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"SCHOOL BULLYING: POWER ABUSE AND RESISTANCE IN JODI PICOULT'S WESTERN AMERICAN NINETEEN MINUTES (2007) AND TAREQ HELAL'S EASTERN EGYPTIAN SCARAB (2019).

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ABSTRACT

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This paper explores school bullying as portrayed in two narrative texts of two different cultures: *Nineteen Minutes* (2007) by the Western American Jodi Picoult, and *Scarab* (2019) by the Eastern Egyptian Tareq Bassem Helal. Attention is paid to how school bullying is conceptualized in the texts, particularly according to the role that is attributed to Foucauldian power/resistance; showing the power of the bully and the resistance of the bullied. The analysis highlights various relationships related to school bullying: parent-child, boyfriend-girlfriend, peers, and sibling rivalry. As well as it exposes this negative function that the school context performs. It also attempts to prove that

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ableism and physical shape affect students' self-esteem. This cross-cultural study follows the comparative analysis methodology to analyze the similarities and differences of school bullying in Western and Eastern cultures as portrayed in two narrative fictions.

Introduction:

Differences between cultures have disappeared to the extent that the world seems like a global village now. As a result, the term ‘bullying’ which is adopted by Western society begins to appear in other societies and cultures like the Eastern Egyptian one (Horton 269). Further, studying and comprehending fictional narratives are recognized as an effective way to consider troublesome features, like bullying (Dutro 423). Thus, school bullying has become a critical area of research across disciplines that show effective tools for dealing with this increasing problem. Young adults could have an opportunity to evaluate their affections and reactions concerning any matter throughout those narratives which explore the most vital emotions and affairs of their life. So, narrative writing offers a good opportunity for examining troublesome and odd matters and highlights topics such as school bullying. Consequently, a new sub-genre; anti-bullying fiction, of young adult literature is developed which carries an anti-bullying theme. This sub-genre of fiction has increased as a result of the enlargement of this influential problem all over the world (Wiseman 190). This subgenre of fiction considers the role of a bystander who is supposed to have the capacity to make a positive difference (Ansary 27) and examines those powerful teens who subjugate others using hegemonic practices or who are haunted by bullying depending on ableism and suppression.

The current cross-cultural study follows the comparative analysis methodology. It highlights this increase of the school bullying theme in narrative fiction that spreads from the West to the East, through a critical analysis of two contemporary young adult anti-bullying narratives, published in two different cultures; *Nineteen Minutes* (2007) by the Western American author Jodi Picoult and *Scarab* (2019) by the Eastern Egyptian author Tareq Bassem Helal. The study compares various types of bullying themes, including ableism,

class discrimination, sexuality, school shootings, power and resistance in both texts. These texts implement narrative elements to explore school bullying in accordance with the French philosopher Michel Foucault's theory of power/resistance; analyzing how powerful students suppress powerless and subjugated peers and how these bullied victims may resist.

Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to show how narrative fiction depicts a community feature like school bullying, declare how the school-bullying phenomenon began to appear in the contemporary Egyptian novel to mimic the Western novel, analyze various relationships (parent-child, boyfriend-girlfriend, peers and sibling rivalry), prove that ableism and physical shape affect student's freedom and equality, invoke power/resistance effect throughout school bullying, investigate whether the causes and results of bullying in the Western societies differ from those in the Eastern societies, show how Eastern and Western novelists depict the role that both school context and bystanders play in bullying, and point out how do Picoult and Helal indicate that highlighting the ways of interactions in the classroom can treat, help and calm abused students who tend to be subjugated.

School Bullying: Power Abuse / Resistance

Michael Cart (1941-), an expert in Young-Adult literature, assumes that "the very rapid emergence of a subgenre of young adult literature that continues to explore the many aspects of this issue with insight and empathy" (113) is the only good and useful result of Columbine High School shooting on April 20, 1999. Bullying is considered one of the regular aspects of school affairs. Throughout such texts, Robert J. Kirkpatrick (1953-), a researcher and writer in Young Adults' fiction, claims that "misery and unhappiness were confined to the weakling, the swot, the unathletic, the misfit" (12).

Bullying is defined in Peter-Paul Heinemann's book *Mobbing* (1972) as aggressive and destructive acts by one individual or some persons towards a single person or several people. Heinemann claims that those who bully "are not deviant children per se, but rather ordinary children who partake in bullying in particular group situations". He defines "the situation" in bullying as the fatal and crucial factor in how and why bullying takes place (qtd. in Horton 268).

The founder of research on bullying, Dan Olweus (1931-2020), asserts that an individual is "bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (9). Olweus develops his definition of bullying as a portion of aggressive actions marked by "repetition and an imbalance of power...a student is being bullied or victimized when...exposed repeatedly and over time subjected to negative actions on the part of one or more other students with the intention of hurt" (9). Throughout his analysis of Olweus' Bullying Circle, Barbara Coloroso (1954-), the educational consultant for school districts and bullying, claims that "it is one thing to have a policy; it is wholly another to make sure the policy is not just placards on the school wall or an inspirational piece of writing at the beginning of the student handbook" (178). So, Young Adult anti-bullying literature allows students to view their school settings well to grant greater derivation and understanding of power abuse.

The American sociologist Randall Collins (1941-) emphasizes that bullying is a repeatable and frequent confrontation, a "locally institutionalized pattern" (158) such as mocking and jeering; exclusion from the group; stealing; and physical aggression. Collins also points out that bullies develop their own networks. They tend to surround themselves with other people that have similar tendencies towards violence or people whom they can manipulate or victimize. Additionally, the school environment represents a typical

area for bullying to occur because of its structured and confining format, limiting the control of the individual to determine whom they spend time with; which creates a perfect situation and setting for bullying (Baker 32).

Bullying can be divided into four types: 1) verbal 2) physical 3) relational, and the latest trend is 4) cyberbullying. Bullying is a particular shape of aggression; direct or indirect. Direct bullying contains verbal and physical attacks that take place face-to-face. The most common form of direct bullying is verbal because it is the easiest to get away with, as Coloroso affirms. According to her, a bully can launch this verbal attack without the slightest threat of detection by anyone (15). Moreover, verbal bullying involves demeaning labels, insults, offensive phone calls, cruel criticism, false accusations, whispers, and gossip directed at an individual or a group. When done in the presence of peers, verbal bullying leaves the bullied humiliated, embarrassed, and worthless. These feelings can cause problems that are far more destructive than the initial embarrassment. On the other hand, physical bullying can easily be detected. The results of this form of bullying are typically evident in the bullied body or possessions. The physical bully may strike, scratch, kick, bite, pinch, punch, or damage the property of the victim (Coloroso 16). Physical bullying can often lead to broken bones, bruises, concussions, bites, torn clothing, and in the worst cases; permanent brain damage (Sullivan 27).

Behaviors such as exclusion and spreading rumors have also been called relational aggression because they use interpersonal relationships as a means to harm the victim. Relational aggression is a “behavior that intentionally harms another individual through the manipulation of social relationships” (Coloroso 642). This type of bullying is the hardest form to perceive; it can be destructive at the time when teens are trying to find their place in society, especially with girls. A student who faces this type of bullying suffers from

ignorance, isolation, or neglect. Rumors are another part of relational bullying. The bullied does not even know what the rumor is, but still suffers from the social exclusion that accompanies relational bullying. In his book *Bullying in Secondary Schools* (2003), Keith Sullivan says that “indirect aggression by girls gets overlooked, probably because it is subtle and there is no outward sign of damage. It is, however, as harmful for girls as physical bullying is for boys” (21). The last form of bullying is cyberbullying carried out through aggressive e-mails, humiliating text messages, and messages and posts on social media websites. Cyberbullying is the hardest form of bullying to detect. Unless it is reported, the bully may never be caught.

Novelists from different cultures present bullying as a symbol of injustice and prejudice which highlights discrimination and sovereignty and invades young adult culture. Roberta Seelinger Trites (1962-) declares that American teen fiction has an abundance of young adult characters “whose personal growth is a metaphor for the author’s ideologies of social change” (*Twain* 52), despite the difficulty of that change. She assumes that teenagers in these narrative fictions have to “navigate” (*Disturbing the Universe* 21) tyrannical microcosms represented by high schools managed by bullies who impose hegemony and supremacy by suppressing the weak peers, or, as Foucault exclaims, “a whole micro-penalty... of behavior” (*Discipline* 178). Tisha, in the Young-Adult book author Jaime Adoff’s *Names Will Never Hurt Me* (2004), may portray this tyranny of power abuse inside schools when she argues that each individual must “be in a box—be like a pair of socks. Matchin’ with everyone else. The smart with the smart, jocks with the jocks, geeks with the geeks, freaks with the freaks” (41).

Bullying interactions, as social relations, are so connected to power. Foucault states that power is “not an institution and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (*Power/Knowledge* 93). It can be defined as how individuals position themselves within that strategic situation that allows them to exercise power. In other words, it is not the school that controls the power but the students in the school. If the individual does not take a stand and exerts his/her power to change what is currently the status quo, the existing situation will not change. Paul Horton, an expert in child studies and school bullying, asserts that a student “is not just aggressive, passive or provocative, but rather has to navigate a range of power relations” (269). Considering power relations through bullying, Horton quotes Foucault arguing that it may be great to consider power as a behavior “that is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations” (271). Simply, power is everywhere and must be examined continuously from all directions. Foucault’s assertion, “Where there is power, there is also resistance” (95), provides a foundation for the notion that power is exercised from innumerable points, is not equal and always mobile (*The History* 271). Similarly, bullying actions are repetitive and invisible to others, and they are not directly involved. Therefore, when bullying victims stand up for themselves, they resist subjugation.

School Bullying in *Nineteen Minutes* and *Scarab*

Ken Rigby (1932-), Australia’s foremost expert in effective prevention and intervention of bullying in schools, handles power notions to supply and nourish a list of the kinds of power imbalance set in schools: harming others physically; trying to be superior to others; showing more confidence in oneself; having more forceful personality than others; having superior verbal cleverness which

means having the ability to terrorize by one's selection of terms and the way he/she talks; having greater cultured expertise; revolting against someone; excluding others and maintaining prominent degree and the whole sovereignty to suppress others (232). Some interactions and an imbalance of power; just like the interactions between parent-child, siblings and peers, are depicted in the two texts discussed in this study.

Picoult's *Nineteen Minutes* sheds light on school bullying, school context, and the possibility to modify culture in the school community. Picoult talks to the young adult reader in the exposition section of the text, "To the thousands of kids out there who are a little bit different, a little bit scared, a little bit unpopular: this one's for you" (3). She tells this reader that, "There were two ways to be happy: improve your reality or lower your expectations" (31). The narration shows how students at Sterling High School spend their daily routine. Going through flashbacks, the climax discloses early in the text when one day, on the morning of March 6, 2007, a sharp noise rises from the school garage. Recently, the noise is claimed to be a bomb exploding in Matt's car. Following that bang, gunshots have been fired. This

lasted nineteen minutes in the life of Peter Houghton, but the evidence will show that its effects will last forever. And there's a lot of evidence, ladies and gentlemen. There are a lot of witnesses, and there's a lot of testimony to come... Peter Houghton purposefully and knowingly, with premeditation, caused the deaths of ten people and attempted to cause the deaths of nineteen others at Sterling High School. (395)

When Patrick, the attorney, arrives, he searches the school to detect the gunman and discovers that it is one of the students who killed ten people and wounded many others. The detective conveys that the main character in the novel Peter Houghton, a seventeen-

year-old junior at Sterling High School, is the shooter who commits all these crimes and so locks him in a room where he finds Matthew Royston, A hockey player at Sterling High and Josie's boyfriend who is part of the popular crowd and has a high social status at school, and Josie Cormier, Peter's former best friend, resting on the floor and the blood encloses them in all sides. Matthew, the only victim shot twice "once in the gut, once in the head" (60), is dead. While Josie is just traumatized to the extent that she is unable to retell the accident. In addition, Patrick sees "kids who'd been shot in the head, kids who will never walk again, kids who died because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time" (69).

At the beginning of *Nineteen Minutes*, the reader views Peter as an antagonist. However, reading further, he appears to be the protagonist of the text. The reader's response now is whether Peter, the shooter, is a victim or a criminal. In other words, is Peter a bully or a bullied? Peter seems to be humiliated and subjugated hence has to resist bullying, and, ultimately, seems like a bully.

The narration that goes through flashbacks before and after the school bang tells that Peter and Josie are intimates. Peter is regularly and severely bullied while Josie, who acts as a bystander, usually approves and supports him. However, they gradually become less familiar. To secure herself against humiliation, Josie joins the favored group. She believes now that her intimation to Peter humiliates her. Moreover, Picoult depicts the absence of a family role showing Peter as rejected and subjugated at home too. Lacy, Peter's mum, is ignorant about the sibling, Joey, humiliation against Peter. Peter's home life is upsetting despite his mother's best efforts. He is convinced that Joey wins their parents' favor. Peter is usually blamed. His father, Lewis Houghton, irritably tells him, "I don't remember Joey losing his lunchbox three times during the first month of school" (99). Despite Joey's status as an approved clever student and athlete, he humiliates Peter to keep himself superior and

powerful. He makes up lies about Peter fabricating a story that he is a foundling, and his mother is a prostitute. Unfortunately, Joey usually teases his brother and even eggs on the bullying. After Joey's death in a car accident, the parents become too distressed to care for Peter, creating a larger gap between the parents and their remaining son. Peter blames his mother in his jail, "I haven't been able to make you understand in seventeen years" (135). Six months after imprisonment, Peter's father visits Peter just to arouse his anger. "Fuck you for coming here. You don't give a shit about me. You don't want to tell me you're sorry. You just want to hear yourself say it. You're here for yourself, not me" (379), Peter says. As a result of this inadequate parent-child relationship that causes a lot of bullying for young adults, neither Lewis nor Lacy observes Peter's scheming for something dangerous. Bullying forces Peter to retreat into a world of violent computer games. He, even, designs a video game in which gamers kill athletes as well as popular students in a school. Lacy discovers, after the shooting, that he hides bomb-making components inside his cabinet. In addition, not expecting the results, Peter's father has taught him how to use a gun. Parents feel responsible for Peter's problems and inquire what causes Peter to act so vigorously.

Both Peter and Josie fall victim to the subjugation and pain of being outcasts in school. During their second year in high school, Josie starts dating Matt using him as a shield to stay popular. As a popular student, Matt provokes his classmates, John Eberhard and Drew Girard, to bully and subjugate Peter. Hundreds of kids narrate that Drew "had stuffed Peter Houghton into lockers; had tripped him while he was walking down the stairs; had spitballs into his hair" (Picoult 383). As a bully, Matt is used to suppressing "his own spiritual nature to the extent that he doesn't give a damn about or consider the other person. If he for a moment puts himself in the position of his victim and had some sensitivity, he simply wouldn't

do it” (Marr 94).

Picoult interprets relational bullying in *Nineteen Minutes* when she depicts Peter as often called by Matt a homo or a gay, causing Peter to doubt his sexual attitude. Moreover, Matt keeps Josie away from other boys. So, when Peter tries to talk to Josie after school, Matt oppresses, torments, and humiliates him in the presence of their classmates. The bully Matt “sees his target as an object, as a non-human being” (Marr 84). Matt appears manipulative; he becomes physically abusive towards both Josie and Peter. However, Josie never leaves Matt. She has to join Matt and other aggressive students and leave Peter, because of her self-confidence struggle and repeated conflicts to conceal her real character from her classmates and appear as what she wishes herself to look like. Most young adults sympathize with Josie because they have the same terror of being an outcast among their friends who may reject them for being fake persons. While she superficially pretends to hate Peter, Josie hates herself. She is confused between the ‘popular’ teens and the ‘outcasts’ and even though she realizes the shallowness of her group, she cannot leave those popular mates. Josie is afraid of social opaqueness and bullying. She fears Matt’s and his peers’ hostility against the less popular mates.

After a quarrel between Matt and Peter, Josie shivers and tells Matt that she does not like the way he treats peers “who aren’t like *them*...just because Matt does not want to hang out with losers doesn’t mean he has to torture them.” “Yeah, it does,” he says. “Because if there isn’t a *them*, there can’t be an *us*. ... You should know that better than anyone.” Josie informs Matt that he does what he has to do “to cement your place in the pecking order. And the best way to stay on top was to step on someone else to get there” (219). She acts sometimes as a bystander when Matt bullies Peter and other times as bullied when Matt bullies her. Matt dates Josie, Peter’s girlfriend, and makes her pregnant out of wedlock when he forces

her to have sex with him without protection just to humiliate and bully her and Peter. Josie, even, does not inform her mother about her pregnancy and subsequent miscarriage because Alex always pressures Josie hoping to see her ideal in all life areas.

During school days, Peter is usually pushed, teased, and verbally abused. Wearing glasses makes Peter a frequent target of teasing; he feels “as if he were the punch line to a joke” (83). Each time he is bullied, “his face felt cold, but his ears were burning” (71) and he can hear the bullies’ and his friends’ sniggers. When Josie leaves Peter, he starts a new friendship with Derek Markowitz, who is like Peter awkward, unathletic and a computer whiz and is always subject to merciless bullying, and both design video games together, to the extent that Matt accuses Peter of being “homo.” So, Peter is so cautious not to like his new friend, Derek. Pointedly, teachers rarely take part to prevent bullying and their intervention frequently sharpens the power abuse. Instead, the teacher tells Lacy that she is “showing Peter how to stand up for himself. If someone cuts him in the lunch line, or if he’s teased, to say something in return instead of just accepting it” (78).

The inciting force for Peter’s resistance occurs one month before the shooting when Peter sends Josie an email expressing his love for her. Peter writes, “I know you don’t think of me. And you certainly would never picture us together. By myself, I’m nothing special...But with you...I think...” (347). Peter becomes a cyberbullying victim when Courtney Ignatio, the most popular and cruel girl in school, reads Peter’s email and then asks Drew Girard, one of the popular crowd and main tormentors to Peter, to forward it to all their peers. Convincing Peter that Josie loves him, he invites her to have lunch with him, just to be subjected to public degradation, subjugation, and verbal and physical bullying. Peter

realized how deep a pit he’d fallen into, and how many people had dug it. He glanced from Drew to Courtney to

Emma and then back at Josie and when he did, she had to look away, so that nobody including Peter would see how much it hurt her to hurt him; to realize that in spite of what Peter had believed about her, she was no different from anyone else. (350)

On the morning of the shooting, Peter bursts hysterically once he switches on his PC and discovers that all his peers have read the email he sent to Josie. Peter has been imprisoned after the shooting. Jordan McAfee, the defense lawyer, justifies Peter's crime using tyrannized person complex resulting from fierce power abuse and oppression to persuade the committee that the criminal's violence is only a resistance to his misery. On the first day of school, Peter's mother gives him a brand-new Superman lunch box and then makes sure that he gets on the kindergarten bus. The attorney informs the judge, "By the end of the ride to school, that lunch box had been thrown out the window. From that very first day in kindergarten...Peter experienced a daily barrage of taunting, tormenting, threatening, and bullying" (395-6). Jordan claims that Peter is affected in his decision by bullying and his behavior is a way of resistance. So, he rehearses a bit of this suffering:

This child has been stuffed into lockers, had his head shoved into toilets, been tripped and punched and kicked. He has had his private email spammed out to an entire school. He's had his pants pulled down in the middle of the cafeteria. Peter's reality was a world where, no matter what he did — no matter how small and insignificant he made himself — he was still always the victim. (Picoult 396)

According to Foucault, Peter has to resist as there is irresistible power. Foucault emphasizes that the dominator persistently exercises power, but power is maintained by everybody. He rejects the "zero-sum" prospect of power. "Power is everywhere" (*Discipline* 63), it is not maintained and applied by some, while

missed by others. The strong exercises power over the weak but the weak also exercise their power over the strong using the counterpower of resistance. No one is powerless; there are just various kinds of power. Jordan argues that Peter is in an alienation state at the time of the shooting; he is resisting bullying. Alex states that she “didn’t let Josie watch anything on television that showed violence. She knew what happened when you put a gun in the hand of a troubled kid” (87). However, ironically, Josie, too, uses her counterpower of resistance. At the end of the trial, Josie confesses that she is responsible for Matt’s first shot using a cannon that drops out of Peter’s sack. Then, Peter fires the deadly second one. As a result, the court passes a life sentence for Peter to be imprisoned for ten counts.

Words do not just hurt young adults, but lead some to believe that the only way out of their situation is death. Picoult quotes the Chinese proverb in her text, “When you begin a journey of revenge, start by digging two graves: one for your enemy, and one for yourself” (150). Hence, as a victim of bullying, Peter has been so mentally beaten down that his low self-esteem, his feeling of disconnection from the world around him and that there is no end to his torture, leads him to end the bully’s life. Suffering from isolation, he tells Josie, “I want people to like me” (80). Therefore, finally, Peter decides to end his bully’s life. In the court, Jordan, defending Peter, says “There was a point where the events of your life became a tsunami...The only...choice you had was to move to higher ground while you still could” (165). As Marcia, the vet’s assistant, tells Lacy that death “robbed you of your vocabulary for comfort” (196). So, through killing, Peter looks for comfort. Unfortunately, it is his fate that his parents, peers, teachers, and school managers fail to put an end to that power abuse which causes his tragic end. Ironically, Peter’s mum tells him “One day, Peter, everyone’s going to know your name” (Picoult 80). Finally, he becomes popular just for his

crime or, in other words, when he starts to use his counterpower of resistance. The school shooting is the key moment of Peter's resistance against Matt's tyranny, having the opportunity to be powerful for the first time. Peter's power depends on his awareness of the inefficient school context and the silence of bystanders who fear Matt's cruelty. According to Foucault, "'truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (133). The rules of the school, the "rules of power" (*Power/Knowledge* 94), resemble a regime, however, teachers, students as well as bystanders participate similarly in the assignment of Matt's tyranny and brutality, assisting the provision of his authority and sovereignty.

Similar to Picoult's *Nineteen Minutes*, Helal's *Scarab*, which is written in Arabic and has not yet been translated into other languages, shows students who can study, act, and play in schools where ableism, power, and dominance control social skills and communication among them. This Egyptian narrative considers school bullying from the perspectives of ableism and the human will to subjugate others. It declares how young adults' affairs are controlled by their powerful state. Indeed, power abuse has an influential impact on adolescents' protection and fortune (Rodriguez 17). Subjectivity is described in *Scarab* when the author depicts how the abuse of ableism power has bad effects on the suppressed students who have faced and still face pursuit to confront this subjugation and bullying which damage their liberty and justness (Ladson 212).

Scarab narrates the story of Aabid (Farkha), a victim of bullying who is bullied by Fajr and his peers. One of Fajr's bullying behaviors against Farkha and others is dating several girls to prove that he is powerful and beloved by girls compared to those powerless. Throughout the text, verbal bullying is perfectly depicted

when Fajr subjugates and humiliates Aabid calling him: Farkha (chicken). “His famous walk was the reason to be called: ‘Farkha,’ he is walking small steps, extending his arms/wings by his side while bending to his neck and back tightly in one direction” (Helal 16). Farkha is exposed to constant harassment, mocking, insults, social exclusion, and intentional isolation from peers and parents as well. He faces a lot of relational bullying idioms like, “You can’t play with us,” “I won’t be your friend if you talk to her,” or “You can only be my friend if...” (Bauman 220). This type of relational bullying is the most harmful one as it can go on for long periods because it is the hardest to detect as claimed by the anti-bullying researchers Sheri Bauman and Adrienne Del Rio (220). Power can be enacted through the silencing of the victim (Cross 105). Thus, Aabid’s silence, powerlessness and weakness encourage even those who are not powerful to bully him. “This boy is not one of the ‘powerful’ boys, however, Farkha’s horror that is so clear encourages the boy to bully Farkha” (Helal 16). Those who bully Farkha attract attention from the interaction, whereas the bullied Farkha tries to keep the situation as private as possible. Aabid often fears judgment and consequences. As a bully victim, Aabid not only suffers at the hand of the bully but also feels socially excluded and embarrassed. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault exclaims through selected idioms how power abuse affects negatively the subjects: “It ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’” (194).

The Bully causes physical harm and pain to Aabid. Fajr humiliates Farkha by hitting him on his testis many times. This behavior is popular among male teenagers who are used to humiliating and subjugating powerless students. The bully humiliates Aabid to the extent that he walks with a bowed head. They often mock and scorn him. When students throw a dead raven at him, he even does not resist or oppose because if he does, they

will increase their humiliation and mockery. Aabid is powerless and unable to remove “that dead crow thrown at him by one of his peers to humiliate him in front of all those girls and boys who know him” (18). Those who bully Farkha, humiliate him just to feel superior to him. Once they find a powerless student to oppress, they do not hesitate to subjugate this victim in order to feel superior. The bully Fajr believes that this powerless victim is unable to resist. Farkha’s only way to resist is to keep back and avoid them. Each time he tries to resist, he fails and starts to tremble, perspire and sweat out of fear.

Farkha’s irregular heartbeats start to be normal just after a few minutes of sitting in a far place where he can see nobody. His hands stop trembling and the beads of sweat completely dry. He, finally, rests and stops to respire as if his lungs are a vacuum cleaner. (19)

Even, he is not bold enough to speak to the girl whom he admires. Consequently, he prefers playing video games and watching unrated sexual videos to forget his misery; just like the protagonist and bullied victim Peter in Picoult’s Western text *Nineteen Minutes*.

Despite knowing that his mother is the only one who loves him, Farkha does not complain to her because she always criticizes him and does not support him. Her continuous criticism and lack of kind parental emotions and feelings play an important role in Aabid’s bullying. She, constantly, insults and shouts at him. Her behavior increases his misery. It seems that she, too, bullies her son. She does not care nor bothers herself about how her son uses his computer despite being sure that he watches unrated films. As if she does not want to bother herself with what her son does. This reflects her selfishness. “He’s always perplexed! Does his mother care for him or not? She asks him to keep silent. She also hates his complaint about any problem. However, she advises him to pray, recite Quran, etc.” (24).

Farkha's relationship with his father also lacks harmony. He fears his dad, 'Zezo,' as called by his mother. Farkha feels that his mum cares more for his dad. She behaves kindly to her husband and always scolds and reproaches Farkha to the extent that she asks him not to tell his father about his problems or bullying at school. "Don't tell your father anything as he returns tired from work. Don't annoy him" (23). This absence of the family role is the main cause of Farkha's powerless and subjugated characteristics and traits. Helal portrays through Aabid's family lunchtime how is the father selfish and the absence of harmonious feelings between the parents and Aabid. "Father sits at the central point of the dining table. Mom has put all the food in front of him, leaving just a little amount for Aabid...Whereas, he watches his mom feeding his dad and putting the food in his mouth" (25). Zizo is used to bullying his son by humiliating him and mocking him. When Aabid sees a cockroach on the wall of the bathroom and fails to kill it, he stands silently waiting for his scolding as usual (27-8). His mother, too, is used to bullying her son. She compares Aabid to other teens in his attendance; showing the merits of others compared to her son's demerits (33). Often, when a child is so terrified of his persecutor or ashamed to tell an adult, the physical signs of bullying can be explained away. Some bullied victims may use the excuse that they fall on the playground, thus explaining any bruises, or they are hit with a ball during gym class. Ripped articles of clothing are explained as being caught on a tree or fence and even missing items can be excused as simply being lost. On the contrary, Farkha tells his mother the truth, as if he does not care for her reactions or feelings.

Sitting at the first desk at school, students are used to spitting at Aabid. This indicates the plenty of bystanders who do not try to help Aabid, even teachers act as bystanders in order just not to bother themselves (Helal 33-4). Consequently, Aabid fears communication with people. He keeps looking at the floor and not raising his face to

avoid confronting others and seeing how they pity and humiliate him. However, unlike Picoult, Helal ends his narrative text with Aabid's flexibility to change after his shock of seeing his beloved Farah with Basim and his friend Azooz knows about this relationship without informing Aabid.

Comparative Analysis of School Bullying in the Two Narratives

These antibullying narratives are critically analyzed. Throughout a protagonist, an antagonist, plot, and thematic material, both novelists show similar viewpoints about bullying and portray the bully, the bullied, and all those who act as bystanders when someone is being bullied. These two texts display concrete examples of the bullying circle and show that no one, except the victim, is innocent. Throughout the plot of the two texts, bullying is portrayed as a flawed teen practice, showing hegemonic forces based on class, ableism, physical shape, sexual attitude, and identity. Thus, both texts explore the relationships of power and dominance among young adults and how victims resist.

Not all students can have high status, so one student's status must decrease for another's to increase through bullying. So, both Matt and Fajr bully Peter and Aabid to raise their status in school. Picoult and Helal claim that aggression increases as one moves up the ableism hierarchy. The two texts claim that insults are often directed at others with equal or lower status but they are rarely directed at those with higher status.

The physical and mental effects of bullying that the victims, Peter and Farkha, have been exposed to have led to lifelong problems because of the absence of professional or parental help. In addition to the influence of one's family that appears both in *Nineteen Minutes* and *Scarab*, we have to seriously consider the responsibility

of bystanders represented by Josie through *Nineteen Minutes* as well as Doha and Azooz in *Scarab*, who may encourage bullying. Bullying incidents are observed by bystanders who may take on roles as sidekicks or reinforcers and actively support the bullying behavior through assistance, laughter, or other positive feedback like Doha and Azooz; others may adopt outsider roles and passively observe the behavior like Josie.

Verbal bullying is evident in both texts. Both Peter and Aabid were compared to chicken, as a symbol of a weak living organism. Lacy likens her son Peter to a weak chick “One day, while the class watched in horror, the maimed chick was pecked to death by the others” (Picoult 77). On the other hand, Aabid is called all the time as Farkha.

In *Nineteen Minutes* and *Scarab*, teens from two different cultures commit the same odd behaviors. Young adults fabricate and exchange direct sexual jests and snubs. They watch uncensored films and involve in informal and permanent sexual relations. As shown in *Scarab*, teens are sexually attracted to older women. Girls, in the American text, tease classmates’ breasts, wear sexy clothes and dance to sexually provocative lyrics. The Western and Eastern texts alike portray teens’ abuse of illegal drugs. When Joey dies in a car accident, Lacy observes a lot of heroin in his bedroom. Western and Eastern young adults are similarly depicted by the two novelists as getting drunk at parties. Moreover, just like Farkha, Peter yields to the world of video games to flee bullying. Josie’s terror of being an outcast is similar to Doha’s. In addition, both Peter and Aabid worry about being gay as if victims of bullying confront the same problems.

The two narrative texts, also, claim that the negative school climate affects school bullying. Both texts show that school bullying increases and lasts because the institutional setting of the school brings students together in one place for several hours a day, five

days a week with little to no way of escaping tormentors. Both victims of bullying are trapped in an environment that gives the bully easy access. Bullying is portrayed in both texts as a normal part of school life that often goes undetected or is not reported because students fear retribution from the bully. In addition, teachers are portrayed as unwilling to intervene or deal with bullies reinforcing the belief that it is an accepted part of the school culture and not recognized as a violation. Consequently, the school environment in both texts provides an environment for bullying to occur. Without this negative management of schools, both Matt and Fajr could not manage such power and subjugate their friends. These narratives depict schools that have no power to protect bullied students. These schools are able neither to join students together, offer assistance, nor set up any kind of communication between students and teachers (Cotterell 199). Peter's and Aabid's schools are unqualified to control bullying; despite their trials to protect and aid the bullied teens, they fail to control the abuse of power fabricated and imposed by tyrannical bully students. Definitely, negative school management, depicted here, increases and supports bullying attitudes. Although Peter and Aabid have to inform teachers about the bully's name to protect them, they may face more power abuse due to the schools' inadequacy. Picoult's narrative reveals this school inadequacy when Lacy tells Peter's teacher about his sufferings, the teacher claims that:

The behavior of these other boys is not being tolerated. When we see it, we immediately send the child to the principal... It's just that unfortunately, that response can have the opposite effect. The boys identify Peter as the reason they're in trouble, and that perpetuates the cycle of violence...I'm showing Peter how to stand up for himself. If someone cuts him in the lunch line, or if he's teased, to say something in return instead of just accepting it... I can

tell you what you want to hear... I can tell you that the school will teach tolerance and will discipline the boys who've been making Peter's life miserable, and that this will be enough to stop it. But the sad fact is that if Peter wants it to end, he's going to have to be part of the solution. (71-3)

All in all, class, ableism or merely one's style are shown here as causes for abusing and bullying others. Both narratives reveal that the behaviors of the bully expose the "rules of power" (Foucault *Power/Knowledge* 94). Thus, Matt and Fajr often try to legitimize and confirm authority by exercising hegemony and tyranny to control the powerless. School bullying is portrayed in both texts as increasing the likelihood of depressive symptoms in both girls and boys. In addition to low self-esteem and depression, both Farkha and Peter have extra effects like horrible beliefs about death, social isolation, no sense of a future, powerlessness to express feelings, and silly guilt. They reach the extent that they blame themselves for their situation and feel guilty, even rationalizing that they deserve it. As outcasts, they turn to drinking, drugs, video games, sexual films, sniffing and eating disorders.

These two narrative texts manifest Foucault's belief that power considers and examines moments of resistance as well as the procedures of power. He believes that similar to the network of power relations that "ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities" (96). Thus, these two narratives display the Foucauldian power/resistance through the power abuse of adolescents and the victim's ability to resist. Throughout the narration, the character of the bully is so perplexing, and the binaries of powerful and powerless students in these two texts intensify Foucault's claim that:

One should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with ‘dominators’ on one side and ‘dominated’ on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination, which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies. (*The History* 142)

Peter and Farkha represent the dominated side of that binary, so they are depicted as suppressed and tyrannized victims with whom readers show sympathy. Whereas Matt and Fajr are portrayed as dominators who may not be able to change, and the suppressed may transform either into powerful resistant like Peter or into a much more flexible character like Aabid. In *Nineteen Minutes*, Peter resists bullying by killing his bully, while in *Scarab*, Aabid (Farkha) resists bullying by isolating himself from others in order not to struggle, and, ultimately, trying to adapt and accept his humiliated existence in society.

The two novelists enforce influentially the belief that such bullying phenomenon, severe subjugation and humiliation are due to dysfunctional parenting, decayed families, low socioeconomic degree, siblings or the regime of power that control behavior at schools which they are unable to reform. Both Western and Eastern victims are portrayed as unable to protect themselves against either psychological or physical bullying. As a result, they feel depressed, small, anxious, enraged, resentful, lost, and isolated. On the other hand, both Western and Eastern bullies are depicted as forever bullies; they bully others and are never bullied. Both novelists claim that each person can be hard, cruel, or brutal according to each person’s circumstances that shape behavior; it is not easy to say that a specific child is cruel while the other is not.

Finally, both novelists from two different cultures assume that school bullying is the humiliation and dehumanization of a fellow student to let the bully seem superior or gain popularity among

fellow peers. Therefore, to prevent bullying, one must not imagine that the person can merely see bullying and stop it as the tactics which bullies employ can often go unnoticed. They claim that bullying is not an issue between the bully and the bullied, rather it is an act that everyone around gets involved in. Both Picoult and Helal want to tell the reader what Coloroso thinks, “bullying is a learned behavior. If it can be learned, it can be examined, and it can be changed” (24). As Jodi Picoult states, “If we don’t change the direction we are headed, we will end up where we are going” (1).

Conclusion

Power affects social interactions and school bullying. Following Foucault, this paper examines the procedures exercised by powerful and popular students to subjugate and hegemonize their powerless subjects in addition to the resistance of the bullied victims. As shown in the two narratives from two different cultures there is a clear connection between ableism or physical shape and bullying. The bullies are often much stronger and more popular than the bullied. However, as emphasized by Foucault, power cannot be abolished. Power is everywhere; thus, a student is either practicing power as a dominator bully or resisting the abuse of power as a bullied or dominated as portrayed through characters in both texts. Moreover, it is not simple to specify bullying at schools since students are always either exercising power or are subject to power.

It seems imperative to have the Eastern Egyptian narrative text *Scarab* which depicts, frankly, bullying in an Egyptian school proving that the causes and results of school bullying and the behavior of the bully and the bullied are almost similar in the Eastern and the Western cultures. However, attributed to different cultures, they differ in the behavior of the bullied at the resolution; the Western bullied chooses to kill his bully while the Eastern bullied

chooses to isolate himself and lower his expectations. Each novel uniquely deals with school bullying showing what students are doing in their classrooms in addition to the poor family life of the bullied.

Referring to Foucault's claim that knowledge is power, to change the direction we are headed, the more information you provide your children with, the better qualified they will be to handle certain situations. Young adults get great benefits from reading narratives that revolve around real-world issues and dangers, hence creating empathy and instructing the reader. Young adults might be able to feel sympathy for bully victims, understand their position and anxiety, and even learn from it, thereby preventing another statistic. Almost every reader can identify with the horrors of being bullied within such narratives. Picoult and Helal persuade the reader to sympathize with the bullied. They approve and support the dominated and help those implied readers who may be bullied, along with tuition and advice to expected dominators. Thus, it seems imperative to have anti-bullying narrative fiction like this in the Egyptian culture.

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