outlets, it mostly outsourced the control of public discourse to different players, institutions, heavyweight editors and journalists who understood the red lines and the regime's goals. The state's direct interventions were not regular and explicit, except for certain subjects, such as the president and his family.

However, the plethora of private media outlets was not 'nationalized' per se under Sisi. Instead, the General Intelligence Service (GIS) launched a 'private' company, which extended its monopoly over media and entertainment. Media and entertainment organizations are nominally 'private', yet they are micromanaged by a clique of GIS officers who explicitly instruct the editors via WhatsApp on what to cover, what to write, and how to frame their stories. The result is dozens of newspapers, websites, radio channels and TV stations with identical headlines and reports. This is coupled with a severe erosion of the freedom of expression, continuous crackdowns, and arrests of journalists and social media users.

A short review does not do the book justice since it includes troves of information. Still, there is one thing I may disagree with Hamoud about: his tendency to not distinguish between the components of the repressive apparatus. He lumps together, for example, the GIS and the army under one category: the military. Although both institutions share personnel and are tasked with overlapping mandates, it is still important to distinguish the two, since, historically, they cultivated rivalry, part of the post-1952 regimes' coup-proofing strategy, even though they increasingly worked in unison after Sisi consolidated his regime to ensure that the threat of popular unrest was eradicated. And it is the GIS that has been playing the central role in reorganizing and managing the media and entertainment sectors at present, not the military.

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Rania M. Mahmoud, *Female Voices and Egyptian Independence: Marginalized Women in Egyptian and British Fiction.* London: I. B. Tauris (hb £85 – 978 0 7556 5104 7). 2024, 192 pp.

This book provides an analysis of four Bildungsroman novels by two Egyptian and two British authors. In addition to presenting unique and valuable analyses of each novel – *Mountolive* (1958) by Lawrence Durrell, *al-Sukkariyya* (1957) by Naguib Mahfouz, *The Guns of El Kebir* (2007) by John Wilcox, and *Wahat al-ghurub* (2009) by Bahaa Taher – the book demonstrates the significance of examining these four novels collectively in its Introduction and Conclusion.

In the modernization process of Egypt, patriarchy, social stratification and centralization are significant areas of focus that have been extensively studied by

many scholars. Particularly with regard to the social environment of women, studies have been conducted from various directions, including the masculinity of modern intellectuals (so-called *effendiyya*) who were the protagonists of the modernization project, as well as narratives emphasizing women's education from the perspective of their role as mothers. However, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing analysis of the roles women played in relation to men and the kinds of narratives and assertions allowed for women in novels. By focusing on female characters, this book underscores the exclusionary nature of the Bildungsroman, which traditionally centres on the growth of male protagonists. It also aims to capture women's voices and ideas by analysing the roles of female characters who influence the growth of male protagonists in Bildungsroman novels.

Additionally, this book includes novels that do not strictly fall within the Bildungsroman genre as part of its analysis (*The Guns of El Kebir* and *Wahat al-ghurub*). This approach enables the author to highlight the voices of women who are portrayed as 'vulnerable', or who are situated in a socially marginalized environment and embedded in gender-unequal relationships, while the women who foster the protagonist's growth are more authoritative female intellectuals in traditional Bildungsroman.

Although much research has been conducted on reactions to revolutions and imperialism, this book explores the relationship between Egypt and Britain post-revolution, especially the attitudes to British civilizational narratives from both Egyptian and British perspectives. The study concludes that the novels by the Egyptian authors ultimately marginalize minorities, in an attempt to adopt a new model for modernization. Particularly notable is Chapter 4, which highlights not only patriarchal dominance but also unequal geographical and ethnic relations, revealing the layered nature of colonialism. The book underscores Egypt's role as a colonizer in addition to being a victim of British imperialism, a perspective often overlooked in colonial studies. Despite dealing with the same post-revolution context, the British novels ultimately endorse imperialism, which Mahmoud attributes to the British authors' nostalgia for the empire. She sharply criticizes the portrayal of Egyptian characters in British novels, noting that Egyptian characters who validate the British protagonists and imperialism are in fact a Western consciousness pretending to be an Egyptian voice.

Egypt's nationalist movement partly unites through the exclusion of minorities, as the author examines. The work addresses women, ethnic minorities and peripheral regions, but the Islamization and consequent exclusion of Copts are also examples of minority marginalization in the nationalism process. The quest for national unity within the nationalist movement promoted Islamization, leading to discrimination, violence and the exclusion of minorities such as the Copts. In discussing the chain of multifaceted domination, the presence of religious minorities erased by Egyptian authors should also be considered. In particular, *al-Sukkariyya* focuses solely on Islam when discussing whether to incorporate religion into the pursuit of modernization. This topic could have been explored in more depth, considering the fact that both novels by Egyptian authors feature modern intellectual Muslim Egyptian men as protagonists, suggesting that the main actors in exploring Egypt's modernization are male, intellectual and Muslim. This reflects not only patriarchy but also elitism and Islamization in modern Egypt. Modern education, introduced as part of

Muhammad Ali's modernization policies, created a class of modern intellectuals known as the *effendiyya*. These individuals are defined by their education, professions, modern thinking, and Western attire and lifestyle. In essence, this modernized elite, reflecting Enlightenment values, drove the modernization and nationalism projects in ways that were beyond the involvement of other social groups.

The importance of this work will be appreciated at many levels, including in relation to the exclusionary nature of Egyptian nationalism and the multiple layers of colonialism. By analysing novels about the Egyptian revolutions through the lens of the Bildungsroman, Mahmoud has contributed to the study of modern Egypt and its literature. Her analysis sheds light on different attitudes in the novels to British civilizational narratives and the unique roles of female characters as mentors to male protagonists. Her study opens up possibilities for further research in this field.

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Annalena Kolloch, *Faire la magistrature au Bénin: Careers, Self-Images and Independence of the Beninese Judiciary (1894–2016)*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag (pb €59.80 – 978 3 89645 847 6). 2022, 248 pp.

Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan are well known to Anglophone readers for their anthropologies of the African state. Their approaches have, however, inspired important detailed studies in French and German that will be less familiar. This translation of Annalena Kolloch's ethnography of the Beninese judiciary is, therefore, particularly welcome.

As Bierschenk notes in his preface, *Faire la magistrature* belongs squarely to a 'Mainz tradition of ethnographically grounded and non-normative research on African "states at work"' (p. 13). It thus sets itself against a static 'culturalist trap', analysing the dynamic interplay between formal institutions, informal cultural settings and (unpropitious) material circumstances (p. 16). And it identifies the 'practical norms' that emerge when bureaucrats (here judges) must 'find their way' (*se débrouiller*), navigating irreconcilable imperatives (p. 22).

Kolloch's starting point is a wave of strikes by Benin's judges and prosecutors between 2012 and 2014. She was 'amazed' by these protests. During fieldwork for her master's degree (in 2009), a 'good judge' was always described as detached from politics and public life (p. 19). They would never have eaten in judicial robes, let alone wear them to march through the streets. Field (2015) and archival (2017) research for her doctorate helped her explain this dramatic turn of events. Kolloch argues that it resulted from the increasing impossibility of reconciling judges' ideals and