

SURVEILLANCE AND RESISTANCE: NAVIGATING PANOPTICISM IN BASMA ABDEL AZIZ'S *THE QUEUE*

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Abstract: Violence serves as a stark reflection of the social, political, and economic dystopia that defines many African states, manifesting in systemic and structured oppression. These oppressive structures subject citizens to perpetual hardship, often under the guise of governance and the rule of law. This paper examines the use of surveillance techniques by capitalist and autocratic rulers in Basma Abdel-Aziz's *The Queue*, where constant observation becomes a mechanism for maintaining control. Surveillance functions as an invisible tool of power that not only disciplines but also punishes, reinforcing a system in which citizens unknowingly exist under perpetual scrutiny and subjugation. However, despite being prisoners of their own societies, individuals devise ingenious mechanisms to resist the authority imposed upon them, challenging systemic oppression in creative and often subtle ways. This study explores the dialectic of surveillance and resistance, analyzing how rulers deploy surveillance as a tool of oppression while citizens engage in acts of defiance to reclaim autonomy. The study employs Bentham's "panopticon" theory, which Foucault later expanded into "Panopticism", a concept that examines how surveillance, internalized discipline, diffuse power, and bureaucratic control ensure compliance. The theory suggests that inmates (citizens) are watched without knowing whether they are being observed, reinforcing self-regulation through fear. The paper argues that Panopticism operates as an alternative repressive state apparatus, enabling despotic rulers to perpetuate structural violence against their citizens. The study concludes that while authoritarian regimes manipulate bureaucratic control to maintain dominance, citizens resist through protests, boycotts, and psychological defiance.

Keywords: Despotic Rule, Dystopia, Panopticism, Resistance, Surveillance

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1. Introduction

Basma Abdel Aziz is not only a fêted Egyptian writer but also a renowned psychiatrist and journalist. She reportedly worked with Nadeem Centre in Cairo- Egypt for victims of torture. A visual artist with a specific creative imagination, Abdel Aziz was given the appellation of “the Rebel” as a result of her activities and involvement in human rights agitation- she is a human rights activist to a fault (Mokrushina, 2021, p. 256). Her literary creativity emerges from the dystopia realities of the Middle East, especially after the emergence of the Arab Spring. Hence, her writing is a simple collection of powerful resistance against the universal oppression of society by the totalitarian state. She represents the voice of the subjugated class, especially the women of her country. She writes generally to revolt against the incessant violence committed by a state against the subjects.

Abdel Aziz therefore writes to add her voice to the legions of narratives that tend to speak up against the totalitarian, capitalist and authoritarian state machineries and mechanisms that wish to keep the masses especially the working class under perpetual “panoptic” surveillance and keep them perpetually silent while suffering. As such, most of her writings are forms of sincere resistance, including her first collection of short stories, *May God Makes it Easy* (2008), and *The Boy Who Disappeared* (2008), a collection of short stories. Her non-fictional writings include; *Beyond Torture* (2011), *Memory of Repression: A Study of the Matrix of Torture* (2024) and *The Power of Text* (2016). Her first novel is *At-Tabur* (2013), translated as *The Queue* (2016). Her second novel is (*Hunā badan*) *Here is a Body*, published in 2018 and her most recent novel, titled (*A ‘wām at-tūta*) *Years of the Mulberry Tree*, was published in 2022 (Taskeen, 2021, p. 261).

2. Literature Review

This paper explores, specifically the nature of resistance against panoptic coercion in Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue*. Hence, it emphasises how resistance reveals the weak nature of surveillance and panoptic coercion in the novel. The assumption of power relations in this novel is that it is relative. Relativity in the sense that there is always the will to resist in any situation where power is activated. Hence, attention is shifted from oppression to the power of resistance in the contestation of power. This validates Mill's claim in 2003 that Foucault, unlike other Marxists, devoted greater attention to resistance in play, rather than the use of power. *At-Tabur* (2013), translated into the English Language as *The Queue* by Elisabeth Jacquette in 2016, is the debut novel of the Egyptian critic and physician, Basma Abdel Aziz. In this novel, Abdel Aziz paints the picture of a dystopian African nation under a despotic mechanism referred to as the “Gate”. Although the novel is set in an unnamed Arab nation, the historical resemblance is too similar to be referred to as a mere coincidence with the Egyptian realities as a nation. This explains why Beskova (2022) says that:

Despite the fact that the dystopian reality in aṭ-Ṭābūr is not portrayed in such a way as to be interpreted as directly connected with the 2011 uprising, the author alludes to the historical event to explain the rise of the fictional yet very lifelike dehumanized power apparatus known as the Gate. Even though the plot of the novel is set outside any actual place and time and the references to the actual events are given in a rather vague fashion without any factual historical details, the reactions of people to these events, the narratives that surrounded them, the fragmentation of the protest movement into different groups, the violent response of the authorities to these expressions of dissatisfaction, as well as their strategies to re-gain control and remain in power all reflect elements of the country’s real-life experience with the (post-) revolutionary period. (p. 260)

The novel is set under a totalitarian regime where the government maintains strict control over every aspect of individuals and their lives in an unnamed society. The “Gate”, hence, serves as a symbol of mysterious bottleneck bureaucratic processes and a system that perpetually denies the citizens the right to life. Eram and Haque (2022, p. 51) wrote that *The Queue* “reflects the turmoil of the social-political atmosphere of Egypt, as the dystopia imagined is an expression of the hopelessness faced by people”. They submit that the absurd economic and intentional political manoeuvre of the social and psychological minds of the citizens by the faceless government of the day is serious structural violence. However, their focus is on how Abdel Aziz depicts the political structure and the unconventional form of punishment imposed by the government of the “Gate”. Eram and Heque (2022, p. 51) argued that “panopticism” is the powerful tool and strong mechanism of hegemony used by the government against the masses in the novel. Citizens under this despotic government and the absurd policies of the “Gate” become imprisoned within the confinement of their thoughts and the artificial queue created by the “Gate”. Hence, the oppressive situation turns most of the characters upside down such that they become changed persons and live far away from their old selves.

Machahary (2022), on the other hand, claimed that religion becomes a system of Foucault’s Panopticism. Machahary, therefore, assessed and questions “the possibilities of religion to be an ideology of prison that makes the people behave in a particular way” (2022, p. 894). Such a religious system places the church in the position of divinity with a self-imposed surveillance mechanism to regulate and explore the common people, who are unaware of the action of the church. This further confirms the invisibility and unverifiable nature of the observer as emphasised by Foucault. In Bentham’s panopticon, like in the religious system, Bentham created the imagery of God uses gaze and a voice. Bozovic (1995) wrote that:

In the panopticon, we are seen without seeing the one who sees us; we hear a voice without seeing the one who speaks. For instance, the characters in Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue* do not see the person who addresses them even while waiting in the endless queue. Hence, “the panopticon is governed by a gaze and a voice which are desubjectivized, detached from their bearer in a word, by a gaze and a voice qua objects.” (p. 13)

3. Theoretical Framework: Understanding Bentham’s ‘Panopticon’ and Foucault’s ‘Panopticism’

‘Panoptic’ is a theory and a concept derived from Jeremy Bentham’s “Panopticon” adapted by Michel Foucault’s “Panopticism”. Scholars like Anne Brunon-Ernt (2012), Emmanuelle De Champs (2012), Marie-Lanre Leroy (2012) Sheridan (2016) and Bozovic Miran (1995) differ in their critique of “Panopticon” and “Panopticism” especially in recent times. Sarigul (2018, p.201) establishes the fact that: “the history of surveillance, which is one of the most important means of social control used by ruling powers, dates back to ancient times. The real pressure of surveillance on social life, however, began to manifest itself in modern times”.

Generally speaking, “panopticon” or “Panopticism”- “panoptic” is a theory that spells out the use of surveillance (whether traditional or advanced) in the management and control of a set or group of individuals within a social political and economic environment towards a desired set goals. These set goals and locale are what separate “panopticon” from “Panopticism”. With this in mind, this research work recognizes the variations between Bentham’s “panopticon” and Foucault’s “panopticism. Brunon-Ernt (2012, p. 19) explained

that “this distinction is not used consistently in academic writing, since there are many fields of study where Bentham’s Panopticon is mistakenly identified with Foucault’s Panopticism”. For instance, Eram and Haques (2022, p. 48) described how the Panopticon is used as a disciplinary tool and as a perpetual form of punishment in Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue* vis-à-vis Foucault’s idea of Panopticism and Schweitzer’s theory of waiting. It is therefore very important for the sake of this study and for the sake of clarity, to argue that any discourse on Panopticon should not fail to consider the fact that Foucault’s idea of Panopticism, according to Brunon-Ernst (2012, p. 21), is “mainly grounded on Bentham’s first description of the Panopticon, that is the penitentiary described in 1786–91, and since Foucault never addressed the latter and more complex versions of Panopticon which appeared between 1798 and 1830”. Brunon-Ernst further identified four main types of Bentham’s Panopticon which include: ‘the Prison Panopticon’, ‘the Pauper Panopticon’, ‘the Chrestomathic Panopticon’ and ‘the Constitutional Panopticon’. Although Brunon (2012), argued that Foucault’s Panopticism accounted only for Bentham’s Prison Panopticon, he agreed that “Panopticon projects the importance of the supervision for the [purpose] of productive labour”. (p. 26)

Gouck (2018, p. 57) explained that: “Panoptics... began with Jeremy Bentham who designed a prison in which an observer in a central tower could watch the prisoners undetected, meaning that prisoners could never be certain if they were under observation or not” Gouck further emphasizes the difference between Bentham Panopticon and Foucault Panopticism. She spells out the contradistinction between the two as: ‘Physical’ versus ‘digital’ and ‘watching’ versus ‘being watched’. She argues that Bentham’s design of panopticon is the idea of surveillance that lies in the hands of a single observer who mounts a tower, while, Foucault’s Panopticism is the use of surveillance that goes beyond a single physical observer, rather in the hands of unidentifiable identity and observers. Hence, Michel Foucault (1977, p. 201) wrote Panopticism as central to power has shifted power from the prison tower to the prisoners. This emphasis by Foucault implies that instead of focusing on who observes who, the focus of panoptic discourse is now central to who is being observed (in this situation, the masses). This above, explains why Sheridan (2016) argues that “Panopticon has moved beyond prisons and workplaces and now encapsulates society as a whole...because the eyes of the inspector is now on all of us” (p. 1). Sheridan (2016) in the above expression referred to the modern panopticon, a situation where technology has taken over the work of a single guard on a tower.

The rise of the modern security state allows governments and powerful corporations to observe behaviours and trends in citizens and consumers to more easily control them and to enforce checks on transgressive behaviour. There are very few public places that do not have some form of security camera or CCTV, and any time one connects to the internet; their traffic is monitored by various markers for reasons of commerce and security. The practice of panopticism has now spread beyond institutions, beyond the traditional Benthamite prisons and workhouses or in the wider, more Foucaultian sense. (p. 44)

Elmer (2012, p.23) posited that the distinction between Bentham’s form of Panopticon and Foucault’s form of Panopticism lies in the idea of mobility and flexibility nature of the observer. Elmer opines that Bentham’s form of Panopticism emphasizes the immobility of the observer more than that of the prisoners. It is therefore on this premise that this present study hinges on a critique of the “panoptic” rules and the corresponding resistance in Basma Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue*. Biju and Das (2020) hence rightly observed that the tower of the panopticon designed by Bentham has changed its form from an abstract idea of power play that existed between people and institutions within the society over the years. (p. 53)

4. Analysis of Panopticism: A Subtle Coercion in Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*

Basma Abdel Azez's *The Queue* is a sincere reflection of the dystopian experiences of a panoptic society. *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz can therefore be read as a panoptic text, perhaps as a result of its embodiment of the concept and theory of Jeremy Bentham's "panopticon" adopted by Michel Foucault as "panopticism". The novel is a narrative of subtle coercion within a totalitarian state. The despotic ruler uses coercive hegemony to control the social, economic and political affairs of the state, though in a strong but less violent approach. The narration does not rely on open violence or direct oppression of individuals to question the totalitarian despotic violence over the state. Abdel Aziz therefore presented readers with a more subtle form of force that emanates from the bottleneck of bureaucratic control, social manipulation, alienation and psychological coercion.

Bureaucratic control therefore becomes one major instrument the government of the unnamed society in Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* used to exert control and watch over the citizens without direct violence. The regime creates a system that is inherently oppressive and dehumanizing yet disguises this with an unsuspecting official process. The physical queue itself in the novel is a metaphor for the bureaucratic labyrinth which the characters have to navigate in this despotic state. The bureaucratic labyrinth is a form of power structure designed to victimize and punish the citizens. Yehya Ga el-Rab Saeed, for instance, found himself entangled in the web of bureaucracy after he was shot during the second failed revolution referred to by the state as the "Disgraceful Event". Yehya, therefore throughout the narration, sought permission to have an operation to remove a bullet that lodged beneath his belly. Aside from the fact that the government denies the existence of such bullet wounds, "the Gate" refuses to open to serve the waiting citizens even without any official pronouncement by the government that the "Gate" would not open for service. Aside from Yehya, other characters also found themselves entangled in the web of bureaucratic labyrinths. Umu Mabrouk, the idealist school teacher, the outspoken woman with short hair, the man in jalabiya, Ehab Ahmed Salem the journalist, Shalabi who seeks justice for his cousin killed in the course of service to the state, Ines, Sabah the nurse, Amani and even Nagy are all caught in the web of bureaucracy.

Doctor Tarek Fahmy is also caught in this web of bureaucracy. He is caught between the dilemma of his duty and the sinister of state surveillance. Before then, Tarek has been a law-abiding citizen of the unnamed country until he is subjected to empathy in the line of duty by Yehya's unfortunate incident. He therefore needs the permission of the "Gate" (the symbol of oppression) to operate on him. This gives Dr. Tarek sleepless nights as the "Gate" and the state denies him the right to help Yehya. Abdel Aziz (2013) therefore presented readers with different characters particularly those from the lower class of the societal ladder- the poor masses (the Rabble) who only seek simple means of livelihood and daily bread-baladi.

Ordinary citizens are caught in the web of bureaucracy. Even eating becomes official; some characters even find it difficult to procure bread with their hard-earned meagre income. Others are caught in this bureaucratic web not because they belong to any opposition political party, but for mere accusation of being suspicious of having a contrary political ideology to the ruling government. "Who did you pick?" had spread like the plague". While some need to have a "certificate of true citizenship", others need official permission for the procurement of drugs for minor ailments like in the case of Nagy. Abdel Aziz (2013) in *The Queue* did not fail to undermine and belittle how unimportant and profane such permission is to a serious government; "oh nothing, just permission for medical treatment. I have this little stomach pain". At a point in time the "Gate" controls almost all the affairs of the state. According to Biju and Das (2020, p. 53), in fact, in a panopticon society, all persons are subjected to the authority of the state, especially with the fast-growing trend of digital surveillance.

Then one day the Gate issued an official statement detailing its jurisdiction, which extended over just about everything anyone could think of... soon it was the singular source of all regulations and decrees. Before long, it controlled everything and made all procedures, paperwork, authorization, and permits, even those for eating and drinking are subject to its control. (Abdel Aziz, 2013, p. 31)

Aside from the bureaucratic control used by the government in the narrative, Abdel Aziz also critiques the social manipulation (surveillance) of the citizens by the government that ultimately leads to alienation and psychological coercion, especially in the case of Amani, Yehya's girlfriend. Abdel Aziz (2013), hence, offers a critique of such social manipulation of the citizens by the totalitarian regime which centres on the 'panoptic' gaze- a metaphor for pervasive surveillance of the activities of the populace. This panoptic surveillance depicts an extreme mechanism of visibility and tools of regulation.

Abdel Aziz's (2013) unnamed society in *The Queue* is a similitude of the prison mentioned by Bentham, while the "Gate" and all its mechanisms are metaphors and manifestations of Bentham's panoptic gaze. This "Gate" and its mechanism in *The Queue* become a powerful panoptic control that reinforces the omnipresent nature of the bureaucratic ruler and its despotic rule. After the first failed revolution called "the storm" then, the second revolution tagged the "Disgraceful Event" which led to the erection of the imposing structure called the "Gate".

At first, no one (no character) knew that this immense and awe-inspiring structure simply offered its name – the Main Gate of the Northern Building – as the pretext for its existence. Yet it was not long before people realized the importance that it now played in their lives. As the ruler faded from the public eye, it was the Gate that increasingly began to regulate procedures. (p. 31)

Characters are watched without them being aware of the surveillance mechanism used against them. For example, Ine, the young school teacher is caught under the gaze of the regime's panoptic surveillance. This happens when Ines praises her student "The girl had written a long brilliant paper about the conditions in the district where she lived". The student's essay criticizes the government while the action happens within the four walls of the classroom only to be secretly exposed to the gate- the symbol of the government's eyes. Ines, therefore, is asked to produce a certificate of citizenship as a result of her action. One therefore wonders the person who reported her to the authority or how else such a simple act in a classroom could catch the attention of the Gate. The truth is that Ines is being watched by the authority of the "Gate" either physically or through a presumed surveillance technology. However, in compliance with Bentham's Panopticon theory, Abdel Aziz does not reveal how Ines is discovered in the novel. This use of surveillance in the novel therefore confirms the "Gate" as a true reflection of an autocratic government. Although Richard (2013, p. 1936) argued that "Autocratic regimes have long been the villains in the stories we tell about surveillance, they are no longer the only governments that have stepped up their surveillance activities", he, however, Concedes that "Government surveillance (especially) of the internet is a power tool with the potential for massive abuse" (p. 1936). Ogasawara, (2025) agreed with Richard (2013) on the fact that it is not only the authoritarian government that is guilty of "oppressive surveillance" or "authoritarian surveillance". He argues that "oppressive surveillance" has continued to increase in terms of advanced tech practices even in the so-called liberal democratic state. He is of the opinion that the idea of an "autocratic state" is a tactical linguistic manoeuvre by the media to refer to countries outside the "West" (especially

Russia and China). He explains that ‘authoritarian surveillance’ is now the key tool in the heart of democracy fuelled by capitalism (p. 134).

Ogasawara, (2025, p. 135), posited that disasters, such as the “War on Terror”, the war against pandemic continue to increase the level of surveillance in the global world. Scholar such as Lyon (2021) is of the opinion that disaster such as COVID-19 pandemic and wars allow the authoritarian state to have accesses to unlimited information about people at schools, workplace and through communication channels. He refers to it as “Pandemic surveillance”. “The Storm” and “The Disgraceful Event” are two examples of Pandemics in *The Queue*. The day of the Disgraceful Events, for instance, is the aftermath of surveillance on Yehya. In the case of Yehya’s patient file, it seems that there is an unidentified recruit of the “Gate” who keeps an eye on the workers, especially Dr Tarek and the head nurse and at the same time, often updates and sometimes removes details of Yehya file. This confirms Richard’s fear that “in an age of terror, our government has shown a keen willingness to acquire this data and use it for unknown purposes”. This “unknown purpose” is an irony of the high level of wickedness and impunity as well as social maladies committed by the autocratic government of the “Gate”. For instance, Alfat, the head nurse at Zephyr Hospital disappeared without any trace. Earlier on, she is seen in the queue, even though she denies the existence of Yehya’s X-ray. “The day of the Disgraceful Events,” she said sharply. “Sir, I didn’t receive any paperwork or X-rays that day-not yours” (Abdel Aziz 2013, p. 125). This also confirms that Alfat is also being watched by the surveillance mechanism of the “Gate”.

Though it may seem very difficult to identify the exact “panoptic” mechanism and tools used by the autocratic ruler in watching over the affairs of the characters in Aziz’s unnamed society in *The Queue*, it can also be suggested that communication gadgets are major apparatuses used in the surveillance monitoring. Citizens’ communication gadgets are bugged and mole through a telecommunication company perhaps in the payroll of the government. This gives the autocratic government unlimited and unrestricted access not only to information about the citizens but also gives the government free access to citizens’ conversations. This means that the mobile phone becomes the specific and confirmed device used for monitoring and surveillance in *The Queue*. The conversation of Ehab Ahmed Salem the journalist, for instance, is recorded through the mobile phone distributed by the Violet Telecom Company.

On the other hand, the presence of the bullet in Yehya’s lower abdomen is a similitude of the visible presence of the military and the police in an autocratic system. However, instead of the physical presence of those government security forces are the bullet and the constant “panoptic” gaze and surveillance of the system of the “Gate”. Suffice to say that the “panoptic” mechanism in Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue* is the alternative yet invisible “repressive state apparatuses” as mentioned by Louis Althusser. Thus, this panoptic mechanism turns out to be a single version of dystopian and utopian conditions imposed on the citizens in Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue*. Beskova (2022, p. 253), therefore, must have noted rightly that when “a single version of a utopia is imposed on all the people in a given society, especially when combined with ideology it can easily become a tool of oppression and tyranny”. Many citizens caught under the “panoptic” surveillance of the state, for example, are secretly tortured and left psychologically traumatized and in some cases, disappeared (nurse Alfat disappearance). Some are even forced into a forceful compliance with the government and are shut up, sealed-mouthed; otherwise such would be forgotten, blindfolded in the dark. This is the case of Amani said Ibrahim after she visited the Zephyr Hospital’s restricted zone in search of her lover’s X-ray. In fact, “things had happened to her that no one else knew, things she couldn’t speak of, things she still hadn’t admitted even to herself” (p. 2013). This use of

surveillance technology -“panoptic” according to Fuchs (2011, p. 54), perhaps is what Marx referred to as the “Globalization of capitalism” or the “big data capitalism”

5. Subtle Resistance: Navigating the Bend of Panoptic Gaze

In support of previous examinations of Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue*, this study argues that the novel is used primarily for the exploration of resistance. Abdel Aziz portrays this theme of resistance through the experience of most of the characters and the way by which they navigate through the bends of an authoritarian state and as well manoeuvre the complex panoptic gaze of the gate. Hence, the nature of force and coercion used by the state calls for the form and nature of resistance narrated in *The Queue*. This implies that there are identified correspondent subtle resistances against the panoptic violence gaze of the citizens by the “Globalized capitalist”, borrowing Marx’s words in Fuch (2013). The government in *The Queue* doesn’t rely too much on direct violence to oppress the citizens except in a few cases of torture, shooting and unconfirmed disappearance of people masterminded through effective surveillance and the modern panopticon. However, Sheridan (2016) warned that the use of panopticon on the masses is indeed “inhumane [and] that it would lead to madness among the subjects” (p. 1),

The study presents two main forms of resistance the characters use towards the redemption of their livelihood. The first one is the protest- the physical reaction and confrontation of the citizens against the autocratic rule. The second one is the subtle acts of defiance which include psychological resistance. There are instances of physical confrontation of the dissidents against the autocratic government. There were regular and incessant protests across the unnamed country leading to what is referred to as the “First Storm” and “the Disgraceful Event’. Right from the outset of the narration, Aziz presents to readers with protesters calling “for the dissolution of the Gate and everything it stood for” (Abdel Aziz, 2013, p. 8). The protesters fought for redemption and their freedom from the hands of the totalitarian State instruments. These were ordinary people – the masses who stood up against “injustice and the tyranny” of the gate to demand redemption from the panoptic Gaze- Global capitalist. “Ordinary people rose, defeated the security force on the street, overcame the old guard’s defence, and nearly forced the ruler to surrender” (p. 8). However, like any other failed revolution and movement to end a bad government, this movement is fractured by some unfortunate people. Perhaps, according to Abdel Aziz, “some people used the gains they’d made to secure their position and power”, thereby betrays the common interest of the rest of the protesters. This situation is not uncommon in a revolutionary system. The protest later turns riotous that the ‘Quell force” and the newly formed “Concealment force” beat and shoot at protesters (p. 3). Many are dead while many others are injured. For instance, Yehya Galeh was shot below the abdomen and was taken to the hospital. Yehya’s gun wound is, therefore, a symbolic representation of people’s struggle against bad governance and their quest for change, towards redemption- Redemptive Violence (RV). Hence, to curb further occurrences of such riots and protests from the dissidents, the government opted for a more subtle punishment by keeping the citizens perpetually busy- waiting in the queue.

There is also the boycott campaign against the Violet Telecom Company. This boycott is a form of structural violence against the unlawful and evil surveillance the government places on the citizens of the unnamed Arab nation in Abdel Aziz’s *The Queue* “Their phones had begun to record their conversations and were transmitting them to a receiving device in the booth” (Abdel Aziz, 2013,p. 120). Some characters are even paced on special surveillance, especially the suspicious individuals. The special technical crew of the company subjects the conversation of the suspicious individuals to further investigation. The “gate” then uses such information and data retrieved with the assistance of the Violet Telecom Company to determine the level of threat an individual is to the security of the “Gate” and the regime.

Thus, people's privacy is bridged and they are punished for holding a contrary political view or a revolutionary agenda. There are rumours "that some people whose conversation had been recorded had disappeared; "they'd been summoned to the basement and never returned...even though no one from the queue was missing" (p.122). Hence, with such revealing information, though as a rumour, individuals on the queue stop using phones and refuses to make calls even from Um Mabrouk "and a wide-reaching boycott campaign gathered momentum" (p. 121). Aside from the boycott against the Violet *Telecom* Company, there is also the first boycott against a candy factory.

Another form of resistance depicted in *The Queue* is silence and passivity. In most situations in the narrative, the silence and passivity of many characters are displays and reflections of resistance against the autocratic panoptic ruler. This is the case of Dr Tarek Fahmy, Um Mabrouk and other characters. Abdel Aziz narrates the story of individuals and how they navigate through the oppressive system more subtly. Most characters in the narrative are seen engaging in small acts of resistance, in the form of compliance that is not overtly confrontational, unlike the protests (riots) and the boycotts earlier mentioned. It is, however, important to note that the characters' compliance with the autocratic regime should not be misguided for complete compliance; rather, it should be seen from the perspective of the author as a strategic display and technique for survival. Abdel Aziz in *The Queue* creates a complex reflection of how coercion can be internalized and how compliance can subtly co-exist with resistance. This complex situation of navigation reflects the nature of subtle coercion where resistance is disguised by the need to survive within the constraints imposed by autocratic panoptic rule. This form of resistance is rooted in endurance and determination. Some characters endure the hardship of the panoptic monitoring and sanction imposed on them by the government without any move or overt rebellion. This type of resistance can be referred to as psychological resistance. This is because of the impact of the panoptic gaze that breeds internal resistance which forced the characters to be silent in force solidarity to the captivity. According to (Jeihouni & Torkamaneh, 2016, p.89) "the knowledge is, then, internalized by bodies that surveillance cannot be toppled but, by taking due measures, to be coped with". This is the case of Amani, Yehya's girlfriend, who went through psychological trauma after she made frantic deviance and attempted to retrieve Yehya's medical reports, specifically, his X-Ray from the restricted area of the hospital. Amani, after going through a lot decided to keep to herself as the only resolved way of resisting the despotic regime.

6. Conclusion

The Queue serves as a stark depiction of the deplorable socio-political and economic conditions faced by the masses during and after the Arab Spring of 2011, particularly within African society. Abdel Aziz portrays a dystopian Egyptian nation—an African state that is not only politically imprisoned but also socially and economically oppressed by a despotic ruler through the implementation of a "panoptic" mechanism of control. The "Gate" in Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* functions as a symbol of the authoritarian government within this African nation, while the "queue" itself represents the ongoing, inescapable oppression of the masses.

Endless queues, as portrayed in the novel, are not unfamiliar in many African countries, where citizens often wait for necessities such as gasoline, food, medicine, or medical treatment, particularly in public hospitals. Paradoxically, these queues rarely result in any tangible service, remaining in a state of perpetual state, constantly growing but never addressed. Similarly, in *The Queue*, the "Gate" provides only minimal service, reinforcing the concept of a stagnant system that perpetuates its inefficiency.

Beyond the act of waiting, which serves as a subtle form of punishment, the citizens within the queue are subjected to continuous surveillance through an invisible panoptic device wielded by the "Gate." This form of subtle, psychological punishment, enacted through constant observation, calls for an equally subtle resistance from the characters—a resistance that is psychological, emerging as a response to the oppressive structures imposed upon them.

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