

Crime and Dystopia in Three Egyptian Novels: Dissecting Cityscapes and the Body as a Terrain for Political Critique

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This article comparatively analyses three prominent novels that have acquired a large readership and significant critical attention since being published: *al-Singa* (The Knife) by Ahmed Khalid Tawfiq (2012); *al-Tabur* (The Queue) by Basma 'Abdel 'Aziz (2013); and *Nisa' al-Karantina* (Women of Karantina) by Nael Eltoukhy (2013). I situate the late Tawfiq's work alongside that of younger writers 'Abdel 'Aziz and Eltoukhy to explore how the three novelists coalesce around a dystopian vision of Egyptian society. Tawfiq's work, especially his acclaimed 2008 novel *Utopia*, could be considered a precursor of the two others' writings. The three novels deal with crime and violence wielded against women and men to silence their dissent from authoritarian and patriarchal orders. Each novel forensically investigates urban space and blurs the lines between fiction and reality. Two key questions guide the analysis: in what ways do crime and dystopia intersect in these fictional works? What does their dystopian vision tell us about contemporary Egyptian society? This analytical approach positions the body at the centre of dystopian fiction to explore how physical and psychological abuse transform places into unliveable, nightmarish environments; hence, I conceive of the body as a terrain for political critique.

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