

Fall in Line: How Surfers' Perceptions of Localism, Territoriality and Waves as Limited Resources Influence Surf-related Aggression

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Abstract

To understand why aggression frequently arises in a sport often described as “Zen-like,” I examined whether surfers’ perceptions of localism, territoriality, and waves as limited resources predicted aggression while surfing, over and above what can be accounted for by individual differences in general aggressive tendencies. Sixty-two surfers (88.7% male; *M* age = 29.5 years), sampled from popular surfing beaches in Southern California, were asked to complete a brief survey designed to measure their beliefs about territoriality, perceptions of waves as a limited resource, self-identification as a local, and the extent to which they engaged in actual surf-related aggressive behavior and experienced anger-related emotions toward their fellow surfers (i.e., anger, frustration, irritation, agitation and hostility). To measure individual differences in general aggressive personality, participants also completed two subscales (anger and physical aggression) from the Buss-Perry Aggression Scale (Buss & Perry, 1992). Results from partial correlation analyses demonstrate that even when controlling for general aggressive tendencies, beliefs about territoriality, self-identification as a local, and perceptions of waves as limited resources were all significantly associated with greater surf-related aggression and surf-related negative affect. These results shed light on the psychological processes that lead to aggressive behaviors among surfers.

Introduction

Imagine you are driving in your car and someone cuts you off. What do you do? Do you speed up, yell and scream at the driver for cutting you off? This type of incident is commonly referred to as “road rage” and

happens often on the highways of Southern California. Now, imagine you are surfing and another surfer cuts you off. Would you become violent and aggressive? Surf-related aggression, or “surf rage,” also happens often in Southern California. But isn’t surfing, which takes place in a beautiful natural environment, supposed to be a peaceful Zen-like sport? Why are surfers fighting with one another? This phenomenon is a relatively untapped area of research in the social sciences. To understand why aggression frequently arises in surfing, we examined whether surfers’ perceptions of localism, territoriality, and waves as limited resources predicted aggression while surfing (over and above what can be accounted for by individual differences in general aggressive tendencies).

Movies like *Point Break* and *Blue Crush* introduced us to aggressive local surfers and “surf gangs,” but do surfers really act this way? The simple answer is yes, some surfers do act aggressively while surfing. But understanding why some surfers are aggressive and why some are not is the focus of my research. Today, practically any surf spot with good waves has its own set of self-identified locals. A local is anyone who has lived and surfed in the area for a long period of time. This person knows the surf spot and knows exactly where to be in the line-up to catch the most waves. If swell-driven waves are forecast, locals are the first ones in the water and the last ones to leave. To a local, surfing is more than a sport, it is a lifestyle. Localism is a term used to describe the various behaviors of local surfers. Localism is best described by sociologist Dean Scheibel as “the various exclusionary cultural practices by which a number of surfers attempt to control access to particular surfing spots” (1995, p. 255). In Hawaii, for example, local surfers decide which surfers are allowed access to popular surfing spots. There is no formal regulation for surfing (like referees in other sports), so local cultures of informal regulation often develop.

Each year, more and more people engage in the sport of surfing. Surfing has grown tremendously in popularity since it first hit the Southern California beaches during the early 1960’s. But with more surfers, there comes greater crowding in the water. The ways in which surfers attempt to control access to the surf spot differs between locations. At Pipeline in Hawaii, for example, locals literally regulate the

waves in the water. One local sits among the other surfers and allocates the waves to surfers based on his decision. The hierarchical order is at this local's discretion and his decision is as stands. Another form of controlling access may be through intimidation or verbal threats. The parking lot at Trestles in Southern California is marred with graffiti, stating things like "locals only" and "beat it kook" (kook is a euphemism for someone who poses as a surfer). Stories in popular surfer magazines tell stories of surfers popping tires and breaking boards because of an altercation between locals and non-locals. Surf etiquette is one attempt to prevent fights among surfers, but it has yet to prove effective since the rules are merely implicit.

Because there are no official rules for surfing, localism thrives within the surf culture. However, there are general guidelines for surfing localized surf spots. Since locals surf the same surf spot, it appears there is an assumed level of respect and privilege for them. Respect is an important value for locals. Locals feel they have the "right of way" to the wave, although surfer etiquette states whoever is closest to the peak has the right of way. Most of the time a social order is created at localized breaks and thus, a hierarchy is formed for catching waves. Daskalos (2007) interviewed a small group of surfers in Southern California and describes a surfing social order: "The local social order gave precedence to seniority and surfing skill and endowed a sense of belonging and esteem to group members" (p. 128). In Daskalos's study, he decided to focus on two local surf spots in San Diego. The surfers he interviewed have been long-time residents and surfers for over 20 years. These surfers felt the surf culture has changed dramatically from what it once was and is no longer "soul surfing," but commercialization of the surf culture. David Brown and Nick Ford (2006) agree surfing has changed dramatically since its prime. According to Brown and Ford, the sport of surfing has changed since the 1960's and currently surfing is seen more as a way to make money, where corporations are making a profit off products and the professional circuit. The authors believe the shift towards commercialization and the enormous growth in participation and crowding are reasons for an increase in localism. From this perspective, locals feel a need to preserve a surf spot as local because most of these

surfers have spent their lives surfing in the same surf spot. Surfers see the surf spot as more than a public domain and feel it is a personal space.

Due to the massive influx of surfers into the culture, it seems locals have, over time, become more territorial. Waitt (2008) observed a group of male surfers in Australia and noted “men’s love of surfing is often so intense for a particular break that territorialism is commonplace, marked-out by graffiti tabs such as ‘locals only’” (p. 75). Waitt was a frequent body boarder at the location he chose to observe, but he did not identify as a local nor did he surf. He observed the surfers for over a period of time and concluded this about localism: “Seemingly, amongst many short board-riders, nothing is more pleasurable than defending access to a surf-break that enables possibilities to maintain a strong sense of self, through the pleasures of ‘killing waves’” (Waitt, 2008, p. 75). If waves cannot be controlled, perhaps the location can. Localism and territoriality both appear to control access to the surf, and provide two ways in which locals can protect the waves from intrusion.

Human territoriality has been studied by numerous social psychologists and environmental psychologists across the globe. According to Altman (1970):

Human territoriality encompasses temporarily durable preventive and reactive behaviors including perceptions, use and defense of places, people, objects, and ideas by means of verbal, self-marker, and environmental problem behaviors in response to the actual or implied presence of others and in response to properties of the environment, and is geared to satisfying certain primary and secondary motivational states of individuals and groups. (p. 8)

Altman’s definition of territoriality provides a clear explanation of human territoriality, which may be particularly useful in understanding surf-related territorial psychology.

Altman classifies territories as either primary, secondary, or public. According to Altman (1975), “Primary territories are owned and used exclusively by individuals or groups, are clearly identified as theirs by others, are controlled on a relatively permanent basis, and are central to the day-to-day lives of the occupants” (p. 111). Examples of primary

territories include one's bathroom or a family's dwelling. Occupants place value on their primary territories and use their territories as boundary-regulation processes (Altman, 1975). Furthermore, Altman (1975) concludes this about violating primary territories: "A violation of a primary territory can be a serious affront to a person's self-identity, especially if the intrusion is repeated and if adjustment and readjustment of boundaries is unsuccessful" (p. 112). Secondary territories are, in essence, the in between space between private and public territories. "The bridge, therefore, between the total and pervasive control allowed participants in primary territories and the almost-free use of public territories by all persons" (Altman, 1975, p. 114). Examples of secondary territories include neighborhood bars or social clubs. In regards to a violation of secondary territories, Altman (1975) states, "There may well be confusion regarding secondary-territory boundaries, and the possibility exists for considerable conflict as boundaries are established, tested, and violated" (p. 114). The final territories are public. Altman (1975) defines public territories as "having temporary quality, and almost anyone has free access and occupancy rights" (p. 118). Examples of public territories include public beaches or residential parks. Since public territories are, in theory, open to all occupants there is no such thing as violating a public territory. According to Altman (1975), "In general, public territories are relatively fragile mechanism for control of self/other boundaries. They are heavily dependent on institutions, norms, and customs rather than on rules set down by an individual user" (p. 120). Since beaches are a public territory this definition allows us to understand how a surfer's perception of territoriality might be shaped. The beach may be open to all, but there are general guidelines and customs that need to be respected when surfing.

In addition to territoriality, surfers' perceptions of waves as limited resources may contribute to the psychology of surf-related aggression. Waves are a limited resource because there are few ideal surf spots. People compete for the best waves; therefore, good waves are seen as a highly valued and limited resource. Since good waves are viewed as a scarce resource, some surfers will engage in surf-related aggressive behaviors to gain access to them. In their writings about the sociology of surfing, Ford and Brown (2006) blame the inherent scarcity of waves as

the reason a regulation of surfing has been born. Other authors disagree. Young (2001), author of *Surf Rage*, believes surf rage is about dominance over waves. Young makes a connection between dominating waves and the limited resources of waves. He describes surf rage as: “Surfers who are emotionally overtaken and resort to attempting to dominate the space, equipment and even bodies of the surfers, especially novitiates who inadvertently break the surfing etiquette” (p. 145). Due to the scarcity of quality waves, surf spots are becoming heavily crowded with eager surfers all wanting the same thing—a wave. Surfers travel to distant parts of the world because they are trying to escape the crowds at their local surf spots. More and more competitions at popular surf spots are forcing surfers to go to new surf spots. In conclusion, since waves are a limited resource more surfers are becoming frustrated and hostile with one another. A problem arises when the frustration of locals attempting to control their territory is combined with the use of force to gain access to what they desire. All three of these factors appear to increase surf-related aggression. If the preceding factors prove to be significant to the increase in surf-related aggression, then one can see how powerful our environment affects human behavior.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: Do surfers’ perceptions of localism contribute to surf-related aggression? Even after controlling for individual differences in general aggressive tendencies, does perceiving waves as a limited resource contribute to surf-related aggression,?

Method

Participants & Recruitment Procedures. Participants were 62 surfers who volunteered to complete the surf-related aggression survey. Data were collected from Newport Beach and Huntington Beach, California. Demographical information and individual differences data were collected from the participants on the beach or in the parking lot adjacent to the pier. There were a considerably large number of male (88.7%) surfers surveyed. The average age of the surfer was relatively young ($M=29.5$, $SD=12.17$). The average surfing ability was intermediate ($M=2.23$, $SD=.73$). There were more non-

locals (56.5%) than self-identified locals (43.5%), but only by a few participants.

I parked my car in the same parking lots and waited for the surfers to come out of the water. I had three clipboards, so I was able to administer the survey to more than one surfer at a time. Once the surfers were at their cars, I approached them and asked how the waves were. I started out having a casual conversation with the surfers, so I could transition into asking them to fill out the survey. At the beginning stages of data collection, I approached the surfers before they went surfing. This method was not efficient because most of the time the surfers would tell me they were in a hurry. In fact, a few times, if the surfers saw I was carrying a clipboard they would not even talk to me. I decided to approach the surfers as they headed to their cars. This time I kept the clipboards in a beach bag and explained the study before I brought out the clipboards. I asked them if they would be interested in completing a survey to help support a university student's research on environmental and surf-related attitudes and behaviors. I identified myself as the researcher and had them read and complete the consent form before completing a brief survey. After the surfers completed the survey, they were debriefed.

Measures

Surf-related Aggression Survey. To assess surf-related aggression related to surfers' perception of localism, territoriality, and waves as a limited resource. Self-identified local was originally a continuous variable but was transformed into a categorical variable. If surfers indicated on a Likert-type scale a 5 or above (1 Uncharacteristic of me to 7 Characteristic of me) for the question, *yes I am a local*, then it was assumed they were self-identified locals. The rest of the questions consisted of the same Likert-type scale. The territoriality scale consisted of nine items (Cronbach's alpha = .84) that assessed participants' level of perceived territoriality (i.e., *If an "outsider" breaks the surf etiquette and drops in out of line this surfer has disrespected the surf territory*). The waves as limited resources scale consisted of two items (Cronbach's alpha = .64) that assessed participants beliefs about waves as limited resources (i.e., *Good*

waves are increasingly becoming a limited resource). Lastly, the surf-related aggression scale consisted of eight items (Cronbach's alpha = .85) that assessed participants' aggressive tendencies while surfing (i.e., *The thought of physical abuse crosses my mind when another surfer drops in on me*).

Buss-Perry Aggression Scale. To measure individual differences in general aggressive personality, participants were also asked to complete the two subscales from Buss-Perry Aggression Scale (Buss & Perry, 1992). The two subscales were physical aggression and anger. Sample items included, *"I have trouble controlling my temper."* Also, *"If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights I will,"* using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (extremely disagree with this statement) to 7 (extremely agree with this statement).

Negative Affect. Lastly, to measure attitude towards fellow surfers, participants were asked to complete a seven-item negative affect scale. The negative affect scale consisted of seven items (Cronbach's alpha = .91). The participants were asked to which extent they experienced negative affect, and/or anger-related emotions toward their fellow surfers (i.e., anger, frustration, irritation, agitation and hostility), using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations. Mean scores and correlations for all measures are displayed in Table 1 and 2 of the Appendix. As illustrated in Table 1, self reports of surf-related aggression and negative affect were moderate, as both scores were near the mid-point of the scale. Similarly, territoriality was just above the scale mid-point. Notably, the sample perceived waves to be a limited resource because the mean was considerably higher than the scale mid-point. As displayed in Table 2, a significant positive correlation was found between all predictor variables and the criterion variable surf-related aggression score. The strongest correlation was between territoriality and surf-related aggression. This strong correlation is consistent with

Waitt's (2008) observations of surfers' territorial habits inside and outside of the water (e.g., graffiti marred parking lots which were meant to intimidate non-local surfers). Personality anger and surf-related aggression were also strongly correlated, which was to be expected because both measure anger. The same can be inferred about the strong correlation between physical aggression and surf-related aggression. Identifying these strong correlations is important because it highlights that general aggressive personality tendencies are associated with surf-related aggression. These relationships will be statistically controlled when examining whether perceptions of localism, territoriality, and waves as a limited resource predict surf-related aggression and negative affect, over and above these personality tendencies.

In addition, there were moderate correlations between waves as limited resources and surf-related aggression, as well as between self-identified locals and surf-related aggression (see Table 2). This was surprisingly lower than the correlation between surf-related aggression and personality anger and the correlation between surf-related aggression and physical aggression. The reason for the moderate correlation could be because not all self-identified locals engage in aggressive behaviors. Another explanation could be a difference in the traditional social order and the modern social order. Traditionally, locals earned a position in the social order, but it seems this has changed because the surf industry has changed. According to the study by Daskalos (2007), surfers he interviewed felt the traditional order (social order), valuing seniority and skill, is being eclipsed by the new order, which values competitiveness and individual gratification. Therefore, just because one considers himself a local doesn't mean he will necessarily act aggressively to gain access to more waves.

Partial Correlation Analyses. Partial correlations were utilized to test the study hypotheses because partial correlations measure the relationship between two variables, while statistically controlling for relationships with other variables. In these analyses, personality anger and personality physical aggression were partialled out of correlations

between surfers' perceptions of localism, territoriality, and waves as limited resources and the surf-related measures of aggression and anger. As displayed in Table 3, a significant positive partial correlation was found between surf-related aggression and all three of the predictor variables, even when controlling for general aggressive tendencies (anger and physical aggression). As predicted, surfers' perceptions were positively associated with surf-related aggression even when controlling for general aggressive tendencies. The strongest partial correlation was found between territoriality and surf-related aggression, but there was still a significant moderate partial correlation between self-identified locals and surf-related aggression and between waves as limited resources and surf-related aggression $r(51) = .28, p < .05$. Further, a positive correlation was found between negative affect and territoriality and waves as limited resources, even when controlling for the effects of general aggressive tendencies (see Table 3). The strongest correlation was found between territoriality and negative affect. There was also a significant partial correlation between waves as limited resources. Lastly, there was no significant relationship between self-identified locals and negative affect, when controlling for the personality variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that surfers' perceptions of territoriality and waves as limited resources successfully predicted surf-related negative affect, even when controlling for individual differences in general aggressive tendencies.

Discussion

Data from this study furthers our understanding of how environmental attitudes and beliefs relate to self-perceptions and behavior. It is evident that perceptions of the surfing environment influences the ways in which individuals react to social situations in the water. Personality influences were related to surf-related aggression, as expected, but there was also a significant influence of surfers' perceptions of the environment above and beyond personality. That is, surf-related aggression and negative affect cannot be fully accounted for by individual differences in aggression personality. This phenomenon can be explained by Altman's (1975) social-

systems perspective, which proposes a two-way view of environment and behavior relationships. The first way to view the environment and behavior relationship is the traditional approach, where “the environment is treated as a complex of factors that affect behavior in a causal sense; that is, the environment acts on and produces behavior variations” (Altman, p. 4). This definition can explain the behavior variations of surfers. Individual personalities differ, but personality differences do not fully explain surf-related aggression. Surf-related aggression is also explained by surfers’ perceptions of the environment. As a group, surfers are becoming aggressive. Outside of the environment they may not be as aggressive. However, their perceptions of localism, territoriality, and waves as limited resources influence their behaviors and attitudes while surfing.

The second way to view the environment and behavior relationship is to see the environment as a form or extension of behavior. According to Altman (1975), “The environment can be viewed as the behavioral extension of an individual or group—for example, when people establish territories through the use and arrangement of areas and objects or when people move closer to or away from one another” (p. 5). This definition may explain the strong correlation found between territoriality and surf-related aggression. According to this view, the surf territory becomes an extension of the individual or the group. Therefore, group members of the surf environment become territorial because they see the environment as an extension of themselves. It is no longer just a surf spot to them, it is *their* surf spot. These surfers create psychological bonds with the environment and act aggressive contingent on their perceptions of territoriality.

Data from this study can lead to the development of programs of study that can target the reasons why individuals act aggressively in certain environmental circumstances. More specifically, data from this study can help us understand why surf-related aggression exists and thrives within a particular surf spot. For future studies, two surf spots can be compared to see if there are any significant differences based on geographical location. This study only surveyed Southern California surfers; it will be interesting to look at differences across

beaches and even countries. Large surfing communities such as those that exist in Australia and Hawaii could offer a different perspective on surf-related aggression. The sample in this study consisted of mostly male surfers, so unfortunately, gender differences could not be compared because of the low number of female surfers surveyed. The ways in which males view masculinity and construct surfing space could be an important issue to examine in future studies. Crowding creates waves to become more of a limited and scarce resource. Future studies can examine the ways in which crowding is linked with perceptions of territoriality.

Not every surf location is filled with aggressive surfers, nor is every surfer aggressive, but aggressive surfers do exist. Surf-related aggression exists within the surf culture, whether it is because of our perceptions and/or because of our personalities. Violence in the water is happening and surfers' behaviors are definitely being influenced by the environment. It is important to understand why aggression dwells in the world of surfing, so we can continue to understand the hidden behaviors and attitudes of this traditionally Zen-like sport.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics for surf-related aggression, localism, waves as limited resources, territoriality, and personality variables.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Surf-related Aggression	3.41	1.56
Surf- Related Negative Affect	3.98	1.65
Self-Identified Local	4.00	2.28
Waves as Limited Resources	5.33	1.41
Territoriality	4.29	1.52
Personality Anger	2.93	1.41
Personality Physical Aggression	3.65	1.41

Note: Possible range for all variables is 1-7, where higher numbers indicate greater amounts of the construct.

Table 2: Correlations between possible outcomes and variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Surf-related Aggression	-						
2 Localism	.33**	-					
3 Waves as Limited Resources	.36**	.19	-				
4 Territoriality	.74**	.34**	.35**	-			
5 Personality Anger	.68**	.27*	.26*	.41**	-		
6 Physical Aggression	.59**	-.01	.15	.37**	.51**	-	
7 Surf-Related Negative Affect	.78**	.21	.37**	.59**	.67**	.49*	-

Note: correlation is significant at ** p<.01. correlation is significant at * p<.05.
N's range from 58-62.

Table 3: Partial correlations between surf-related aggression and hypothesized predictors, controlling for anger and physical aggression personality scores

Variables	Surf-Related Negative Affect	Surf-related aggression
Localism	.07	.30*
Waves as Limited Resources	.27*	.28*
Territoriality	.45*	.67*

Note: N = 53 for all correlations. * p<.05

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Intellectual Space in Naguib Mahfouz's *Thartharah fawq al-Nīl*

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Abstract

Post-independence Egypt experienced a mass economic nationalization headed by President Nasser; the resulting emergence of an authoritarian socialist government became a source of alienation for the intelligentsia. Distinguished scholar Roger Allen states that Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz's 1966 novel *Thartharah fawq al-Nīl* "depict[s] the role and fate of the Egyptian cultural intelligentsia during the 1960s" (107). Employing literary, theoretical, and historical scopes, this paper investigates the way Mahfouz accomplishes this, specifically in his construction of internal and external environments. From the physical stature of the novel being shorter in length than those from his earlier period, to the confined setting of the houseboat where the majority of the story takes place, the reader experiences a constricted feeling perhaps similar to that of the intelligentsia under Nasser's socialist regime. On an internal level, the numerous mental evocations by Mahfouz's main character involve a vast historical spectrum. Moreover, the constantly shifting currents of his stream of consciousness serve to relocate and dislocate the reader. This multi-layered analysis of the author's spatial construction of both internal and external environments promotes a deeper understanding of both Mahfouz's artistry and the reality for the Egyptian intellectual in the 1960s.

There is no escape from public life. The writer does not live in isolation, he is a citizen. ... The writer has to follow his conscience whatever the price. Creativity does not accept half measures.

—Naguib Mahfouz¹

Introduction

Naguib Mahfouz, the 1988 Nobel laureate, conveys by this quote taken from *The Mahfouz Dialogs*, the hybridity of the writer; on one hand, he is incapable of living in isolation, while on the other, he cannot allow the proclaimed axioms of the hegemony to influence his work. It almost goes without saying that these two spheres of influence—those of the individual conscience and the public realm—often exist in a dichotomy, therefore prescribing the writer to the unique liminal space where he must maneuver independently of the structure while still maintaining of it an acute and constant awareness. The public role of the writer and that of the intellectual have progressively coalesced over the twentieth century. In the words of Edward Said:

[T]he writer has taken on more and more of the intellectual's adversarial attributes in such activities as speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority. (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 127)

So when thinking of the writer's realm, we can also understand it as that of the intellectual. With this in mind, it is most intriguing to consider Mahfouz's 1966 novel, *Thartharah fawq al-Nil* (hereafter referred to as *Adrift on the Nile*), a work by an intellectual about intellectuals, during a time of oppression of intellectuals. The novel's rich symbolism and obnoxious group of characters often draw the most attention, thus I will be focusing on an important, yet overlooked, aspect of the novel: Mahfouz's utilization of space. I maintain that both the allotted space *for* the intellectual (the physical setting) and the space *of* the intellectual (the stream of consciousness narrative) are indicative of the social environment for the Egyptian intelligentsia in the 1960s. I spend the last two sections of the article arguing and analyzing this point, but not before evaluating Mahfouz's interpretations and depictions of the era elaborated through his oeuvre and interviews.

Nasser's Space

The milieu of 1960s Egypt is largely characterized by the establishment of the Republic following the 1952 Revolution, led by Gamal Abdel

Nasser of the Free Officers. Menahem Milson attests that Mahfouz intentionally stopped writing when he finished authoring the *Trilogy*² some months before the coup on account of his political outlook, which assumed a more confident disposition in the wake of independence. Mahfouz no longer saw a need for “the impulse of a social critic” (Milson 177). However, this optimism declined with the appearance of the shortcomings of the Nasserite government. Upon his return to the literary scene with his 1961 novel *The Thief and the Dogs*, Mahfouz began employing a new style and form that continued throughout his 1960s novels,³ which Sabry Hafez defines as “a new blend of realism, mysticism, and existentialism, mixed with social criticism and contemplative and analytical elements” (Hafez 73). Perhaps this fusion of metaphysical components with the palpability of his familiar realist style enabled Mahfouz to communicate the complexity of reality under the circumstances of the new regime.

An understanding of the author’s interpretation of (post)independence events is vital to comprehending the depth of social criticism in Mahfouz’s work of this era. His 1962 novel entitled *Autumn Quail* provides a devastating image of revolution: “Flames were spreading everywhere, dancing in windows, crackling on roofs, licking at walls, and flying up into the smoke that hung where the sky should have been” (19). The image of fire, specifically of a leader burning his own land, harkens back to Montesquieu’s interpretation of a despot: that he would resort to burning his own land under the pretense of purifying his nation (Althusser 79). While the replacement of the sky with smoke intimates not only the toxicity of the event, but also that of the new taking the place of the old.

Mahfouz’s work during this period of restriction assumes the task of communicating social criticism in a method involving precise balance. Like a funambulist, one misstep can mean catastrophe. Erring on the side of caution produces a lost or incomprehensible message approved for publication, yet an overt message of opposition can result in suppression or worse, author imprisonment or exile. Mahfouz stated in an interview: “In Nasser’s time one feared the walls. Everyone was afraid. We would sit in the cafés, too afraid to talk. We would stay at home, too afraid to talk” (*The Paris Review*). For the author’s explicit opinion on the matter,

it is beneficial to look to Mahfouz's later work, 1983 novel *Before the Throne*, free from the manacles of the Nasser regime.

Before the Throne takes place in the courtroom of Osiris, ancient Egyptian god of the afterlife; one by one, Egypt's past leaders address the court of the Immortals, and Osiris determines the fate of the subject—a place among the Immortals, Purgatory, or Hell. Aptly subtitled *Dialogs with Egypt's Great from Menes to Anwar Sadat*, the novel provides a unique opportunity for the reader to gain tremendous insight to Mahfouz's own historical judgments. In his commentary concluding the English translation, Raymond Stock remarks,

[In] *Before the Throne*, he [Mahfouz] ceased to be a teller of imaginary stories. ... Rather, he became a kind of historian—even a righteous judge of the dead—personally choosing who was worthy of a hearing, the evidence presented, and their sentences as well. Here, the ultimate verdict was his. (159)

It is to no bewilderment, then that the most scathing of criticism occurs during Nasser's arraignment. Though he is praised for restoring the governing apparatus to Egyptian power after over 2000 years of occupation, his ambition for Pan-Arabism receives disapproval. The court chides him, "Your interest in Arab unity was higher than your interest in Egypt's integrity" (133). Nasser's determination turns to arrogance with his agitating statement that "Egyptian history really began on July 23, 1952," forcing Osiris to call order in the court of past Egyptian leaders (134). However, Nasser's most abominable sin is his regime's treatment of the intelligentsia. In the words of the court:

You were heedless of liberty and human rights. ... [Y]ou were a curse upon political writers and intellectuals, who are the vanguard of the nation's children. You cracked down on them with arrest and imprisonment, with hanging and killing, until you had degraded their dignity and humiliated their humanity, until you had eradicated their optimism and smashed the formation of their personalities. (136)

This reproach addressing the (post) independence oppression of the intellectuals sums up the nature of their marginalization. Nasserite policy

dictates that attaining knowledge is to take place solely under the pretense of socioeconomic functionality, while the creation of artwork is to serve the nationalist ideology (Dekmejian 140). Nasser speaks to this directly in his prologue to Sadat's *Revolt on the Nile* when he states the new Egypt's mantra is "work, produce" (7).

Besides the very nature of the intellectual as the challenger of dogmatic superstructures (Said, *Representations* 11), and therefore, problematic to an authoritarian government, one cannot help but wonder if part of Nasser's anti-intellectualism rooted itself in the principles of decolonization. In his seminal revolutionary text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon maintains that although the colonized intellectual pioneers a dialogue with the colonizers, the involvement with and exposure to colonialist ideology places the intellectual at risk of perpetuating the colonial structure (8-11). President Nasser likely maintained this image to further negate the intellectual as contrary to Egyptian well-being.

Fanon also notes another interesting characteristic of intellectuals, that they "place themselves in the context of history" (147). This ability to see historical relativity relates to Shaden Tageldin's analysis of Mahfouz's *Trilogy* character, Amina, whose marginalization and "seclusion ... from 'history' proper—from the nation—enables her to see an epistemological continuum between colonialism and nationalism" (90). However, Amina is not necessarily distinguished as an intellectual; it is her *exclusion* from the hegemonic structure—in this case, patriarchal society—that allows her insight to historical relativity. So is this astuteness unique to intellectuals or the marginalized? Said amalgamates these social groups in a series of his lectures entitled *Representations of the Intellectual*, where especially under social circumstances like that of Nasser's oppression, the intellectual is naturally on the margins, placed in metaphorical exile:

The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being.

Exile for the intellectual is this metaphysical sense of restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. (53)

Just as Fanon states about intellectuals and Tageldin does about the marginalized, Said articulates that intellectuals in exile consider the current state of life to be a result of historical choices (60).

In addition to the way the intellectual perceives situations, Said provides through his descriptions the nature of the intellectual and accordingly, his or her *needs*. Above he mentions the necessity for movement, “[a] sense of restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled.” Additionally, and just as important, “[t]he intellectual has to walk around, has to have the *space* in which to stand and talk back to authority, since *unquestioning subservience to authority* in today’s world is one of the *greatest threats* to an active, and moral, intellectual life” (121).⁴ Keeping in mind these essentials of space and movement, as well as the atmosphere of Egypt under Nasser, one discovers the depth of meaning in Mahfouz’s 1966 novel, *Adrift on the Nile*.

The Space on the River

Cited as a milestone of Mahfouz’s literary career in the Nobel Prize committee’s presentation speech, *Adrift on the Nile* has been described by esteemed scholar Roger Allen, “to depict the role and fate of the Egyptian cultural intelligentsia during the 1960s” (107). After all, this is a story of the nightly gathering of the educated Cairenes—a lawyer, a writer, an actor, an art critic, and civil servants—on a houseboat on the Nile, to chitchat over such topics as current affairs, popular culture, and the meaning(less) of life. Faithful servant, Amm Abduh, provides nightly kif and prostitutes, while main character Anis Zaki loads the kif in the water pipe, earning him the rank of master of ceremonies. Typical of Mahfouz’s 1960s novels, the book is shorter in length than his earlier works,⁵ affording limited space for the characters in which to develop. However, this is only a superficial assessment of the intellectual’s space in *Adrift on the Nile*. An analysis of the quantity (how much and how little) and the quality (the content and arrangement) of Mahfouz’s allotted space in the story provides a multifaceted portrayal of the environment for the intelligentsia in Egypt under Nasser’s rule.

One cannot evaluate space in *Adrift on the Nile* without examining the houseboat, since this is where the majority of the story takes place. In addition to providing a claustrophobic atmosphere to the novel, the houseboat also serves as a liminal space. It both removes the characters from the land of Cairo and contains them within its jurisdiction. Arabic literature scholar Shawkat M. Toorawa observes that houseboats make appearances in previous works by Mahfouz, serving as the setting in which evil resides⁶ (although he does not agree that Anis's houseboat necessarily serves such a function). One could redefine "evil" and say that houseboats in Mahfouz's work represent a place where values are not compatible with those on the land. With that said, Anis's houseboat full of intellectuals, contemplating the night away, represents the "evil" in accordance with the Nasserite ideology overwhelming the land: the intellectual should not dwell in thought, but should "transform his knowledge into productive work" (Dekmejian 104). Anis and his friends are doing exactly what the regime dictates that they should *not* be doing.

The dual nature of the houseboat is worth noting, as it is simultaneously a dwelling place and a vehicle. However, the lingering threat posed by Amm Abduh of the anchor breaking (by either will or lack of maintenance), thereby allowing the houseboat to realize its identity as a vessel, is considered to lead to ultimate destruction: "As long as the floats are sound, and the ropes and chains strong, and Amm Abduh is awake, and the pipe filled, then we have no concerns" (48). The fear of movement coupled with the moorings transforms the inherent quality of the houseboat from a hybrid residence/transportation into solely a stationary dwelling. The problem remains in that, in an effort to make the houseboat more like a house by stripping it of its nomadic potential, it experiences the vulnerability and separation from the land, but without the freedom of movement. Anis's houseboat is literally fixed to the margins of the neighborhood.

The distance between the houseboat and the rest of Cairo is manifested by the complete separation from news events. Since Anis does not read newspapers, Amm Abduh serves as a vehicle for the current affairs (70, 142). The reader understands this removal when a local woman commits suicide:

Amm Abduh approached. "A woman has just fallen from the eighth floor of the Suya Company building," he said.

Anis regarded him anxiously. "How did you find out?"
"I hurried over when I heard the scream. It was a shocking sight."

Ali's voice: "Luckily we're far from the street—we can't hear anything." (64)

Any physical space allotted to the group only serves as a removal, to dissociate them from their surroundings. The darkness, constantly mentioned through Mahfouz's narrative, serves a similar purpose.

The darkness pervades Mahfouz's sixties novels, as much of the action (or inaction in Anis's case) takes place during the night. Often, it possesses physical attributes implying solidity and even heft as in *The Thief and the Dogs*: "The dense darkness was disturbing and he groped for the door. The darkness would be even thicker inside. ... All he could see was a darkness that weighed down upon him" (50-1). At other times, the darkness is personified: "From beyond the balcony, the night observed him" (*Adrift on the Nile* 51). Perhaps by forming the darkness into a physical object capable of action (like that of observing), Mahfouz enforces its innate presence as a standalone entity, rather than simply a lack of light. This assertion of the reality of the negative, so to speak, is best summed up by Anis himself: "the power which subjects you to Nothingness is stronger than that which subjects you to Being" (126).

The interesting character of darkness allows its versatile utilization. Of course in a general sense, darkness can serve as a metaphor for the unknown, perhaps a political regime's covert operations remaining hidden from the citizen. Additionally, however, darkness plays a unique role of filling space with a void. It is at the same time a boundary: both empty and ubiquitous, yet as visually imposing as an overwhelming wall enveloping the subject from all sides. Darkness seemingly allows for movement, yet it obliterates the confidence to move *freely*. By depicting darkness as such a physically imposing structure, Mahfouz amplifies its debilitating effect.

Other than residing in darkness, the houseboat exists as such on account of the Nile River. When evaluating its symbolism, the integral

role of the Nile throughout history cannot be ignored. This timeless icon is responsible for the existence of early human civilization in the area,⁷ and the prosperity of the early Egyptians depended much on the tides. Flooding would be a sign of a flourishing harvest, which in an agricultural society means a successful year for the community. Coincidentally, and perhaps symbolically, the British constructed the Aswan Low Dam to control flooding, as did Nasser with the much larger and more effective Aswan High Dam, redirecting the water surplus into the state-owned Lake Nasser reservoir.

Toorawa explores the multiple possible meanings behind the Nile in the novel, likely not only because it is one of the primary features of the setting, but also because of how much and how often it is mentioned. He proffers that it very well could represent death, from which the whale—symbolizing life’s triumph over death—constantly reappears (Toorawa 62). I would like to postulate another possible interpretation, not completely unlike Toorawa’s. While I mentioned above that the Nile is timeless, I also believe it is time itself; after all, both time and the river are interminable. It is even described as smelling of “a dusty, exhausting journey” (*Adrift on the Nile* 31). Just as Heraclitus once said that an individual cannot step twice in the same river, implying that the person could not exist in the same river at any two instances, one can never inhabit the same space in time more than once and for more than an instant. However, this suggests all flowing bodies of water can potentially represent time. What makes Mahfouz’s Nile so especially indicative of such is the whale.

Jonah’s whale appears throughout *Adrift on the Nile* to talk to Anis, and sometimes threatens to swallow the houseboat whole; for the movement-fearing group, he poses a threat. As the biblical story goes, the whale swallows Jonah in order to make him realize his purpose. Just as Jonah hopes to evade his duty by fleeing out to sea, Anis appears to do the same, escaping on his houseboat. Mahfouz’s whale states that he “saved” Jonah (21), suggesting that this act of becoming accountable is necessary for survival. Even at the end of the book, after Anis does not entirely commit to being a responsible person, the whale is still lurking in the water (167), suggesting perhaps that the change is inevitable. Joseph Campbell references Jonah’s whale in his famous monomyth as

the stage of metamorphosis in the “hero’s journey.” Here, in order to undergo transformation, the hero must be annihilated and subsequently reborn (Campbell 90); this links to Toorawa’s interpretation of the whale as life’s triumph over death. I would venture that Jonah’s whale in Mahfouz’s story is a symbol for metamorphosis for Anis, from meaningless to purposefulness. Thus, the whale (change) occupying the Nile (time) represents the process of transformation.

The moon’s phase and position in the sky are frequently mentioned throughout the novel, connoting the passage of time. Even when first mentioned as an expression in the song “Mama, the moon is at the door” (2), its location is defined. The lunar Islamic calendar may very well be the inspiration for bestowing the moon with the role of timekeeper. Or perhaps it is the satellite’s influence over the Nile’s tides. In any case, its relationship with Anis contributes to a larger picture of vast vertical space, which will be discussed later.

While the vast majority of Cairo faces southeast to Mecca, Anis looks west. The location of prayer in relation to the reader in Mahfouz’s novels carries a multitude of meanings, one being the prevalence of religion in all matters. This is exemplified in Mahfouz’s *Autumn Quail* when main character Isa is having a highly politicized conversation with his cousin, meanwhile in the next room his mother’s prayers can be heard (*Autumn Quail* 34). In “The Poetics of Urban Space: Structures of Literarising Egyptian Metropolis,” Stephan Guth views Mahfouz’s juxtaposition of the mosque with the room of a prostitute in “The Mosque in Narrow Lane” to mean similarity: “Connecting one space of *fasād* (prostitution) with the other (hypocrisy, collaboration) raises the central question: Which *fasād* is worse? Which is a greater evil in the eyes of God?” (Guth 467). In the case of *Adrift on the Nile*, applying Guth’s method begs the critic to find the commonality between prayer and the nightly gatherings of Anis and company. The answer to this question lies in Samara’s scenario for a play, summing religion as a form of escape (93). While the concept of escapism links the acts of practicing religion and smoking hashish on a houseboat, Mahfouz spatially connects them by the act of Anis hearing the call to prayer while slipping into intoxication.

The nightly ceremony begins with Anis awaiting nightfall, watching the sunset over the Nile from his balcony. This sets the houseboat on the east bank. Keeping this in mind, and that the Nile (time) flows south to north, it is useful to visit Mahfouz's description of the houseboat's locale:

The houseboat lay still on the leaden waters of the Nile, as familiar to him as a face. To the right there was an empty space, once occupied by another houseboat before the current swept it away, and to the left, on a wide bank of the shore, a simple mosque surrounded by a mud-brick wall and spread with shabby matting. (8)

From Anis's point-of-view, the Nile (time) is flowing left to right, placing the mosque on the left (in the past) and the once occupied, empty space to the right (in the future). This timeline is reinforced by various mentions throughout the novel. The mosque, or religion rather, as a thing of the past is demonstrated in Samara's scenario for a play: "In order to simplify the issue I will say that mankind of old faced absurdity, and escaped it through religion" (93). The empty space in the future is constantly reiterated by the cohort's journey into emptiness, "from Nothingness to Nothingness" (79). This figurative expedition becomes reality in the eventful car trip.

One of the primary paradigms in the novel is that of absurdity and seriousness. The group is considered absurd, living without meaning (92), while Samara represents the seriousness: belief (93). The problem as expressed in the novel is that religion has become archaic; this problem manifests on the Hijra, when Anis and his gang decide to emulate the Prophet Mohammad by taking a voyage of their own (126). The claustrophobic setup of nine individuals squeezed into a car calls to mind the confined space of the houseboat. Mahfouz's placement of the individuals is worth mentioning. The three in front are the responsible ones, according to Samara's scenario, and the six in the back have little to offer.⁸ In fact, these six are "squashed together in the back like one flattened body with six heads" (128). If the atmosphere inside the car is not enough of a restriction of movement, the road itself aggravates the condition, not necessarily by obstructing travel, but rather by forcing its direction. The group plummets into the darkness on a road bordered on