, lies in the term's nonviolent register, a sense that many postcolonial solutions have failed, lack of confidence in existing ideologies and master narratives, and doubt regarding how to build futures respectful of plurality and dignity. Sometimes, as when used by militarists and elites, the term facilitates old-fashioned mystification.

Policing in Rancière's sense refers to the partitioning and hierarchical organization of bodies and voices in space and time. The Egyptian security state remains the most significant actor in partitioning the sensible, making and guarding lines of exclusion and minoritization, deciding what may not be said or heard, and punishing transgression. But policing sensibilities, ideological differences, and positional inequalities are also brought into the scenes of collective politics by activists themselves. Being attentive to relations between bodies, space, and meanings of the civil allows us to better see the lines that divide and enclose, as well as to appreciate the limits of emancipatory ruptures in such arrangements. Rancière's attention to the distribution of bodies emerges from his anticapitalist utopian philosophical and representational concerns, including in aesthetic production such as poetry, sculpture, and film.[105] Mine come from long interest in sexual, class, and ethnic differences in nationalist and revolutionary movements and concern with embodied subjectivities and desires.

Embodied coming together in space is implicit in Rancière's understanding of politics, where the scenes of emancipatory enactments are seen to produce freedom and new sensibilities of shared struggle. Rancière is highly attentive to bodies in his analysis of early nineteenth-century workers in Paris, noting the "physical misery of workshop people," loss of eyesight, death through illness, "the pain of working for a living," the difficulties of pregnancy, the necessities of nourishment, "the monotonous hours whose yoke he must bear to feed his body," and the sufferings of body and soul.[106] But the positioned and ideologically informed and constituted body is also important to police and politics. This article shows that ideological, embodied, and positional differences are rarely overcome in more than ephemeral ways

103. Ranciére, *Proletarian Nights*, 10.

104. Pateman, *The Social Contract*.

105. Burke, "The Body and the Gaze."

106. Ranciére, *Proletarian Nights*, 5, 8, 58, 75, 61, 62, 72.

in Rancièrian politics. While this notion of politics offers emergent possibilities for freedom and beauty, bodies enter the scene already constituted and subjectified, which structures their experiences and actions. ıılıı

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