Crime, Violence and Identity Conflicts in Karen Campbell's *Shadowplay* (2010) and Ahmed Mourad's *The Blue Elephant* (2012): (Re) defining the Self and the Other

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Introduction: Identity Conflicts, Social Violence and Crime Writing in Scotland and Egypt

> In the contemporary contest between stable identity as it is rendered by such affirmative agencies as nationality, education, tradition, language and religion, on the one hand, and all sorts of marginal, alienated or anti-systemic forces on the other, there remains an incipient and unresolved tension.... One side gathers more dominance and centrality, the other is pushed further from the centre, towards either violence or new forms of authenticity (Said, *Identity* 55).

In the above quotation, Edward Said argues that the main reason behind the persistence of the hostility between different cultures, genders, religions, and ethnicities in modern societies is that "national governments and rulers openly espouse values that further the new style of imperialism without colonies" (*Islam* 1). This new imperialism, Said continues, not only "seem[s] inscribed in the very fabric of every modern society, whether that society [is] liberal, monarchical, or revolutionary" (*Yeats* 72), but also encourages a culture of violence and terror that "emanates from any attempt to live beyond the social confinements of identity itself; and is also the means used to quell the primal disorderliness of the unconfined human being" (*Representing* 55). In this way, individuals and communities in modern and postcolonial systems communicate with each other largely by a logic of violence and counter-violence. Noam Chomsky agrees with Said that worldwide aspects of state violence, organized crime, and terrorist atrocities are attempts to "either shake or [maintain] the foundations of our world of privilege and domination" (494). Chomsky, like Said, sees violence and crime as the outcomes of worldwide neocolonial forms of globalization, capitalism, and hegemony. For Chomsky, these neocolonial forms of hegemony produce "concentrated power" that "relies on disciplining the population by one or another means. There is a desperate search for such means: in recent years, Communism, crime, drugs, terrorism, and others. Pretexts change, policies remain rather stable" (494).

In light of Said's and Chomsky's argument that violence and crime are dominant political tools of oppression and resistance, this introduction aims at tracing how specific individuals and communities

in contemporary Egypt and Scotland simultaneously undergo and initiate similar forms of violence, political repression and identity conflicts. It compares Campbell's *Shadowplay* and Mourad's *The Blue Elephant* for two interdependent reasons. Firstly, it argues that *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant* draw the situation in twenty-first-century Scotland and Egypt as one of a similar post-/neo-colonial struggle for privilege, domination, and discrimination. This fact is reflected in the persistent attempts for political reform in the two countries. This paper takes into consideration the different colonial experiences of Egypt, indeed an ex-British colony, and Scotland with its conflicting status as both a colonising and colonised nation internally conquered by England and externally part of the United Kingdom's previous colonial expansions. I do not therefore equate the Egyptian and Scottish colonial/postcolonial situations nor claim that levels of corruption, violence, human rights violations and crime in the two countries are equivalent (Transparency and Corruption Index 18). Rather, this paper compares similar experiences and problems within obviously two different scales of social hierarchy, violence, and political corruption. It argues that in both countries, minorities and marginalized groups still experience highly systematic and collective processes of discrimination, violence, and inferiorization driven mainly by what Said and Chomsky have referred to as inherited neocolonial cultures and politics.

Secondly, this paper argues that Campbell's *Shadowplay* and Mourad's *The Blue Elephant* represent crime fiction as an example of social-political criticism. They specifically challenge the manner in which Egyptian and Scottish identity patterns predominantly figure in terms of ethnicity, class, and gender. The two novels engage with different forms of systematic and individual criminality as a means of instigating a focus on their relatively political usage of and complicity with Egyptian and Scottish patterns of social, gender and racial discriminations. Here, crime not only mirrors social injustice and corrupt political-economic structures within Scottish and Egyptian societies, but more importantly is a method of resistance, group/cultural alliance and self-expression.

Postcolonial Scotland has been a controversial concept that produces controversial views, particularly in the twenty-first-century. Many Scottish writers produce comprehensive and systematic works that discuss the validity of an analysis of Scotland and Scottish writings within postcolonial studies. Two central inquiries inform the majority of these works. The first is the relentless Scottish attempts for devolution seen as a "nationalistic resistance to assimilation, preserving the autonomy of Scotland within the British state" (*Human Rights Watch* 27), and as "an assessment of inequitable material conditions in Scottish society" (Riggs 10). Carla Sassi and Theo van Heijnsbergen indicate that while never defining themselves openly as 'postcolonial,' modern and contemporary Scottish writers, unsatisfied with the state of the Union, pursue agendas, which bear evident similarities with postcolonial ones such as hegemonic relations between 'centre' and 'periphery,' cultural representation and colonially

produced concentration of power and wealth in the hands of specific elite classes (3).

The second inquiry is the interconnections between the growingly violent ethnic divisions in contemporary Scotland and the country's past colonial experiences and inherited power and social imbalances. For example, in 2005 Scotland was named as the most violent society in the developed world (*Scotland worst for violence* par. 1). Neil Davidson believes that ethnic and cultural hostilities survive because the concept of "Scottishness is at least partly the product of imperialism and ethnic cleansing" (Davidson 13). Likewise, while Stephanie Lehner traces lines of (trans)national subalternity across Scotland and Ireland as a postcolonial marker (Lehner 5), Michael Gardiner argues that "the devolution era models of multiculturalism … have been a way to keep using the idea of 'race' even after empire"(Gardiner 6). Silke Stroh traces aspects of the linguistic hierarchy of the nation – English, Scots, and Gaelic – and the double marginality of the gailhealtachd, as evidence of the marginality of Scotland as a whole (Stroh 12). For Stroh, the gailhealtachd refers to the Scottish Gaelic-speaking culture of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland that comes in a third position after English and Scottish.

This article argues that (colonial) inequalities in Scotland encourage and involve concealed and accommodated forms of internal social anger, concentrated communities of crime and ethnic violence. For example, statistics show "a 3% increase in drugs crimes, specifically possession of drugs in 2013-2014 [with] a strong correlation between low socioeconomic status and the likelihood of becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol" (*The Statistical Bulletin* 20). Asian communities and other minorities in Scotland "are about twice more likely to be in relative poverty than white British and other white people, they are under-represented in the social rented sector, and are over-represented among the homeless and in prisons" (*Scottish Government Equality* 23). Additionally, sometimes racial problems in Scotland "arise from assimilatory rather than discriminatory policies. … Indirect racism through a lack of acknowledgement and pathologisation of cultural issues is influential" (*Common Ground* 3). *The Statistical Bulletin: Crime and Justice Series 2013-2014* (SCJS) traces a general lack of accountability in the Scottish justice system; more than half of the violent crimes committed in 2014/15 were not reported to police as 36% of the victims felt the police could not have done anything (*Scottish Crime Review* 12).

Taking its clue from the above-mentioned inquiries, this paper attempts a third inquiry through exploring psychological, economic and socio-political fissures and contradictions in contemporary Scotland. Since in *Shadowplay*, Campbell discusses ethnic crime, gender discriminations, and political economy in contemporary Scotland from the viewpoint of the privileged/oppressed white, female chief inspector Anna Cameron, it is valid for an analysis of (colonial) internal identity conflicts and double mentality, intensified by Scotland's insistent efforts for political independence from the UK. Similarly, set against the background of political revolution, increasing

social violence, crime, and drug problems in Egypt, Mourad's *The Blue Elephant* uses the privileged, middle-class male figure, Yahiya Rashid, being himself a drug addict and a sexist, to criticize patriarchal identity conflicts in Egyptian society, described by Nawal el-Sadaawi as "'an American colony' with 'the brains of women and men [who] have been ruined'" (el-Saadawi par. 3). El-Sadaawi explains how political dictators in Egypt strengthened their power through corrupt compromises with international superpowers. Hence, they not only establish an unaccountable authority through repression, violence and injustices but also normalize oppressive methods like the emergency law used in the past half-century "to suppress liberal political opposition" (Reza 533).

Political patriarchy in Egypt produces and utilizes highly polarized cultural and social paradigms. The 2015 UNDP Annual Report affirms that Egypt suffers from "organized crime networks" as "mounting evidence points to the growing nexus between terrorism, corruption and organized crime since the 1990s" (*Egypt: Crime and Drugs Report* 13). As in Scotland, crime and violence are concentrated within deprived communities with at least 20 percent of Egyptian citizens living below the poverty line, suffering "chronic and long-lasting socio-economic discriminations and inequalities" (Nagarajan 24). Additionally, socio-political repression in highly conservative Egyptian society feeds and utilizes identity patterns that "validate a culture that tolerates violence against women" (*Egypt: Keeping Women Out* 24). While common Egyptian women of all social classes have been experiencing unprecedented, epidemic rates of domestic violence, sexual assault or rape, and sexual harassment (De Koning 258), women and minorities face systematic, state-sponsored violence to hold them back from public participation (Daria 1). Thus, gender violence in Egypt, like ethnic violence in Scotland, is a politically motivated weapon of domination and hierarchy.

The second reason for comparing Campbell's and Mourad's crime novels is that the selected novels achieve significant success in Scotland and Egypt as forms of moral-social criticism. *Shadowplay* was shortlisted for the CWA Gold Dagger Award (Gillies par.1). It received highly positive reviews (*Shadowplay* par.1). *Shadowplay*'s success reflects a growing interest in crime writing that, according to Ian Rankin and Gill Plain, respectively, "tackles big issues" such as "the morality of big business, political corruption, and the drug scene" (Rankin 9) and has been a vibrant dimension of Scottish literary culture since the 1980s (Plain, *Concepts* 132). Plain illustrates further how post-devolution Scottish crime fiction "feeds upon concepts of corruption, duality, deceit, repression and hypocrisy" (*Concepts* 132) as a means of "negotiating intangible and ever-shifting moral boundaries" and thus "act[s] as a threat to the corrupted body politic" (Plain, *A Spirit* 8).

Likewise, Egyptian crime writing makes a strong comeback in twenty-first-century Egypt with novels like Mourad's *The Blue Elephant*, Magedy El-Shafee's *Metro* and Donia Maher's *The Apartment in Bab El-Louk*, all top-sellers. *The Blue Elephant* had been

a bestseller for over a year, was turned into a successful movie (Newbould par. 1) and was shortlisted for the eighth edition of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (Mustafa par.1). The popularity of crime writings in contemporary Egypt, like in Scotland, is seen as "leading to new aesthetics and a new social critique" (Qualey par. 2), and as exposing corrupt authorities' "repressive attempt to restore law and order" (Guyer par. 3). Yusuf Ziedan, like Plain, argues that contemporary Egyptian crime writings seek "to establish a base of moral and rational thought and champion the values of enlightenment and tolerance in the community [against] current state of backwardness and illiteracy" (Ziedan par. 5).

This paper is divided into two parts. The first examines identity conflicts in *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant*. The second part argues that the two novels endorse change through their characters' moral revolts against these patriarchal identity patterns.

Patriarchal Divisions, Immoral Authority and Political Complicity in *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant*

> We have become accustomed to thinking of the modern period itself as spiritually orphaned and alienated, the age of anxiety and estrangement. … Modern Western culture is in large part the work of exiles, emigres, refugees. (Said, *Reflections* 173)

In the above excerpt from *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said relates problems facing exiles within their Western host societies on the one hand to issues of growing worldwide feelings of mental and cultural alienation and anxiety on the other. Said, himself a Palestinian exile, describes how in modern societies still "governed by racism, violence and alienation", the marginalized, as well as the exiled are always torn between the past and the present, and between freedom and social customs, feeling "insecure and estranged" (*Reflections* 173).

Said explains further the fact that since many modern Western cultures are multiethnic, "exile has been transformed into a cruel punishment of whole communities and peoples" (35). However, Said distinguishes between younger and older generations of modern exiled and alienated individuals and communities. While older generations preserve "collective cant, automatic language, ready-made sentiment," younger generations adopt "a highly politicized, skeptical and self-conscious attitude, seeking answers to theoretical questions; problems of identity, collective memory and the struggle against attempts to quash it" (37). In this way, young people's mobility and intellectual inquiries of deep-seated mental and moral traditions inevitably create locations of cultural and spatial clashes, conflicts, and reevaluations. In the forthcoming analysis, I argue that Said's ideas on exile and alienation in modern societies are perfectly applicable to Campbell's *Shadowplay* and Mourad's *The Blue Elephant*. In *Shadowplay*, chief inspector Anna Cameron tries to think of alternative power and ethnic relationships in twenty-first-century Scotland that seem dictated by wider political hierarchy and capitalist economy which integrate

poverty with wealth, diversity with geographical isolation and national identity with ethnic discrimination. Anna says:

> It was another of these multi-agency things to tackle youth disorder. Number one on the agenda was: 'Diversionary Tactics'. Second- and third-generation Asian youth, intent on throwing off the shackles of respect and hard work for which their parents were renowned, and replacing them with souped-up cars and drug-running. (Campbell 72)

As Anna witnesses and investigates the murder of the nineteen-year-old Asian drug dealer Sabir Aziz at the hand of the nineteen-year-old white drug dealer Gordon Figgis, she uncovers the complicit attitudes of Scottish politicians and police towards ethnic conflicts and injustices in Scotland. Anna wants to achieve justice but feels helpless. The Scottish police refrain from charging white Figgis with his crime, leading Sabir's brother to seek revenge. Since Asian Sabir is categorized as a "subaltern figure" (Said, *Representing* 221), his justice predicament is underestimated. In *Youth Justice in Scotland*, Claire Lightowle and David Orr trace how "the state of youth crime and youth justice in Scotland has been shaped by the political context" (9), and that in post-devolution Scotland, "local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) are now entrusted with greater responsibilities to make the right choices for the individuals and the communities within their organisational boundaries" (10). However, these decentralized authorities, Lightowle and Orr continue, fail to address deprived individuals' and the communities' "deficits and challenges" or to "respond to their current problems" (Lightowle and Orr 10). In *Shadowplay*, Sabir and his deprived Asian community are no exception. Economically marginalized, geographically isolated, and stereotyped as "insecure and dangerous" (23), Asian Sabir and poor Figgis find refuge in gang life. For Sabir and Figgis, gangs give them a sense of identity, economic security and privilege. The struggle between Sabir's and Figgis's gang groups is complex, then, because it is not only about geographical dominance, money, and power but also about ideas and self-images. 150 organized crime groups, out of 232 operating in Scotland, run "legitimate businesses and make money by bypassing regulations" so that crime and corruption in Scotland diversify (*Serious Crime Gangs* 24).

In *Shadowplay*, as Scottish authorities and complicit community leaders, education professionals and law enforcers sponsor ethnic divisions, councilor Heraghty tells Anna, they not only encourage "the kind of lawlessness and gang culture proliferating on our streets" (236), but escape their responsibility "to work together to combat the scourge of disaffected, angry youth, to give them other choices, a better future" (236). For instance, while Glasgow police try to coercively impose its authority over these gangs, the latter, mostly youth, act violently to express their difference and rejection of established and unjust hierarchies. To break these circles of violence and counter-violence, Edward Said calls for "political imagination and political involvement" (Said, *Power* 204). As Anna Cameron attempts to search for a more integrative and just form of political action

towards ethnic crime in G Division, her new boss, Mrs. Marion Hamilton, warns her that:

> This is my division, and you are my police officers, so the council can go take a fuck to themselves. You listen carefully, nod politely, then filter all requests back through me. I drive this division's strategies – and I expect you to follow where I lead. (24)

Obviously, Mrs. Hamilton's words infer a colonial culture denoting "the way power and misused authority can corrupt language" (Gallagher 24). She represents the oppressive authority that necessarily endorses hierarchal processes of social labeling and patronizing attitudes. Mrs. Hamilton's orders are to "overcome the least sign of trouble, whether they're black, white, orange or green, and we clamp down hard – no matter what 'the community' thinks" (44). Seeing Sabir's ethnic cause as peripheral to the pressing issues of "spying on her domain or contemplating that big, final hurl" (46), Mrs. Hamilton not only hides information to be revealed according to "proper protocol" (52), but also favours "loyal" members of staff to intimidate Anna and other independent and opposing officers. Her limited vision hinders serious efforts of the local council to solve youth crime.

In a society marked by political hypocrisy and corruption, then, authority for Mrs. Hamilton entails acceptance of "Scottish male chauvinism and misogyny" (Breitenbach 44).Gill Plain argues that "Scotland is constructed and understood through reference to masculinity, a world of men" and that "the literary-political coalition between the tough-guy detective and the Scottish hard man is ultimately a limiting and destructive one, constructing Scottish masculinities as inevitably alienated, inarticulate and violent" (132). For Plain, crime fiction "can rewrite its own tropes and imagine alternatives to masculine modes of investigation" (132). *Shadowplay* that aims at deconstructing masculinist culture and politics in Scotland by showing internal and external conflicts between marginalized, resistant and complicit white women. Meeting her new boss Chief Superintendent Mrs. Hamilton, Anna is happy to work for "a woman" seeking "a bit of female solidarity and a tightrope of femininity and authority" (20). For Anna, the new leaderships mark potential reform and justice. However, Anna is bullied and singled out by corrupt Mrs. Hamilton, who is either occupied with "police conferences" or is making "links with local politicians and bigwigs" (46).

In this way, both Anna and Mrs. Hamilton seem, similar to Sabir and Figgis, controlled by patriarchal economic-political structures so that their mental and gender "difference signals inferiority" (Daly 286). According to *A Gender Audit of Statistics*, "within certain sectors of criminal justice workforces, women remain in the minority and are particularly underrepresented at senior levels, for example, in the judiciary and in police forces" (viii). Moreover, low pay remains a significant problem in Scotland and particularly for women, with 23% of all workers being low paid in 2005, and 31% of women workers being low paid (vii). Injustice in *Shadowplay*, then, is not related to ethnicity. Rather, it exposes contradictory and ambivalent identity

patterns and subject positions that, according to Edward Said, expose the "internal exile and alienation of [the white woman] from political and, to a degree, sexual gratification and participation" (80). Jacqui Alexander agrees with Said that women's oppression in modern societies is part of international processes of "political economy" that operates "hetero-patriarchal (re)colonization through the consolidation of certain psychic economies and racialized hierarchies, and within the various material and ideological processes initiated by the state, both inside and beyond the law" (Alexander 67). Both Mrs. Hamilton and Anna are "without a man," competing for power "in a Man's World" (103). The competition is so fierce and immoral that Anna's "promotion" and "shine" allegedly account for either "clandestine lesbian favouritism" or are meant "to bump her out of the division with minimum hassle and maximum protection" (3-4). Anna confesses that she is "a woman who'd never worn make-up, who'd relied on sharp brains and even sharper cheekbones" (4). As a police officer, Anna has to be protective and defensive of her sexuality and femininity. She is isolated and impassioned. Anna "had no memory at all of the last time she'd kissed her mother, properly, with love" (101). Similarly, Mrs. Hamilton's social status as a single woman arouses sarcastic comments as "misnomer" and "brand new or a total boot" (23). Anna and Mrs. Hamilton challenge gender and social stereotypes to join the Scottish police at the time when "married ladies had been required to resign, pregnant and in purdah" (24). Competing in a men's world, Mrs. Hamilton's "ruthless drive for power at all cost" turns her into "a Hitler… more macho than the men you tried to match. So scared you might be perceived as weak that you would overcompensate, grow more antagonistic, more quick to confront than the worst of the men you worked with" (133).

Anna's and Hamilton's internal feelings of gender inferiority and their embrace of masculinist practices, then, are results of a phallocratic, immoral economy. Their work into the police system provides them with power and money but deprives them of their difference and independence. Like inferior Asian Sabir who falls victim to polarized ethnic culture in Scotland, Hamilton's and Anna's entry into the patriarchal police not only leads them to either corruption or marginalization, but also limits their moralizing potential. Officer Claire affirms that "the more women we get up the ranks, the more bullies we're getting too" (32). Anna and Hamilton are unsympathetic, lonely and unemotional. As Anna investigates the disappearance of the 82-year-old white Mrs. Cassandra Maguire from the Meadows, a home for the elderly, she realizes the complex, prevalent effects of this immoral political economy in her society. Mrs. Cassandra and other residents of the Meadows, mostly affluent white soldiers, housewives, professors, postmen, suffer negligence and live in filthy, unprotected houses full of "salted air, oozing with lard-drenched cooking … an awful acknowledgement of too damp pads, of fading control of bodily functions" (73-74).

Facing Dr. Robert Macklin, a consultant geriatrician and a major shareholder in the Meadows with these problems, he answers: "it is a

business interest as well as a professional one. We're already fully approved and regularly inspected by the local authority" (73-74). In a *Study of Medical Negligence Claiming in Scotland*, Frank Stephen emphasizes that although there are some improvements in social care services, "negligence claims increase" (22). Patients and residents complain that "staff lacked empathy and compassion, were bullying or arrogant. Some lack intern training and supervision" (Stephen 22). Fionnuala Ní Aoláin argues that in transitional and changing periods, social justice is related to "the legal imperative of accountability and the willingness to establish new legal and political institutions" (1056). In *Shadowplay,* Campbell exposes the ongoing Scottish democratic incongruities and unsatisfactory political performances concerning centralized control and the maintenance of colonial notions in relation to issues of citizenship, moral responsibility, and power. Lacking the "imagination" and the "accountability" to reform the patriarchal visions of her ancestors, Mrs. Hamilton disapproves Anna's difference, accusing her of "clearly not coping" and suspending her because she "is unfit for duty" (70). In the end, Anna is marginalized, feeling "hopelessness" while "people like Hamilton apparently were the future of policing. Slick operators all and not one you'd trust to watch your back" (460).

In a similar way, *The Blue Elephant* exposes the inability of the new governing systems in post-2011 Egypt to stand up for the high ambitions of the Egyptian people revolting against domineering corrupt economic and political structures and deep-seated patriarchal cultural and identity patterns. Working in Abbasiya Psychiatric Hospital and assigned "8 West," a special department for mental patients who are also criminals, Dr. Yahiya Rashid, like Anna Cameron in *Shadowplay*, deals with the world of crime, deciding "the sanity and responsibility of crime perpetrators" (Mourad 22).[1] Through the postmortem examination of Basma Magedy who is killed and her body mutilated by her husband, psychiatrist Sheriff Elkordy and Yahiya's old friend, the author exposes "the laws of exploitation and depict the objective truth about the relationship between bourgeois legality and crime, the latter being shown as a special case of exploitation sanctioned by the former" (Benjamin 83-84). Within the Egyptian context in *The Blue Elephant*, bourgeois legality is based upon complicit attitudes towards gender violence, cultural crime, and a corrupt political economy. Sheriff and Basma love each other. However, Sheriff has infertility and sexual problems that prevent him from either pleasing his wife or having children. Since in the patriarchal Egyptian society, Michael Kimmel argues, "rape and [m]ale violence is a way to prove successful masculinity" (203), for months, Sheriff has been beating and raping Basma who takes no action to end her suffering. Rather, educated Basma escapes to superstition to satisfy the sexual and social desires of her husband. Basma uses "a demonic superstitious act that uses talisman and tattoo belonging to the time of Solomon, the demon or the talisman server sleeps with the wife either alone or through possessing the body of her husband ... so the couple enjoys a happy sexual life" (401). In the end,

allegedly possessed Sheriff murders his wife and Yahiya has to deny him criminal responsibility.

Basma's inferior and superstitious attitudes and her husband's violence are not exceptional. Rather, they are part of contemporary Egyptian society in a constant intellectual struggle between forces of oppression and cultural backwardness and forces of enlightenment and inquiry. In "Saints and Sheikhs in Modern Egypt," Valerine Hoffman discusses "state complicity" regarding religious culture in Egypt in the 1990s indicating that not only "unqualified individuals [are] granted a certificate to function as sheikhs" but also "visitors to the tombs increase, includ[ing] the well-educated and politically powerful" (19). Hoffman traces further how Mubarak's regime gives these "sheikhs some political and social power"(19). Sheriff Tarek and Khalid Montaser agree with Hoffman that superstition and political economy are interdependent oppressive powers in Egypt. Tarek underscores "the passiveness of the state regarding the spread of superstition and [sexual violence] is obvious because sex and superstition are the most commercial material" (13). Tarek shows how superstitious religion in Egypt becomes a "multi-million business" protected and maintained by corrupt institutionalized and individual structures and widely covered in "mainstream media to discuss possession, spells, and sorcery, even displaying acts and events supposedly related to such superstitions" (13). Khalid Montaser believes that since successive patriarchal political systems in Egypt succeed in "authenticating a culture of subjugation," people see superstition and/or fundamentalism as a way out of "their repression and failure to interpret the phenomena of change" (par. 4). In willingly giving up her rational thinking, Basma, like many characters in the novel, is complicit in upholding the regime of phallocentric and authoritarian power.

In *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective*, Christine Matzke argues that a forensic post-mortem not only "mirrors the body of the victim as well as the postcolonial society itself" but also "deconstructs the status quo. … Death, secrets, crime upset the domestic lives of characters and lead to an investigation of transgressions of social boundaries," and allow an "open-ended ambiguity, ongoing project of national liberation riddled with injustices, contradictions, and struggles" (15). Matzke's argument is perfectly applicable to an analysis of gender violence and crime in *The Blue Elephant*. Instead of joining the middle-class reformers in pre-and post-revolutionary Egypt, the majority of middle-class women and men in *The Blue Elephant*, like Basma and Sheriff, are imprisoned within inherited and neo masculinist identity and cultural patterns. For example, to secure a respectable social image, Yahiya marries his wife, Nermeen whom he does not love. Nermeen "realized that Yahiya is in love with another woman," but "sacrifices her happiness for the sake of her daughter" (401-402). When his wife and his daughter died in a car accident because of his reckless driving, Yahiya takes voluptuous and drug-addicted Maya as a new girlfriend. Yahiya confesses that Maya "understands him completely" and knows his "inner secrets," but he judges her as a "beautiful whore" and a "sex toy not a wife"

(67). Drugged Yahiya, like Sheriff, rapes and beats Maya. When Maya dies in a car accident, Yahiya is relieved that "she died away from his house" (207).

Living in a highly sexist and masculinist society, Yahiya and Sheriff neither pay for their social crimes nor are they culturally condemned for their violence or for immoral and illegal sexual relationships. Rather, Yahiya judges Maya's morality as unfit for marriage and is inconsiderate of his wife's feelings. However, Yahiya himself, like Sheriff, is a victim to masculinist traditions. Yahiya could not marry his beloved Lubna Elkordy for socio-cultural customs and is marginalized and repressed at work, described as "bureaucratic" and "corrupt"(207). Yahiya, like Sabir and Anna in *Shadowplay*, is an "anti-social and alienated person hooked on poker, weed, and alcohol" (11 & 23). Similarly, Lubna Elkordy loves Yahiya but obeys the order of her patriarchal family and marries her rich relative Khalid "who affords everything" (102). Lubna, like Nermeen, professes, "I do not love Khalid. We have no emotional or physical harmony" (102). Here, sexual and gender violence reflects a religiously based culture of subjugation and female inferiority. In *Spousal Violence in Egypt*, Hanaa Ismail reveals that "one in five married women with completed secondary education or higher condones wife beating for one reason or another" (3). Ismail further explains that "one in four Egyptian women said they recently experienced sexual violence, noting the most common forms as being forced to have sex against their will or when they were ill" (Ismail 3). Lubna, Nermeen, Basma, and Maya are well-to-do, educated women who are supposed to fight for their freedom and dignity. Yet, they are mentally and psychologically caged within their traditional secondary roles so that they unconsciously condone their partners' and husbands' (sexual) violence and abuse as part of their religious and cultural identities. Likewise, Yahiya and Sheriff become slaves to ideas of masculinity and sexual domination over women.

Unlike in *Shadowplay* where structures of violence and discrimination are tangible, obvious and domineering, forces of oppression and inferiority in *The Blue Elephant* are virtual, impalpable and mental. Geographical seclusion is replaced by psychological isolation. However, Mourad, like Campbell, represents Egyptian middle-classes as standing in a median state; neither completely at one with their new settings, responsibilities, and realities nor fully disencumbered of the enslaving past. They seem to experience processes of voluntary absent-mindedness and internal exile. In *Killing Rage* and *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Bell Hooks and Edward Said, respectively, discuss the political and cultural implications of the issue of sexuality in modern and postcolonial societies. For Hooks, "female (sexual) subjugation has always been a political stance" in the sense that "it is this merging of sexuality with male domination within patriarchy that informs the construction of masculinity for men of all races and classes" (9). Said supports Hooks' view that cultural traditions and politics are intertwined. Said explains that since "culture is authorized to represent the nation and to defend its identity", it is

assimilated "to the authority and exterior framework of the State" and consequently cultural norms defend "the entire matrix of meanings we associate with 'home', belonging and community" (*The World* 5). In line with Said's and Hooks' ideas, sexual and cultural violence in *The Blue Elephant* shows the contemporary Egyptian political system as encouraging and utilizing phallocentric culture and economic structures that rekindle basic (colonial) and patriarchal binary oppositions of male/female, master/slave and superior/inferior to suppress projects of liberation and imagined alternatives of authority and subject positions in society. In order to express their identity and be part of the community, Arab men and women in the novel have to obey coercive cultural and economic considerations. All couples in the novel see marriage as a "business" and "a social and economic contract" that "bestows prestige, recognition, and societal approval on both partners, particularly the bride" (Rashad 3) and thus helps them uphold class superiority.

In this way, violence and social crime in post-revolutionary Egypt, like in devoluted Scotland, is all-inclusive. In both countries, the governing systems give the opportunity to corrupt individuals and institutions to protect their interests. Consequently, daily contacts between men and women in *The Blue Elephant*, similar to ethnic contacts in *Shadowplay*, become sources of violent struggle over (sexual) domination and class/gender superiority, denoting different forms of economic patriarchy. In *The Blue Elephant*, Dr. Safaa, the director of the Abbasiya Hospital, like Mrs. Hamilton in G Division in *Shadowplay*, is a slick operator. She regards management as "obeying the laws and avoiding any discrepancies or divergences in the workplace" (23-24). Her aim is to keep the status quo and stop any disturbance to "the law and order" (294) inside and outside the institution. Dr. Safaa represents post-revolution authority but fails either to envisage new measures or ideas or to rationally defend her system. As a result, Yahiya's report on Sheriff's case is rejected because "you cannot tell the court that he is "schizophrenic or epileptic" (296), nor that "he is possessed" (402). Rather, for the Egyptian police, the Abbasiya Hospital administration, Dr. Safaa, and even Sheriff's family, Basma's murder is better explained as an "honour crime out of suspicious pregnancy" (81 & 297). An honour crime not only places shame and blame on the inferior female figure (Elakkary 79), and so preserves the patriarchal familial and tribal customs of the society and the system but also terminates attempts of new analysis and investigation. Like Mrs. Hamilton, Dr. Safaa dismisses Yahiya from the case, accusing him of being "depressed and unbalanced" (84). "I will suspend you from work for a year until you find another job" (298). Thus, in *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant*, Campbell and Mourad reread present histories of violence and crime in Scotland and Egypt to expose immoral, hierarchical and complicit political systems in the two countries as (re)domesticating the old colonial concept of identity as static, essential and based on binary oppositions.

Moral Authority and Change in *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant*

> A spiritual activity means moral progress when man does not simply take the command of an outer or inner authority as motive for his action, but strives to recognize the reason why a particular principle of conduct should act as motive in him. This is the advance from morality based on authority, to conduct based on moral insight. (Steiner 64)

In the above quotation, Rudolf Steiner relates the moral and political ramifications of authority. Steiner argues that the roots of feelings of slavery and siege are straw political creations that isolate the figure of authority from the rest of the world, designating them as superior, unemotional and stereotypical operators. To build an alternative concept of authority, Steiner suggests that a non-authoritarian spiritual principle can help one to be able to judge other people and cultures devoid of any religious, political or cultural stereotypes. Once liberated from the deep-seated shackles of hierarchical authority and power, the individual develops a "moral insight" in order to rethink, criticize and reevaluate one's cultural and political affiliations from a humanitarian perspective and to acquire real insight into other cultures and peoples. Steiner's concept of moral authority is valid for Campbell's *Shadowplay* and Mourad's *The Blue Elephant*. In the two novels, Scottish police chief Anna Cameron's and Egyptian psychiatrist Yahiya Rashid's experiences and responsibilities towards the world of crime and violence in their societies provide them with new knowledge and awareness. They develop different forms of moral responsibility and humanitarian sympathy that not only contradict the intimidating and constraining premise of patriarchal thought in their workplace, but also transcend personal concerns to connect with and defend the rights of those labeled as others. After her experiences in Glasgow's G division, Anna realizes that police work is not "just prosaic and practical, oven-ready leadership skills" (164) but denotes "real life, hands out and open" (257). Anna thinks:

> Crime, fathomless dark water she'd chosen to immerse herself in, was all a violation; its depth variable, dependent on who measured it, and why. Did society have the monopoly on defining moral turpitude? Society was wee shites like Gordo Figgis as much as it was High Court judges, or businessmen like Mr. Nayar, or spent old souls in nursing homes. (257)

As the above quotation indicates, Anna breaks her political siege and internal exile through getting away to other cities, other horizons and other desires. Her fight is against a war of bureaucracy that goes beyond moral condemnation of corrupt individuals like Hamilton, to condemn and expose corrupt structures like the police system. Monica Germana praises Campbell's ability to "develop dynamic paradigms for reading identity in relation to nation and gender" (153). I agree with Germana that Anna's involvement in the political problems of her country initiates her social integration and gender change in various contexts. Traveling to Spain to see her dying mother, Caroline, Anna

reconsiders her national affiliations and identity. Her mother is not the selfish woman who abandons her daughter to marry and live in Spain. Rather, "Spain was Caroline's home, where her friends were, her life was. As Scotland was for Anna" (102). Anna realizes that home is synonymous with feelings of security, belonging, equality and social openness. Phillip Rawkins suggests that through identification with the abject and the vulnerable, "the role of insiders and outsiders [is] blurred," with the aim to "address the relationship between the ongoing transformation of group identity in society and the political economy of the modern state" (519). I believe that Rawkins's suggestion is also compelling for an analysis of Anna's life. As an outsider, Anna judges the experiences of Sabir, Cassandra, Caroline and other colleagues from a detached stance. However, as an insider, she identifies with the abject, the vulnerable and the other as a lonely, marginalized and self-enclosed woman that may meet a similar fate. Anna is able to transcend her troubled childhood and sexual-social deprivation and fears to embrace love and emotional gratification offered by Rob Gingernut. With Rob, Anna "voices her fears [and] his face filled her with vision" (452). In addition, Anna persists in denouncing the rigidly enforced and policed separation of populations and subjects into different groups and antagonistic positions. Anna celebrates her difference declaring that she is still "fascinated by the flame, aware that it will hurt, and wanting to feel it, to prove that you can, that it will not sear flesh from bone" (464-5).

In *Notional Identities*, Thomas Christie argues that "crime fiction offers the suggestion that clever use of information can solve problems and provide an assurance of at least partial closure—an appealing promise" (8). Christie's argument is applicable to *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant*. As Anna stands for promising moral authority in Scotland, Yahiya Rashid in *The Blue Elephant* is able to effect a positive moral condemnation of the evil masculinist ideas in his society. Yahiya's experiences in a revolutionary Egypt suffering from violence and chaos not only "dash the successiveness of his cheap drama" (167), but also turn him into "a different kind of man" (428). Yahiya's personality transformation resonates with what Julia Kristeva describes as the disruption of "the primers of my culture" (*Powers of Horror* 2). Kristeva explains: "[o]n the edge of non-existence and hallucination of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me … abject and abjection are my safe-guards. The primers of my culture" (2). For Kristeva, when the subject loses the distinction between him/herself and the abject, a moment of positive disruption may occur. Here, the abject resonates "as a double" and a "political" presence within us and within the culture, exposing politics of "inclusion and exclusion" which establishes a "person's social affiliations and filiations" (134).

In *The Blue Elephant*, the distinction between the world of reality and the world of illusion is intentionally blurred. Both Sheriff and Yahiya are seen as schizophrenic, immoral criminals, drug and sex addicts, victims and patriarchal figures. Yahiya professes that "in my dreams, I see myself killing Lubna, the way I killed Maya" (358). The

only difference between the two male figures is that Yahiya is able to develop a morally induced responsibility for his actions: "For the first time in five years I confess that I let Maya and Lubna down, like everybody else" (185). Admitting responsibility rather than escaping to drugs and alcohol, Yahiya faces his "fears" and opens up for people. He "hung up the photos of his daughter and his wife on the wall again. He made amends to his neighbor, Mrs. Kawther, by giving her the green scarf which my wife asked me to give her in my first dream of her since her death" (428). Yahiya decides to marry Lubna who is encouraged by Yahiya to end her failed marriage. For him, Lubna is not a sexual object nor is an obsession. Rather, he marries Lubna "because she loves him and could understand him well" (148). Since the traditional rapports of authority and subordination in *The Blue Elephant* permeate interpersonal, particularly sexual relationships, change is fundamental at the level of sexual and familial intimacy. Here, Yahiya and Lubna initiate their revolt not merely against sexuality as a power that controls the subject's every relation with the other but also end their self-victimizing and subjugating intellectual traditions.

In *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant*, Anna and Yahiya realize that oppression is an essential part of patriarchal thinking and systems that seek to violate and encumber human dignity and consciousness on grounds of ethnicity, gender or sexuality, thus degrading human relations to primitive conflicts and basic identity divisions. Yahiya and Anna vigorously contest such covert degradation through eradicating its prejudicial distinctions between the self and the other, the past and the present, and the political and the personal. Thus, although change in *Shadowplay* and *The Blue Elephant* is effected on the individual level, it maintains an optimistic and forward-thinking venture toward a different, just future manifesting itself in the persistence of characters in the two novels to change their lives for the better and to identify with the diligent efforts of their societies for reform.

Notes
1. All quotes from *The Blue Elephant* are my own English translations.

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