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Collective memory in Egypt:
The contested memory of the 1952 revolution during the
administrations of Anwar al-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak

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1. Defining the subject and its location in time and space

This dissertation will examine the contested memory of the Egyptian revolution of 1952 during the periods of rule of Anwar al-Sadat and Husni Mubarak. The revolution of July 23, 1952 constituted a watershed event for Egypt. After years of monarchial rule, a group of officers split away from the army and overthrew the government of King Faruq. Initially, the revolution enjoyed broad support from all different strands of Egypt society. It united Islamists, Copts, leftists, communists, and liberals under the umbrella of resistance to foreign intervention and the corrupt nature of the monarchial regime, believing that popular resistance had finally culminated in true freedom. Moreover, it returned a sense of 'dignity' to the Egyptian people – dramatically stated, it was for the first time in two millennia that Egypt was ruled by an Egyptian, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, and that Egypt would determine its own destiny.

Nasser is credited with achieving sovereignty for Egypt, and was able to develop and 'Egyptianize' the national economy mainly by introducing socialist measures. The successes of large Nasserist projects such as the building of the Aswan Dam, the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the expulsion of the British, are hardly debated. He also succeeded to court both Egyptians and a large part of the Arab world with his vision of Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, the darker, authoritarian side of his system of rule became clear already in the 1950s. Moreover, in the 1960s, Nasser's policies failed to fulfill the dream of Arab unity and social justice. Increased state control on the economy, land reforms and nationalizations did not rid Egypt of rural poverty, unemployment and social injustice. Though a champion of non-alignment during the Cold War, Nasser became militarily and economically dependent on the Soviet Union. Egypt's humiliating defeat in the 1967 war with Israel dealt the final blow to Nasser's image and the pan-Arabist ideology. Politically, Nasser died a broken man in 1970; yet, he had won the hearts of the people.

His successor, Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat, faced the difficult task of stepping out of the shadow of the charismatic 'Abd al-Nasser. In the process referred to as de-Nasserization, Sadat sought to downplay Nasser's achievements and denounced him for his authoritarianism and his failed policies of socialism, pan-Arabism, and alliance

with the Soviet Union. Instead, he pursued an entirely different course of 'open door' economic policy (*infitah*) and rapprochement with the West. He renewed war with Israel, but later signed a bilateral peace treaty in 1978 under the watchful eye of the United States. Yet, Sadat had to always be careful not to delegitimize Nasser and the 1952 revolution as a whole - at the end of the day, Sadat himself was one of the Free Officers, and the entire legitimacy of the Republic rested on the 1952 revolution. Sadat handled this by claiming to have improved the achievements of the revolution and highlighting Nasser's authoritarianism and the 1967 defeat. Sadat gained confidence in his departure from the Nasserist course after the 1973 war with Israel, which, according to him, sharply contrasted the disastrous 1967 defeat and returned dignity to the Egyptians – a phrase Nasser had claimed for himself in 1956.

Husni Mubarak, on the other hand, faced a different political environment than Anwar al-Sadat after the latter was assassinated by Muslim fundamentalists in 1981. He introduced new policy measures which at times went as far as reversing Nasser's policies. Policy changes also affected the 'pillar stones' of the revolution, including its land reform, socialism, foreign policy and Arab nationalism. A critical debate about the revolution was tolerated since the errors of the Free Officers carried no direct personal challenge to Mubarak as opposed to Sadat. In the wake of criticism on Sadat, Mubarak needed to distinguish himself from Sadat more than Nasser. At the same time, Nasser's reputation underwent a substantial popular revival.

As significant measures of liberalization were introduced in the 1970s, including a limited form of political pluralism and relative freedom of press and publication, a critical discourse about the revolutionary years came to the surface. In particular, writers and artists started to reconsider the achievements of the revolution, reflecting on its intentions, principles and goals. Interestingly, observers clearly differed in what they had envisioned for the revolution and how its outcome should be assessed. In one way or another, critics of Sadat's and Mubarak's policies frequently raised the July revolution as a prism through which to discuss contemporary politics. Advancing very different narratives about the 1952 revolution, they used the past to promote their present political goals.

This work will examine the various narratives regarding the 1952 revolution in Egypt, how they evolved over time, and the debates they enticed. Using a theoretical framework based on collective memory studies, it will explain the dynamics of the different narratives, taking into account the changing context of Egyptian politics. A

main focus will be on the interplay between the different narratives. The time frame of the study will be limited to 1970-2010, that is, the Sadat and Mubarak administrations will be examined, with the aim of identifying changes and continuities between and within the two periods.

Collective memory can be described as the way in which groups construct versions of an imagined shared past, and employ them for self-understanding and legitimization in an ever-changing present. On the one hand, collective memory is instrumental in expressing or proving one's belonging to a group; and at the same time, it is crucial for distinguishing this group from other groups. Historian Carl Becker has argued that no matter what is written in history books, the memory of the past will always remain the dominant factor of how people perceive the past, and that "this picture, however little it corresponds to the real past, helps to determine their ideas about politics and society".¹ As David Lowenthal argued, in the minds of the people, the accurate version of historical events is of minor importance. Most important is what people *believe* happened, or what they *want* to have happened. The majority "does not seek historical veracity nor mind its absence".² They may believe in anything that unites them or strengthens their identity, which is something that is based on "faith, not rational proof." Preserving and reshaping the past is important in order to make sense of the present. The narration of central, historic events and their employment within the overall 'biography' of the nation is vital to national identity.

In the case of Egypt, since Nasser's death, various parties have exploited selected parts of the revolutionary legacy to serve their political goals. The word 'selected' is crucial here: in their narratives, the different parties have highlighted certain episodes, while others are omitted. According to Alon Confino, collective memory studies should intend to explore "how the construction of the past, through a process of invention and appropriation, affects the relationship of power within society".³ This study aims to demonstrate that the narratives and conflicts surrounding the memory of the 1952 revolution reflect the efforts of different groups to use the past in order to benefit the present. This work seeks to identify the agents of memory who have been active in shaping the narratives of the 1952 revolution in Egypt, and to

¹ Carl L. Becker, "What are historical facts?" in Phil L. Snyder, ed., *Detachment and the Writing of History: Essays and letters of Carl. L. Becker* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p.61

² David Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage", *History and Memory*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 1998), p.13

³ Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review*, 102(5), 1997, p. 1393

define their motives, goals and affiliation. A distinction will be made between the official state memory – which is most visible, especially in authoritarian states – and the counter memories of the Nasserists, the leftists and the communists, the liberals, and the Islamists. According to Confino, this is how the study of collective memory can be most useful: when the construction of memory is linked to its reception and contestation, acknowledging that there are multiple memories, and that struggles and negotiations take place between them. The 'real' principles and goals of the revolution have constantly been reexamined and debated. The liberals took issue with the authoritarian state that Egypt became under Nasser, a situation perpetuated by Sadat and Mubarak; the Marxists felt that the revolutionary regime had not rightly applied the true principles of socialism; and the Nasserists, greatly marginalized since the 1970s, accused Sadat and Mubarak of betraying Nasserism and '*the Philosophy of the Revolution*'. The Islamists had already become disillusioned with the revolution as a result of their repression by Nasser and his left-wing tendencies. Though Sadat returned them considerable freedom in a bid to counter left-wing groups, he is considered to have diverted from the revolution's goals of anti-imperialism and economic independence with his *infitah* policy, his rapprochement with the West, and the peace with Israel.

An examination of these counter memories as opposed to the official narrative will shed light on the cohesion of Egyptian state and society. Moreover, the acceptance and rejection of the various narratives will be examined. Assuming that memory's function is to shape national identity, this study will shed light on the Egyptians' self-perception and worldview by analyzing a central event in the evolution of Egyptian collective memory, and its continuing role in the negotiation over Egyptian national identity. This study is not concerned with examining historical facts about the revolution, but rather with the representation of the July revolution within the Egyptian historical and popular discourse. This study will not describe the political, economic and social aspects of Sadat and Mubarak's policies as such, rather, it will focus on changing commemorative traditions and narratives and how the official ones supported Sadat's and Mubarak's policies in their view. Thus, this study focuses on how the Egyptian government and members of society remember and interpret the 1952 revolution, how the meaning of the past is constructed, and how it is modified over time.

2. Scholarly discourse (historiographical) on the subject

A literature review concerning the memory of the 1952 revolution requires reference to two fields of research: the theoretical discourse of memory studies, and the historical discourse that deals with the memory of the revolution. The developments and major debates in the field of memory studies will be addressed first.

While the roots of memory studies date back to the early 20th century, the field gained popularity in the humanities since the 1980s as an expansion of the field of historiography. The rise of memory studies can be considered part of a decisive shift in theoretical orientation in the field of history towards the "*histoire des mentalités*", exhibiting an increased focus on social and cultural history. In terms of approach, memory studies added a parameter to academic history by studying not the past itself, but the ways in which the past is experienced and represented.

In the early 1920s, Maurice Halbwachs, one of the founders of the field of collective memory studies, argued that memory is a social construct and that it is shaped in interaction with others. Reconstructed images of the past provide a group with an account of its origin and development, and allow the group to recognize itself through time.⁴ Thus, collective memory is decoded in identity. As summarized by Aleida Assman, memory "provides a repository for group affinities, loyalties, and identity formations".⁵ Since one usually belongs to multiple groups in society, it is possible to identify with multiple collective memories at the same time; ranging from as small as the memory of the family to as large as the memory of the nation.

Collective memory is based on narratives and can be strengthened by 'memory aids' such as memorials, monuments, institutions and performative acts of remembrance, all of which confirm the narrative. The common need to 'inscribe' memory in the public and private space was already recognized in the 1980s by Pierre Nora. He introduced the concept '*lieux de mémoires*', referring to places and objects that incarnate national memory. He claimed that in modern times, people feel the need to materialize memory and create 'remnants' so that memory will remain, "like shells

⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago University Press: 1992), p.38

⁵ Aleida Assmann, "Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past", in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by K. Tilmans, F. van Vree & J. Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p.39

left on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded". Nora argues that this objectification of memory creates the "duty to remember".⁶

Recent scholarly literature in the area of collective memory has emphasized the constructed nature of collective memory and the forces behind memory. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan introduced the 'agency' approach, highlighting the behavior of small groups and individuals in doing the work of remembrance.⁷ Notably, throughout their work, Winter and Sivan use the term 'remembrance' instead of 'memory', implying that memory needs to be activated with the use of memory aids. Referring to the 'shelf-life' of memory artifacts, Winter and Sivan explain that there is a need for 'rehearsal' in order for a certain memory to become used. Jan Assman too has argued that every event is a potential memory (*stored*), while only some are actual memories (*adopted*).⁸ David Lowenthal uses the constructed nature of collective memory as a point of departure in his studies about myths and nationalism, what he calls the 'fabrication of heritage'; that is, falsified legacies that are integral to group identity and a sense of uniqueness.⁹ Yael Zerubavel has made important observations regarding the tools used in portraying the past as a coherent narrative to serve the purpose of strengthening group identity and national imagination, introducing useful terms as periodization, density and temporary regression.¹⁰

As the field of memory studies developed over the last thirty years, it brought about various, on-going methodological debates. One major debate is about memory's relation to history: is history opposed to memory, are they the same, or do they complement each other? Both Halbwachs and Nora assumed a sharp distinction between history and memory. According to Halbwachs, collective memory is stored in the minds of individuals and cannot be communicated further than three generations. Hence where memory ends, history begins. Nora explains the fundamental split between the two by arguing that memories are the events that actually happened, while histories are subjective representations of what historians believe is crucial to remember. In line with this dichotomous approach, Kerwin Klein

⁶ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, Spring 1989 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, 26), p. 7–24.

⁷ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and remembrance in the twentieth century* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

⁸ See Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, No. 65, (Spring - Summer, 1995), p. 130

⁹ Lowenthal, p. 11

¹⁰ See Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots. Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

argues that memory became an alternative to History with a capital 'h'. Citing Marita Sturken, he argues that while "formal" historical discourse has been sanctioned or valorized by institutional frameworks or publishing enterprises, memory can be considered the "unofficial" and genuine version of events by the common people.¹¹

Other scholars argue that memory and history are basically the same, based on the postmodern idea that not only all history, but all ideas are constructed in narratives. For example, Peter Burke claims that "neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases we are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion, which is socially conditioned".¹² Also Michel's Foucault ideas about knowledge, power and memory subvert any notion of objectivity. Foucault simply views collective memory as an expression of the power politics between interest groups. According to him, collective memory is basically the same as history because modern historiography is nothing but a tool of memory. The most powerful memory agents, who aim to control the master narrative, wittingly dismiss the memories of others in order to enlarge their social and political power in the present. Thus, historiography is not a scientific effort to uncover the past, since the past in itself is a tool in the hands of powers of the present.¹³

Berger, Lorenz and Melman offer a more nuanced view, combining the two opposing stances in the introduction to their edited volume *Popularizing National Pasts*. The authors propose a relation between history and memory that functions as a bridge between two points in time, and is located both in past and present. They adopt the view put forth by Lucian Holscher that memory is "the exemplary point of departure and original material of all historical consciousness", because only through memory do we have a consciousness of the past at all.¹⁴ Indeed, it can be argued that history feeds commemorative activities, while commemoration defines historical significance. The authors acknowledge that memory is a mediated activity, just like history. History and memory have similar as well as different characteristics, and often serve each other's interest. Thus, assuming a mutual effect between history and

¹¹ Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse", *Representations*, Winter 2000. Special Issue: Ground for Remembering, 69, p. 138

¹² Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory," in *History, Culture, and the Mind*, edited by Thomas Butler (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 98.

¹³ Cited in: Yitzhak Konforti. *Zman Avar: Ha'istoriografija ha-Tzioni ve'itsuv ha'zikaron ha'leumi*. Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 2006, p.9

¹⁴ Berger, Stefan, Chris Lorenz & Billie Melman, "Introduction", in *Popularizing National Pasts: 1800 to the Present*, edited by Berger, Lorenz & Melman (Florence, USA: Taylor and Francis, 2012), p.6

memory appears to be a helpful prism through which to approach the study of collective memory.

The development of memory studies also raised a debate about the distinction between individual and collective memory, and the terminology one can use when referring to the latter. According to Wulf Kansteiner, "to say that collectives remember and forget is at best metaphorical and at worst misleading".¹⁵ While it has become common to use psychoanalytical references in memory studies, one should not *analyze* collective memory with psychoanalytical tools, but by considering relevant social and political factors. Another important difference between individual and collective memory is the 'transferability' of collective memory. Individual memories can be externalized through language and images, which makes them potentially accessible to those who do not live within spatial and temporal reach, and which makes them negotiable and useable for the collective, including future generations.¹⁶ The 'received' memory will always be distinct from the recall of actual witnesses and participants, but approximates memory in its affective force.¹⁷

Kerwin Lee Klein adds that the most common strategy for justifying the analogical leap from individual memories to collective memory is to identify it as a collection of practices or material artifacts. This makes memory seem thoroughly material, empirical, and suitable for historical study, very different from individual memory.¹⁸ The study of memorial artifacts requires a three-folded approach, focusing on the process of establishment, the characteristics of the artifact itself, and the use of the artifact by society. Though public monuments aim to mold history into its rightful pattern, it has been demonstrated that, once available in the public space, monuments are reinvigorated and acquire new meanings.¹⁹ One should not at all assume a strict connection between the intentions of the maker of the artifact and its actual usage.

This brings us to two other important aspects of memory studies: contestation and reception. Memory has proven to be an efficient instrument of identity and power. Current political interests often determine the foci of commemoration. Seeking the acknowledgement of selected events from the past highlights the way individuals,

¹⁵ Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies." *History and Theory*, 41(2), 2002, p.185

¹⁶ Assmann, A. "Re-framing memory", p.35

¹⁷ Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory". *Poetics Today*, 2008, 29(1), p. 109

¹⁸ Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse", p. 136

¹⁹ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1993), p. 14

groups and nations perceive their past and shape their identities. The social function of collective memory is to reconstruct the past as well as to serve and legitimize the present and the desired future. In order to make the study of collective memory most useful, Alon Confino argues, scholars should explain why memories are accepted or rejected.²⁰

John Bodnar introduced a distinction between official and vernacular forms of collective memory. The official narrative originates in the concerns of leaders or authorities at all levels of society, who share a common interest in social unity, the continuity of existing institutions, and loyalty to the status quo. "They attempt to advance these concerns by promoting interpretations of past and present reality that reduce the power of competing interests that appear to threaten the attainment of their goals".²¹ Vernacular culture, on the other hand, represents an array of specialized interests originating from units within society. The latter has also been termed 'counter memory', which poses a challenge to the 'commemorative master narrative'.²²

The point of departure of the present study adopts the notion that memory is contested, that there are multiple memories, and that struggles and negotiations take place between them. It is assumed that the representation of the past by different groups is closely related to their current social and political agendas. The reconstructed nature of collective memory, as well as the notion that individual consciousness of the past is linked to group identity, is highly relevant to the study of the memory of the 1952 revolution in Egypt. This study seeks to demonstrate how Egyptians understand their past, both in the framework of the nation and depending on their political, social, and religious orientations. It will examine how different groups have used the past to benefit the present in terms of strengthening group identity and legitimizing current political goals or positions of power.

An examination of collective memory in Egypt over the defined period of 40 years will demonstrate that collective memory is subject to continuity and change. Hutton and Kansteiner suggested that commemorations are a good reference point for measuring how collective memory changes over time and for examining the intentionality of collective memory and the agencies at work.²³ Good case studies

²⁰ Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," p. 1398

²¹ John Bodnar, "Public memory in an American city" in *Commemorations: the Politics of National Identity* edited by John R. Gillis (Princeton University Press, 1994), p.75

²² Zerubavel, p.12

²³ Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory", p.188

adopting this methodology have been put forth in the edited volume *Performing the Past*, which includes a chapter about commemorations in Northern Ireland that shows clearly how commemoration is an intensely political activity and carries messages about the present.²⁴ Case studies on collective memory that could function as examples for this study mainly draw on events in European and U.S. history. The majority of Middle East related research deals with collective memory in Israel, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁵ All these works give methodological clues as to how to approach the issue. But in view of the growing popularity of memory studies, relatively few works have been published about the Middle East. Although the challenge of examining memory in authoritarian states should be acknowledged, such an effort will contribute to the existing studies on revolutions in collective memory.

One of the most significant works on collective memory in Egypt is Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski's *Commemorating the nation*.²⁶ Examining statues, ceremonies and media in Egypt, the authors analyze the role of public commemorations in shaping Egyptian collective memory and national identity. The larger part of the book is devoted to the life and career of Mahmud Mukhtar and the importance of his artwork in shaping a national historical narrative. In addition, Gershoni and Jankowski compare the character and meaning of national holidays in the pre- and post-revolutionary period, and also address changes in commemorative traditions since Nasser's death. They make the important observation that after 1973, the centrality of the revolution was eclipsed by the "Crossing of the Sinai" under Anwar al-Sadat. Elie Podeh's book, *The politics of national celebrations in the Arab Middle East* includes a chapter on Egypt focusing on holidays and ceremonies in more detail and extends the time period of study to the Mubarak government.²⁷

In a series of articles, Yoram Meital examined how Nasser's regime sought to consolidate the revolutionary historical narrative through school curricula and street

²⁴ K. Tilmans, F. van Vree & J. Winter, ed. *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010),

²⁵ See, for example: Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*; Anita Shapira, "Historiography and Memory: Latrun, 1948" *Jewish Social Studies*, (1996)3(1); and Meir Litvak, ed. *Palestinian Collective Memory and National Identity*, (Palgrave Macmillan: 2009)

²⁶ Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski. 2004. *Commemorating the nation: collective memory, public commemoration, and national identity in twentieth-century Egypt*. Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center. See also: Israel Gershoni, Meir Hatina, and Hagai Erlikh, *Narrating the Nile: politics, cultures, identities* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008)

²⁷ Elie Podeh, *The politics of national celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

naming.²⁸ Meital shows how parts of the past were selected and others forgotten or discredited in order to grant the new regime more legitimacy. Meital stops short of discussing the changing collective memory accompanying the period of transition from the monarchial regime to the Nasser regime, and does not examine post-Nasser Egypt to a great extent, except in his article on the representation of Sadat as the "Hero of War and Peace".²⁹ In his work, Meital states that the Egyptian public at large did not accept the official narratives, but he does not examine counter memories. Neither do Gershoni and Jankowski, nor Podeh pay much attention to counter memories or the contested nature of the revolution. Existing scholarly works focus mainly on the design of an official post-revolutionary historical narrative that highlighted certain episodes in Egyptian history while repressing others, in an effort to consolidate the power and legitimacy of the regime. In my dissertation, I would like to pay an equal amount of attention to counter memories of the revolution as to the official one, and focus on the interaction between them. I would like to make use of the many narratives that proliferated since the Sadat presidency, and see how non-government sources reflect on the revolution from their ideological viewpoints.

Meir Hatina's book chapter, "History, Politics, and Collective Memory: The Nasserist Legacy in Mubarak's Egypt" serves as a good starting point for the present study.³⁰ Hatina examines how the leftists, the Nasserists and the state have exploited different aspects of the revolutionary legacy to serve their present political goals. Still, Hatina's work, as well as the other contributions mentioned above, leaves much room to study the change and continuity in the Revolution Day celebrations and the extensive debates surrounding that day. An analysis of the changing commemorative traditions surrounding the death of Nasser will also add to the existing scholarly literature. None of the works mentioned above have addressed the Muslim Brotherhood's memory of the revolution in a significant fashion. This is notable, since the Muslim Brothers have served as one of the main forces of opposition since 1954, and their discourse becomes even more relevant considering their ascension to power in 2012. Therefore, this constitutes a gap in the research that cries out to be filled.

²⁸ Yoram Meital, "School textbooks and assembling the puzzle of the past in revolutionary Egypt", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2006, 42(2), p.255–270 and "Central Cairo: Street naming and the struggle over historical representation," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2008, 43(6), p.857–878.

²⁹ Yoram Meital, "Who Is Egypt's "Hero of War and Peace"? The Contest over Representation," *History & Memory*, 2003, 15(1), p.150–183

³⁰ In: Elie Podeh & Onn Winckler, eds. *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt* (Universtiy Press of Florida: 2004)

Thomas Mayer's book on the historiography of the 'Urabi revolt examines a historical event beyond the timeframe of this study, but can nevertheless serve as a good example for conducting the present study.³¹ Mériam N. Belli carried out a valuable survey of Egyptian textbooks, examining, among other things, the prominence of the revolution in textbooks during the Sadat and Mubarak period.³² Her book, *An Incurable Past: Nasser's Egypt Then and Now* explores historical representations and vernacular experiences in national education; the tradition of effigy-burning on the Suez Canal; and the apparition of the Virgin Mary in 1968. The first of these will be highly relevant to the present topic.

Important works on Egyptian historiography have been published in recent years. Anthony Gorman and Yoav Di-Capua's have given detailed overviews of the trends, developments and crises in twentieth century Egyptian historiography.³³ Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot made a survey of Egyptian works of history with a focus on the period between 1970 and 1990, noticing the rise in publications in the post-Nasser area and identifying new genres of publication.³⁴ These authors have made important contributions regarding Egyptian historiography, but have not examined the place of the 1952 revolution in Egyptian collective memory.

Donald Reid has examined stamp collections up to the Nasser era, arguing that stamps reflect the depth of the overlapping and conflicting Egyptian, Islamic, Arab and Pan-African feelings in Egypt at different moments in history.³⁵ Other scholarly works have dealt with Nasser's legacy and Nasserism in Egyptian collective memory, but not with the 1952 revolution itself. Leonard Binder's "Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser. Iconology, Ideology, and Demonology" discusses responses to Nasserism that express a longing for 'the true principles of the Revolution' and will be relevant to the present study, although my dissertation will not focus on Nasser's policies but on the debate surrounding the envisioned goals and outcome of the revolution.³⁶

³¹ Thomas Mayer, *The changing past: Egyptian historiography of the Urabi revolt, 1882-1983* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1988)

³² Mériam N. Belli, *An Incurable Past: Nasser's Egypt Then and Now* (Florida University Press: 2013)

³³ Anthony Gorman, *Historians, state, and politics in twentieth century Egypt: contesting the nation* (London: Routledge: 2003); Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: History and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). See also: Israel Gershoni, "Imagining and Reimagining the Past: The Use of History by Egyptian Nationalist Writers", 1919-1952," *History and Memory* 4, no. 2 (1992): 5-37

³⁴ Afaf Lufi Al-Sayyid Marsot, "Survey of Egyptian Works of History" *The American Historical Review*, 1991, 96(5), p.1422-1434.

³⁵ Donald Reid, "Egyptian History Through Stamps", *The Muslim World*, 1967, 62(3), p.209-229

³⁶ In *Rethinking Nasserism*, edited by Podeh and Winckler.

Joel Gordon has made significant contributions to the understanding of cinema, music and mass media in Egypt from the perspective of national politics, focusing mainly on the Nasser era.³⁷ Walter Armbrust's works about popular culture and Egyptian nationalism refers to the revolution but does not examine its portrayal in detail.³⁸ Allen and Fedwa Malti-Douglas wrote a book chapter on the portrayal of Nasser in Egyptian comic strips.³⁹ Gordon, Armbrust's and Douglas's observations will be of great help in examining memory through popular culture. Recent Egyptian TV series have thus far not been examined in the context of collective memory, but constitute an important part of Egyptian popular culture and have often reflected historical themes. Social media, such as the Facebook groups for Nasser, Sadat, and 'Egypt History' can be considered expressions of counter memory and can give some clues as to sentiments of nostalgia.⁴⁰

From the literature review it can be concluded that scholars have dealt with collective memory in Egypt in terms of textbooks, street naming, monuments, stamps, holidays and historiography. However, in their endeavor, they have each focused on one or a few aspects of representation, and during distinct time periods. I seek to offer a comprehensive picture of all these aspects, including counter memories, during the time period of both Sadat and Mubarak. I will include underrepresented initiatives such as Sadat's 1975 committee to rewrite the history of the revolution and the debate around it, and the government imitative of The National Memory Project at the Library of Alexandria. New holidays and commemorative traditions created under Sadat and Mubarak, such as Sinai Liberation Day, deserve to be examined in more detail, as well as newly established museums and monuments such as the Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser museum, the Sadat museum, and the Egyptian National Military museum. By extending the period of study to a time span of over 40 years, I seek to highlight continuity and change in Egyptian collective memory.

³⁷ Joel Gordon's most relevant works for this study are *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt* (University of Chicago Middle East Center: 2002); "Nasser 56/Cairo 96. Reimagining Egypt's Lost Community", in Walter Armbrust, ed. *Mass mediations: new approaches to popular culture in the Middle East and beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and "The Nightingale and the Ra'is: Abd al-Halim Hafez and Nasserist Longings", in *Rethinking Nasserism* ³⁸ Walter Armbrust, *Mass culture and modernism in Egypt* (Cambridge University Press: 1996) and *The rise and fall of nationalism in the Egyptian cinema* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002)

³⁹ In *Arab comic strips: politics of an emerging mass culture*, edited by Allen Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)

⁴⁰ See, for example, the public Facebook pages "Jamal Abdel Nasser II By Mahmoud ElSheikh"; "Gamal Abdel Nasser"; "Old Egypt History"; "El Sadat Fans"; "Sadat Museum"; "King Farouk of Egypt" and "Memory of Modern Egypt".

3. Research questions and basic assumptions

1. *What was the official representation of the 1952 revolution during the Sadat and Mubarak administrations and how did it change over time?*

This study examines the promotion of the official state memory of the revolution and seeks to identify changes in the official representations between 1970 and 2010. The aim is to shed light on the motives of state memory agents for representing a certain narrative of the revolution. This study will analyze the various tools used for the dissemination of official memory, ranging from school textbooks to commemorations, and from government-owned newspapers to mass media. Possible differences between the various instruments, in content of representation and in impact, will be highlighted. Comparing the celebrations of Revolution Day will be one way of demonstrating the official narrative and identifying changes. Government initiatives such as history writing projects, and the motivations behind them, will be of similar interest in answering the question above. In addition, this study will look at the ways in which the revolution is presented in government-funded or -controlled media such as the print media, movies and TV series. Monuments and museums will also add to an understanding of the official commemorative narrative; in particular their process of establishment, their 'use' and contemporary relevancy.

An additional focus will be on discrepancies *within* the state discourse, that is, is there a difference between how various state institutions relate to the revolution? This study examines whether there is any significant difference between the representations of the army, the universities, the press, the various ministries, and the President's office. One aim is to show the extent to which the two presidents in the time period studied, Sadat and Mubarak, differed in their representation of the 1952 revolution: that is, the degree that the two leaders chose to remember or forget Nasser's role in the revolution, and highlighted or suppressed certain achievements or failures of the revolution. The contrast between their distinct memories of the revolution will be explained by considering various contexts. Among these contexts are Sadat's personal role in the revolution and his relation to Nasser, the changing political atmosphere and nature of opposition forces, and the different challenges to the leaders' legitimacy. It is assumed that Sadat and Mubarak alternately chose to exploit or marginalize the revolutionary ethos according to their political needs.

2. What were the counter memories regarding the nature of the 1952 revolution and how did they change over time?

One basic assumption of this study is that the official narrative promoted by the regime was contested. Thus, a main aim of this dissertation is to examine the counter memories of the main opposition groups in Egypt – the leftists, the Nasserists, the liberals and the Islamists – and to identify their motives in shaping the counter memories of the revolution during the Sadat and Mubarak eras. The perceived origins, aims, failures and achievements of the revolution as presented in each of their narratives and their relevance to Egyptian politics will be discussed. The key points of disagreement between narratives will be identified, assuming that these reflect ideologies and contemporary political interests. It will be demonstrated how the various parties exploited different parts of the revolutionary legacy to serve their contemporary goals. Conclusions will be drawn as to how the conflicts surrounding the memory of the 1952 revolution have reflected power struggles within Egyptian politics and society.

It should be noted that in authoritarian states, it is more difficult to measure counter memories than the official government narrative. Despite this, the aim is to reconstruct the counter memories by using op-eds, books, journal articles and memoirs written by members of the various oppositions groups. Another important source for examining counter memory will be popular culture – mainly literature, arts and satire. The primary concern will not be with the factuality of the historical narratives of the revolution. Rather, it will be examined which 'facts' are represented in order to 'authorize' a certain perspective on the event. Aspects that are omitted or explicitly highlighted in the narratives will be analyzed, guided by the assumption that in order to legitimize or delegitimize the present, the past is always *selectively* exploited, since to forget is as vital as to remember.⁴¹

3. How have changing social and political contexts influenced the representations of the 1952 revolution?

Egypt underwent significant political, economic and social changes during the time period being examined. For instance, Egypt's rapprochement with the United States, its adoption of policies of economic liberalization, and the growing influence of

⁴¹ Lowenthal, p. 19

political Islam were part of the changing political and social contexts that are of great importance in analyzing the dynamics of Egyptian collective memory. The October War, the peace treaty with Israel, and the assassination of Sadat were all major events that reshaped the collective memory of the revolution. And in order to understand the complex attitudes of the Egyptian authorities towards the revolution, it is essential to take into account the changing nature of opposition forces and the policy changes initiated by Nasser's successors. This study examines how, during periods of political upheaval, the memory of the revolution has been invoked in order to reflect on contemporary contexts. While certain memories may be underrepresented at one point, they may later on prove useable and be 'revived'. The generational aspects of the fluidity of the memory narratives will also be examined, taking into consideration Winter and Sivan's assertion that forgetting and fade-out are usually the rule, and that endurance and persistence of memories among next generations require explanation.⁴²

4. How did the various memories interact with each other?

Memory narratives are constantly on the move, not least in order to counter or complement the representations of others. It is assumed that in one way or the other, groups responded to each other's commemorative performances, whether by imitation or adaptation, or by challenging or sabotaging remembrance, be it during commemorative events or in writing. This part of the research seeks to answer the question of how memories of the revolution were adjusted or revived in response to each other. It is assumed that state commemoration can exacerbate political frictions, and that participation in commemorative events can ignite debate over the history of the nation and over its identity. In this regard, the annual commemorations of the revolution will serve as the main framework of reference for measuring interaction. Through a discourse analysis of newspaper and journal articles published around the time of Revolution Day, this study will shed light on the national debate that the revolution generates until this day. Also commemorative speeches will be examined, since they provide an opportunity to respond to criticism, manage controversies, forge authenticity, and to increase legitimacy by 'authorizing' a certain version of events in history. The study will focus on both the multiplicity of voices and the element of dialogue that takes place during the time of commemorative events.

⁴² Winter and Sivan, p.31

5. To what extent was the official narrative accepted by the Egyptian public?

This study adopts Alon Confino's idea that historians should be suspicious of the visible, explicit expressions of memory apparent in society.⁴³ The most visible and institutionalized memory objects may be the least influential, depending on the meaning the public attaches to it. It is assumed that while memory agents may seek to suppress certain episodes in Egypt's history, this does not guarantee that the event is forgotten among the public. This study aims to shed light on the reception of the official and counter memories of the revolution, taking note of the fact that it is difficult to measure the reception of memory – especially in authoritarian states where freedom of press and publication has been restricted and where genuine polls are rare. A considerable degree of manipulation should be taken into account. For instance, even when a large number of people attend a commemorative event, this should be interpreted carefully, as the gathering may have been orchestrated. Still, an examination of the popularity of memory objects, such as museums and monuments, as well as products of popular culture and the preservation of Nasser's legacy among the public, will give clues as to what extent the official narrative was accepted and rejected. Conclusions will be drawn as to whether certain tools used by the various memory agents have been more influential in disseminating narratives than others.

4. Hypotheses and tentative directions of answers

1. The official memory of the revolution changed significantly over the time period examined.

State institutions have promoted various memories of the revolution over the time period studied. On the presidential level, Sadat and Mubarak differed in their portrayals of the revolution due to the fact that the two leaders faced distinct political environments and legacies compared to their predecessor. Sadat was under pressure to distinguish himself from Nasser more than Mubarak. Therefore, he was active in eliminating Nasserite threats to his regime and created new national myths of war and peace. Among other things, he introduced the 'October Victory' as a counter metaphor to the 1967 defeat, and subsequently made it the most prominent national holiday instead of Revolution Day. Yet, when criticizing the revolution, Sadat would not go much further than declaring that the revolution had been diverted from its true

⁴³ Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," p. 1395-1397

course. Sadat sought to transform the memory of the revolution mostly in order to legitimate himself as a ruler in Nasser's shadow, and to build prestige. A mixture of praise and silence about Nasser's legacy as well as rewriting his personal role in the 1952 revolution supported Sadat in this aim. Government initiatives towards history writing projects prove that Sadat sought to sanctify a certain version of the 1952 events. For example, in 1975, he created a special committee to write the history of the 23 July Revolution, after blocking a similar initiative by Mohammed Hasanayn Haykal, a staunch Nasserist.

Mubarak on the other hand, felt comfortable enough to reverse many of Nasser's policies in the socio-economic sphere. Because he had not played a personal role in the revolution, and because of distance in time from the Nasser era, Mubarak did not need to rewrite the revolution. In order to build prestige, he capitalized on the 1973 myth by promoting his role as an air commander in 'The Crossing'. At the same time, in order to make himself relevant to the course of Egyptian history, he sought to represent himself as the 'link in an unbroken chain' of the 'unfinished' revolution that had started in 1952. Overall, Mubarak, even more than Sadat had an interest in shifting away from the prominence of Revolution Day, and deemphasized the roles Nasser and Sadat had played in it. Instead, he chose to present the revolution as an event of the people.

2. In Egypt, agents of memory were largely defined along ideological lines.

The contested memory of the 1952 revolution shows that Egyptians judge history based on their ideological vision for the country and in the framework of what they perceive as liberation, dignity and progress. Members of Egyptian society may remember various episodes of the Egyptian past as either positive or negative based on their political views and ideology, and according to what they consider the proper track for the nation. Hence, in the case of the 1952 revolution, a sharp distinction can be made between the collective memory of the Nasserists, the Islamists, the liberals and the leftists, since they each conceived different goals for the revolution based on particular future visions for their country in line with their ideologies. This explains why the Islamists, liberals and leftists represented the revolution as being diverted 'from its original course' and emphasized its defects: the liberals with regret recalled the authoritarianism that followed the revolution, the Islamists highlighted Nasser's tactics of political suppression and his secularism, while the leftists emphasized the

ideological shortcomings of the revolution despite its promises for socialism and equality. The Nasserists, on the other hand, were convinced of Nasser's commitment to the revolutionary aims and glorified his achievements such as the withdrawal of the British, the building of the Aswan Dam and his efforts towards social justice and Arab dignity. In sum, criticisms and glorifications on the outcome of the revolution usually lead back to a certain view of the nation and its future.

3. Contemporary political contexts and grievances lead to the reinterpretation of the 1952 revolution.

Reflections on the revolution have always been related to the current state of political and socio-economic affairs. The revolution did not at all solve Egypt's problems of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, and this is the reason why the revolution's goals and achievements have been constantly reassessed. Present grievances have led people to turn to history for answers, sink into nostalgia, and glorify past periods. For example, as Mubarak reversed Nasser's land reform policies, he was accused of serving the elite, which suddenly caused leftists and the Muslim Brothers to praise the Nasser period. And authoritarian measures led the liberals to emphasize that the Sadat and Mubarak regimes were mere continuations of the Nasser years. Moreover, ground shaking events such as the peace treaty with Israel led to retrospective debate on the revolution, what it 'really' embodied and how the state diverted from it.

4. The memory of the 1952 revolution was and is being constantly revised as a result of interaction between groups.

The anniversaries of the 1952 revolution have become a moment of self-reflection for the Egyptian public and generally triggered national debate, creating a high level of interaction between the state, leftists, Nasserists, liberals and Islamists who relate to the revolution in order to make statements about contemporary politics or to send a message to Egypt's leaders. As the opposition reacted to commemorative speeches, publications, films and museums, they actually responded to manifestations of memory, seeking to promote, complement or reject them. For example, the publication of various memoirs of the Free Officers led Sadat to respond to the portrayal of his role in the revolution with his history writing project in 1975, and the publication of yet another memoir of his own. Another example is Mohammed Naguib's memoir "I was once president of Egypt", which was a response to the

absence of this basic fact in Egyptian textbooks until 2011. After 1970, the Muslim Brothers started publishing prison memoirs including their critical reflections on the revolution, along with a rise in publications of books about Hassan al-Banna, in an attempt to counter the countless biographies of 'Abd al-Nasser and his stature as a national leader. As Sadat and Mubarak attempted to reduce the centrality of 'Abd al-Nasser during Revolution Day, the Nasserists promoted anew his role in the revolution and his achievements. Official and counter memories of the revolution were not static, but were actively shaped and modified as a result of interaction with each other. This study may show that interaction between groups not only resulted in the reiteration of, but also a modification of each party's respective positions.

5. Generational dynamics partially explain fluctuations in Egyptian collective memory and paved the way for a nostalgia industry during the Mubarak years.

The younger generation of secular Egyptians has tended to glorify the Nasser period in an expression of 'distant' nostalgia – that is, nostalgia in the metaphorical sense of the word: a longing not so much for what they had lost, but rather the expression of an ideal situation that was not actually attained prior to 1970, yet is retroactively associated with a period of 'real' freedom, prosperity, equality, and dignity. For this generation, the principles of the revolution and the strong leader that 'Abd al-Nasser embodied, have overshadowed the actual deficits in political freedom and failure of policies it produced, which are more often acknowledged by those Egyptians who personally experienced the revolution and its aftermath. Interestingly, the rehabilitation of Nasser among the public as part of a 'nostalgia industry' that emerged during the Mubarak years coincided with positive representations of the pre-revolutionary, monarchial period by the state. Media outlets began drawing attention to deceased members of the former royal family, with interviews highlighting their suffering and reactions to the events that happened during the Nasserite era. A TV series that came out during Ramadan 2007, 'The King Farouk Series', emphasized democracy and freedom during the monarchial period, going against the negative view on the monarchy as presented in school textbooks for decades. The series ignited discussion about whether this constituted a call for the return of the monarchy, and whether such longing defamed the revolution. Thus, during the Mubarak years, Egyptians once again reconsidered their past.

5. Sources

This study will largely be based on a discourse analysis. The principle sources that will be used to examine the official state memory of the 1952 revolution will be government-owned newspapers and journals, memoirs, textbooks, history writing and memory projects, as well as commemorative publications, speeches and objects such as stamp collections, and mass media. As for counter memories, I will employ Nasserist, leftist and communist, Islamist and liberal newspapers, journals, op-eds, memoirs, history books and expressions of popular culture such as arts and satire. Keeping in mind theories of collective memory, the written sources will be examined on a historiographical level, while popular culture will be examined from the perspective of representation and reception. While the actual text or production itself may be of interest; in most cases the debate surround it will be of similar importance.

I will examine three (semi-) government-owned newspapers: *Al-Ahram*, the weekly *Al-Akhbar Al-Youm* and *Al-Jumhurriya*. These specific newspapers have been selected because of their wide circulation in Egypt, and because of the frequency of their publication during the time period studied. In the examination of these newspapers, articles, op-eds, photos, advertisements and cartoons will be given equal attention. The research focus will be on the first years after Nasser's death, the anniversaries of his death, as well as the anniversaries of the 1952 revolution, in particular the 20th, 25th, 30th, 40th and 50th anniversary. Government-owned periodicals distributed during Sadat's presidency are of interest too, mainly *Uktubir*.

Certain history writing or memory projects about the 1952 revolution deserve special attention. In 1975, a committee was set up by Sadat to write the history of the 23 July Revolution, called *Lajnat tarikh al-thawra*. Although the published output of the committee was minimal, it is worth examining the debate surrounding this initiative as it appeared in the government and opposition newspapers and journals. Sadat's personal memoirs, and the differences between their content, are also most indicative of his desired representation of the events surrounding the 1952 revolution. The Memory Project of the Library of Alexandria, launched in 2008, can be considered another government initiative. Its material is digitalized and available online, including stamps, documents, pictures, postcards and more. It also includes a digital archive both on Nasser and Sadat, and a Sadat museum. The material will be

approached from the perspective of memory: examining the agents behind this project, which narratives are they seeking to promote and why, and how it is received.

Commemorative volumes form another part of the research. Publications or directives issued by the 'The Ministry of National Guidance' (*wizarat al-irshad al-qawmi*) may be of special interest when it comes to the official narrative. Also, in 1977, government think tank 'Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies' marked the 25th anniversary of the revolution with a collection of articles edited by its director, al-Sayyid Yassin. Sadat's multiple memoirs will shed light on his efforts to present the 1952 events in a certain way. Commemorative political speeches will be examined since they are essential in bringing collective norms and values to a wider audience. Although they might say nothing new, they form an opportunity to respond to criticism, manage controversies, demonstrate 'authenticity', build positions of political legitimacy and representation, or to 'authorize' a certain version of events in history. The place of the revolution in educational textbooks and museums will be of interest as well. Stamps constitute an additional focus of interest when it comes to the official narrative. As Reid has noted, while stamps do not reveal unknown information about the past, they "reflect the spirit of an age and reveal much about the values of different societies. As official productions, they tell about the interests of governments".⁴⁴

Popular culture will also be of significance in examining official and counter memories. One could argue that mediums such as literature and film, but also radio and theatre, are much more powerful in penetrating and shaping the collective memory than written history. Movies and TV series will be examined from the perspective of official memory and its reception. Although they are not necessarily state productions, media in Egypt has been largely state-controlled and/or state-funded. Productions as *Nasser '56* and *Ayyaam Sadat* will be examined from the angle of who produced it, whether it has been state-funded, and how it has been received by the public. Similarly, films and documentaries about the revolution and about 'Abd al-Nasser will be examined. A related source will be a selection of Egyptian 'Ramadan' TV series, as they have often indirectly addressed political and social history. For example, in 2006, a series was published about the life of the great singer 'Abd al-Halim Hafez, called *Al-Andaleeb*. The story runs parallel with political

⁴⁴ Donald Reid, "Egyptian History Through Stamps", p.209

and social history in the 1940s and 1950s and addresses Nasser's life in detail. The 2001 serial *Umm Kulthum* also used a personal drama to foreground social and political developments. Another notable TV series came out in 2007 during Ramadan, 'The King Farouk Series'. While post-revolutionary school textbooks had always portrayed the King in a negative light, this TV series emphasizes democracy and freedom in Egypt during the monarchial period. An examination of these series will again focus on its producers and on the public debate around it.

In contrasting the official narrative with counter memories, the July volumes of Egyptian opposition periodicals will provide insights into non-state narratives. All Muslim Brotherhood, Nasserist, liberal and communist writings and productions can be considered as manifestations of counter memory works. Since Sadat came to power, ideological movements were granted more freedom in their writings, and as a result many Islamic publishing houses and periodicals have been established since the 1970s. The Muslim Brotherhood's organs that will be examined are *al-Da'wa* and *Al-I'tisam*. Also their website *Ikhwan Wiki* contains historical writings and books, and constitutes a rich online source. As for the communist journals, it will be most interesting to engage with material from *al-Intisar* and *al-Sawt al-Amil*. The Nasserist narrative can be said to be largely expressed by Mohammed Hasanayn Haykal, whose books and columns (in particular *Bi-Saraha*) will be subject to scrutiny during this study. The Nasserists also used *al-'Arabi* and *al-Ahali* for disseminating their views. As for the liberal discourse, most information will be drawn from the *Al-Wafd* newspaper, founded in 1984. The monthly *Al-Hilal* has also functioned as an important platform for various voices in the debate about the revolutionary narrative.

History books produced by writers belonging to these different ideological currents will be examined as well. As Yoav Di-Capua has convincingly argued, history-writing in Egypt has been greatly politicized due to the Egyptian historiographical culture which prescribes "the writing of patriotic accounts of liberation and struggle that are extremely useful in forging identity and inducing group cohesion".⁴⁵ The role of the 1952 revolution in these different historical narratives is highly important in this regard.

By the mid-1980s, the majority of Free Officers had published their memoirs. These works are an important way of reconstructing narratives about the revolution.

⁴⁵ Di-Capua, p.339

The memoirs will not be approached from the perspective of personal legacies or factual disputes, but rather from the perspective of ideology. The memoirs will demonstrate that those acting during the 1952 revolution had different goals and expectations. Indeed, one thing that most of the Free Officers have in common is that at some point, they disagreed with Nasser because in their eyes, he had 'diverted' the revolution. At the same time, (prison) memoirs from members of the Muslim Brotherhood and communist writers will add to the research on counter memories.

Popular culture will constitute another source for the study of counter memories, since it provides insights that cannot be extracted from written products. While censorship has restricted history writing and the print media in Egypt, satire and political criticism is very much present in cartoons, plays and arts. The great tradition of Egyptian literature proves to be an incredible source in this regard. Among others, the work of Naguib Mahfouz and Alaa Aswany will be touched upon in this study. Notably, Mahfouz remained silent for seven years after the 1952 revolution, and as he eventually returned to writing, it was almost always with a critical note towards the government. Besides that, a novel by Gamal al-Ghitani, *Al-Zayni Barakat*, deals with a period in Egyptian medieval history under the Mamluks, drawing parallels with (then) contemporary Egyptian reality (1952-1967). Naturally, Tawfiq al-Hakim's classic '*Audat al-Way*' will be part of this study, focusing on the reception of the work. In addition, cartoons and other artistic expressions can be considered performances of collective memory and will therefore be subjects of study. The popularity of so-called 'protest songs' from the Nasser era will also be examined.

Finally, in the examination of counter memories, special attention will be given to Facebook pages that emerged in the last few years of the Mubarak era. Pages for Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak and the history of Egypt give clues about the popular sentiment with regard to the legacies of each leader, and which parts of the Egyptian past are highlighted by young generations.

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