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**A New Historicist reading of the lives of two Queens of Egypt:  
'Cleopatra' and 'Nazli' as depicted by Shakespeare, Dryden, Rawya  
Rashed and Rashad Kamel respectively**

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This Thesis is dedicated to the Open House in Ramle of Dalia Eshkenazi Landau and  
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## Abstract

This thesis is a new historicist study of the life and times of Queen Cleopatra VI of Hellenistic Egypt and Queen Nazli Sabri of Modern Egypt in selected literary texts that provide multi-perspectives of the traditional image of both queens in art and history. In the light of the study, Authorial Intentionalism is examined by emphasizing the selected texts' structural analyses of language, which shape the reader's perception of both queens in stylistic terms. The New Historicism theory is thus applied to the selected literary texts, which represent both queens, to deconstruct the traditional opposition between history as factual and literature as fictional and unmask the political ideologies behind Cleopatra and Nazli's discursive constructions. Translation of the Arabic texts that depict Nazli has been attempted, where certain sections have been literally translated not to weaken the effect of the Arabic structure. Mailloux's examination of the temporal reading model is also used to analyze authorial intentionalism in the examination of the texts under study. Therefore, as the authors of the selected texts of Cleopatra and Nazli approach their subjects from one of several directions, the study underlines how by comparing between Cleopatra, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1623) and Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), and Nazli in Rawya Rashed's *Nazli: A Queen in Exile* (2010) and Rashad Kamel's *Queen Nazli: Love and Revenge* (2010) reality is constructed by the free play of institutions and rhetoric among discourses insofar as both queens have been misrepresented in history and literature.

**Key Words:** Authorial Intentionalism- Cleopatra – Discourse – Nazli – New Historicism- Stylistics.

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## Preface

This thesis is a new historicist study of selected literary texts that depict Queen Cleopatra VII of Hellenistic Egypt and Queen Nazli Sabri of Modern Egypt, who have been misrepresented by traditional history and literature until the present time. The New Historicism theory, which is founded by the American literary theorist Stephen Greenblatt in the early 1980s, is applied to determine how there are no objective truths in history and there is no concrete reality of an age. Given that new historicists put forward that history, like literature, is a text that is produced and received by the different cultures that respond to the ideologies of their power structures, the examination of the texts under study attempts to prove how reality is constructed by the free play of institutions and rhetoric among discourses. History and literature are thus cultural artifacts, which embody the dynamic play of discourses and social meanings of the time and place they are written and interpreted. In the light of this view, the study of Cleopatra and Nazli<sup>1</sup> is begun by the application of the New Historicism theory to the selected literary texts, which represent both queens, to deconstruct the traditional opposition between history as factual and literature as fictional and unmask the political ideologies behind Cleopatra and Nazli's discursive constructions.

Since new historicism is based upon the parallel readings of literary and non-literary texts to achieve full comprehension of the social energy, circulating in texts speaking of the same subject, Intertextuality, introduced by the French semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, is used to connect between similar texts that depict Cleopatra and Nazli. By so doing, the political ideologies behind the depiction of both queens in similar texts is determined to underline how there are no universal truths either in history or in literature, as both are entirely textual. In this regard, there is no fixed reality but only a symbolic representation of it either in history or in literature.

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<sup>1</sup> Queen Cleopatra VII and Queen Nazli Sabri will now be referred to as Cleopatra and Nazli in the preface.

New historicists believe that history as a process subject to rewriting and transformation is always in the making. In this respect, "Thick Description," is a term used by new historicists to examine the ways in which all social and political institutions, operating under a larger framework, emerge, become naturalized and define people's perception of themselves and the world at large (Tyson 285). In contrast with the political conservatism of historical criticism, new historicism focuses in its analyses on the subjective side of history. Where historicism reflects a traditional relationship with the past, whose chief objective is to prove how far a work of art is reflective of its age, new historicism in literary studies proposes a new relationship with the past, one that is concerned with examining a specific brand of cultural poetics. By examining the ideological formation of similar contexts, which are loaded with social codes that need to be deciphered, new historicist skeptical and critical readings transform the old Marxist notion of ideology critique into discourse analysis (Henderson 191).

With reference to the new historicist examination of Renaissance studies, literary critics have been skeptic of Renaissance literature insofar as many of the greatest works of art in the history of English literature were produced in the Renaissance period. Being skeptic of culture and history at large, new historicists refuse to see the Renaissance as the golden age that has been dominated by such prominent intellectuals of all times as Shakespeare. In their criticism of Shakespeare thus new historicists deconstruct the fact, put by neo-classicists and later formalists, that Shakespearean plays are universal masterpieces, which belong to all times. New historicists, in this respect, turned their criticism into a more political activity, which reveals the dominant ideologies of the age and signifies how the theatre in Renaissance England played an important role in the representation and circulation of power (Dollimore, *Political Shakespeare* 3).

The same examination has been applied to literary texts, which belong to the Restoration period. Given that Restoration drama is greatly influenced by the socio-political conflicts of the age, Restoration literary texts are ideological constructs of the period's effective dominant culture (Markley 100). This is clearly reflected with reference to Dryden's heroic drama, which reflects the age's moral and political issues. New historicists are thus skeptic of the Restoration rhetoric and reason, which are characterized by controversy and moral ambiguity.

On the other hand, Egyptian researchers, journalists and biographers, such as Lamis Gaber, Rawya Rashed, Rashad Kamel and many others, who witnessed the failure of the 1952 revolution, turned to the past in an attempt to reconstruct a new reading of it that would defy the state's national discourse. More than fifty years after the 1952 revolution and its failed promises, which culminated not only in the establishment of Egypt as a military state but also in the destruction of the origins of its modern history, such writers decided to dig out all the hidden truths that have been buried and disfigured by the state about royal Egypt and its past monarchs in art and history. Such writers thus adopt the new historicist approach of examining the significance of history in art and literature.

The political impact of both Cleopatra and Nazli on the history of Egypt is very recognizable. For instance, Cleopatra, the Macedonian and the last queen of the Ptolemaic monarchs of Egypt, had the greatest impact in the Hellenistic world because of her continuous struggles to protect her dynasty by keeping it independent from the Roman occupation and by securing the Egyptian throne for her Caesarean. On the other hand, Nazli, who isn't descended from a long line of monarchs, had a similar political impact. Certainly, the daughter of the Egyptian Minister of Agriculture and Governor of Cairo, Abdul Rahim Pasha Sabri, was crowned as Queen of modern Egypt only after marrying King Fuad and giving birth to his son, Farouk, the future king of Egypt. Being confined to seclusion throughout her marriage to King Fuad, Nazli celebrated his death in 1936 and, like Cleopatra, she struggled to secure the Egyptian throne for her son.

However, the history of Cleopatra was documented by her enemies, who undermined her political impact on Egypt by disfiguring her reputation in favor of Rome. Similarly, Nazli's political role was overlooked in the historical archives of post 1952 revolution Egypt in that after the death of King Fuad, she was accused of breaking all the rules of the royal family to make up for the wasted years she suffered in her imprisonment in the royal palace. Such misrepresentations of both queens thus underline the existing power structures of traditional histories insofar as both Cleopatra and Nazli have been represented by authors and interpreted by readers over different periods of time as morally corrupt.

As the authors of the texts under study approach their subjects from one of several directions, the first objective of the thesis is to compare between how Cleopatra, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1623) and Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), and Nazli in Rawya Rashed's *A Queen in Exile* (2010) and Rashad Kamel's *Love and Revenge* (2010) have been misrepresented in both history and literature. Therefore, since it is very difficult for historians and authors to construct an objective view of their subjects and the events which surround them so as not to fall prey to the views of a certain culture or the principles of a certain sector of society, it is essential to find answers to:

- How does the effective dominant culture influence the ways in which historians and authors write and interpret history?
- How do the texts under study reveal ideologies that support or undermine the prevailing power structures of the time and place where they are written and interpreted?
- How can the texts under study be appealing to readers who belong to a particular time and place?

New historicists are thus against the notion of historical transparency, as all texts and their interpretations are the product of the effective dominant culture (Payne 28). In their attempt to deny texts any fixed identity, new historicists deconstruct the objectivity of texts, specifically unstable literary ones, to underline the political implications behind their production and reception. In the light of this argument, the second objective of the thesis is to explore the notion of Authorial Intentionalism to determine textual interpretations by examining the relationship between the author, the reader and the text.

In redrawing boundaries between the reader and the text, literary theorists of the second half of the twentieth century such as Roland Barthes, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish advanced the new critical notion of self-autonomous texts by underlining how both the reader and the text exert authority over one another. By proposing how every act of reading projects new meanings onto a text, such critics suggest that there is no final reading of a text, as the interpretation of textual traces varies from one time to another. Every text is thus subject to different interpretations and negotiations that reflect the power of the effective dominant culture of the time it is written and

interpreted, which underlines how as culture keeps changing so do our modes of thought and views of life.

If we assume that our knowledge of the past is textual and our only way of understanding a text is through interpretation, our interpretations and analyses of texts are shaped, on the one hand, by our dominant culture, where unstable social and economic circumstances keep changing over time, and by authorial intentionalism on the other. With reference to Stanley Fish, as all reading models are based upon interpretive communities and reading conventions, the structure of the reader's interaction with the text should be more emphasized than the formal aspects of the text (Fish 2). Against the new critical proposition that meaning is embedded in the text, the reader's experience with the text is thus not based upon extracting meaning from it to determine the author's original meaning. Rather, the reader's temporal interaction with the text underlines how meaning develops during sequential acts of reading in response to the reader's horizon of expectations, which is affected by the linguistic tools the author uses to affect the reader's interpretation of his/her text.

In other words, with reference to the literary critic Steven Mailloux, who draws upon the Reception Theory of the German critic Robert Jauss, the reader's response to any given text is produced and constrained by the text's linguistic aspects in terms of shared literary reading conventions between the author and the reader (10). In the light of this discussion, Mailloux's examination of the temporal reading model is drawn upon to analyze authorial intentionalism in the examination of the texts under study. It could be inferred thus that although the reader seems to have the upper hand in influencing the meaning of the text, the text eventually directs the reader's interpretation of it. The text thus acts as the author's means to capture the attention of the reader and influence his/her ways of responding to it.

Therefore, in examining the texts under study, with reference to Mailloux's discussions of Interpretive Conventions and Authorial Intentionalism, the stylistic analyses conducted on the texts under study are based upon the British linguist Roger Fowler's *Linguistic Criticism* (1986) and the literary theorists Roman Jakobson and Geoffrey Leech's structural analyses of language. Given that the linguistic techniques of authorial intentionalism, which shape the readers' perceptions of Cleopatra and Nazli, must be examined in stylistic terms, the thesis attempts to provide answers to the following question:

- How is language selection/ foregrounding used as a deliberate misinterpretation of Cleopatra and Nazli?

## **Findings and Recommendations**

Against published scholarly articles and dissertations about Cleopatra such as Donald C. Freeman's article "The rack of dislimns:" Schema and Metaphorical Pattern in Antony and Cleopatra,' and Julie Adamson's dissertation "Power and Presence: Cleopatra's Image in Form and Context," which do not entirely tackle the political implications behind the misrepresentation of the queen in art and history, the thesis seeks to find out through the application of new historicism and authorial intentionalism the following: the extent to which canonical works of art and historical texts serve or go against the mainstream and the ways in which the texts understudy can influence the reader's interpretation of them.

In his article, Freeman only tackles the metaphorical representations of Shakespeare's play from the dramatist's schematized figurative language, which reflects the play's progress from Rome and its military power, exemplified in Antony to Cleopatra's transcendence from the boundaries of her physical being into the sublime (443). Although published dissertations such as "Power and Presence: Cleopatra's Image in Form and Context," by Julie Adamson highlights the researcher's attempts to redraw boundaries between fact and fiction in the representation of Cleopatra, Adamson does not construct comparable readings between literary and non-literary texts in her examination of the political implications behind the representation of Cleopatra in fact and fiction. Rather, she consults historical archives and ancient biographies of ancient historians and biographers such as Dio Cassius and Plutarch as well as referring to the latest cinematic productions of Cleopatra, all of which would help the researcher foreground the image of the queen in form and context (12-16)

Thus, by constructing comparable readings between the texts understudy and other literary and non-literary texts as well as determining the inter-subjective reader responses of Cleopatra and Nazli, the thesis seeks to underline the extent to which the stylistic devices, employed by the authors of the texts understudy, reflect or defy the power structures of their effective dominant cultures. The examination of the new historicist perspective of the subjectivity of history is therefore reflected in the

selection of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *All for Love*, where a comparison between the ways in which Cleopatra is foregrounded in the discourse of Shakespeare and Dryden for readers across different periods of time is conducted. With reference to the formalist proposition of Shakespeare's plays as timeless canonical works of art and the ideological content of Dryden's Restoration drama, the thesis seeks to highlight how such texts serve the Renaissance and the Restoration power structures. Accordingly, in the second chapter of the thesis, parallel readings between literary and nonliterary texts which depict Cleopatra are constructed to underline the political implications behind the misrepresentation of the queen in art and history.

The Arabic texts of Rawya Rashed's *Nazli: A Queen in Exile* and Rashad Kamel's *Nazli: Love and Revenge* are selected to examine the misrepresentation of Nazli in art and history from twenty first century reading perspectives that have not been tackled before neither in art nor in history. By conducting intertextual readings of Rashed and Kamel's biographies of Nazli, on the one hand, and then comparing them to a more recent publication of the life and times of the queen on the other, the third chapter of the thesis presents a detailed study of the authors' free interpretations of their historical subject. In other words, given that Rashed and Kamel are not just narrators of Nazli's life but are also readers of historical archives of the last monarchs of Mohamed Aly's royal family and the history of modern Egypt, the historical sources of Rashed and Kamel's texts are examined to underline how far these texts are close to one another in their twenty first century ideological reconstruction of the worldview of the queen. It is important to note that the translation of the Arabic texts that depict Nazli has been attempted by the researcher in the third chapter. Certain sections of such Arabic texts have been literally translated in the fourth chapter not to weaken the effect of the Arabic structure in the research's stylistic analysis.

However, the thesis does not provide full answers to the proposed questions about the misrepresentations of Cleopatra and Nazli in history and literature. Although throughout the thesis, the power of culture and language in shaping literary texts and their interpretations as well as our experiences as readers who belong to different periods of time are examined, there are other areas, specifically related to the background history of Rawya Rashed and Rashad Kamel and the role of the effective dominant culture in influencing the ways in which both writers narrate and interpret history, which need to be further examined in addition to other historical books that

speak of the same subject matter. With reference to the political examination of the misrepresentation of Cleopatra, specifically in literature, there are other literary texts that serve the dominant ideologies of their power relations, which also need to be conducted in analyses. In so doing, the proposed new historicist study of the texts that depict Cleopatra and Nazli can fully reveal the ideologies, which either support or undermine the prevailing power structures of the time and place where such texts are written and interpreted.

## **Chapterization**

The thesis is divided into four chapters and a conclusion, which tackle the main objectives and provide, through the examination of the texts under study, answers to the proposed questions about the misrepresentation of Cleopatra and Nazli in history and literature. The chapters also capitalize upon the power of culture and language in shaping literary texts and their interpretations as well as our experiences as readers, who belong to different periods of time.

**Chapter One – History as Theory and Text** is an introductory chapter. The chapter first introduces the theory of New Historicism and then defines Authorial Intentionalism, upon which the argument of the thesis is built. The chapter also includes a detailed background of the history of Hellenistic and Modern Egypt and their monarchs with reference to a selected number of history books. Towards the end of the chapter, new historicist and critical perceptions of Cleopatra and Nazli are underlined in a number of given histories.

**Chapter Two - History is a 'story:' Cleopatra Disfigured** is a detailed discussion of new historicism in terms of theory and practice. It begins with describing the role of intertextuality and discourse in determining the historical sources of Shakespeare and Dryden's literary texts. In the light of this discussion, the chapter reveals the ideological representations of the anecdote of Cleopatra in literature and history. Then it moves to the study of the English theater and its representation of power, where Shakespeare is introduced as the politician of the Renaissance Theater. The chapter thus emphasizes the importance of intertextuality in the researcher's examination of the political implications behind the production of Cleopatra in the discourse of Shakespeare and Dryden and their significance until the present time. This is clearly achieved in the application of intertextual parallel

readings, on the one hand, between Shakespeare and Dryden's dramatic depictions of Cleopatra in the texts under study, and the representation of Cleopatra in Ahmed Shawqi's poetic play, *The Death of Cleopatra* (1989) and Stacy Schiff's biography, *Cleopatra: A Life* (2010) on the other. The examination of the political depiction of Cleopatra is further illustrated in the comparison of the texts under study with nonliterary texts such as Arthur Weigall's *The Life and Times of Cleopatra: A Study in the Origin of the Roman Empire* (1914), and Sally-Ann Ashton's *The Last Queens of Egypt* (2003) and *Cleopatra and Egypt* (2008).

**Chapter Three - History is an account of 'narratives:' Nazli Condemned** is a further study of the new historicist proposition of history as a narrative construct. The chapter starts with the examination of Nazli as a counterhistorical figure of modern Egypt. Then it highlights the significant role of the autobiographical approach in historicizing Nazli in literature and history. The chapter thus underlines the application of intertextuality to Rawya Rashed and Rashad Kamel's representations of Nazli in the texts under study to determine how far their texts embody or defy the power structures of Nasser's national discourse. This is clearly achieved in the examination of Nazli's biographical depictions in the discourse of Rashed and Kamel in comparison with other biographical texts that depict the same historical subject such as Samir Farag's *The Queen and Chief of Diwan: Nazli and Ahmed Hassanein* (2012). The chapter also extends the examination of the political representations of Nazli in such earlier historical archives about modern Egypt as Abdel Wahab Bakr's *The Royal Court and its Role in the Egyptian Political Life from Ismail to Farouk* (2008), *The Middle East Today* (1994) by Don Peretz and Arthur Goldsmith's *Re-envisioning Egypt 1919-1952* (2005).

**Chapter Four - Intersubjective Textual Analyses of Cleopatra and Nazli** is an application of Steven Mailloux's analyses of Authorial Intentionalism to the texts under study. The chapter starts with describing the relationship between authors and readers in textual communication. The most important aspect of such relationship is Stanley Fish's proposition of the temporal process of reading, which signifies the importance of the reader's sequential interaction with the text in the production of meaning. In the light of this discussion, the researcher draws upon Fish's "affective stylistics" and Roger Fowler and Edmund Leech's stylistic analyses to determine to what extent the reader's interpretation of the texts under study are produced and constrained (Mailloux 48). This is clearly achieved in examining how Cleopatra and