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United Arab Emirates University

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

NEGOTIATING THE INTERSECTION OF ARABIC AND ANGLO-AMERICAN LITERARY JOURNALISM: EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES, CHALLENGING CANONS

Samah Gomaa Mohamed Abou Marzouk

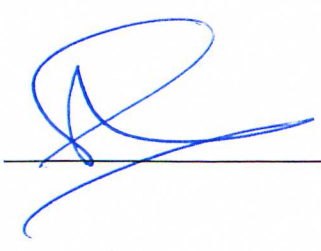
This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Under the Supervision of Professor Ali Noor

November 2017

Declaration of Original Work

I, Samah Gomaa Mohamed Abou Marzouk, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) and the author of this dissertation entitled "*Negotiating the Intersection of Arabic and Anglo-American Literary Journalism: Exploring Possibilities, Challenging Canons*", hereby, solemnly declare that this dissertation is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Professor Ali Noor, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma, or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this dissertation.

Student's Signature:  Date: 7th Jan. 018

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Abstract

Literary journalism is an art form that combines storytelling techniques with the verifiability of standard journalism. Research in the field is recent and predominantly Western. Unlike Anglo-American literary journalism, there are no studies on Arabic literary journalism as a stand-alone art form in Arabic and only one in English, which examines the reasons for its scarcity. This study aims to prove otherwise. The objective of this research is to combine history and criticism in exploring Arabic literary journalism; examine its predecessors, characteristics, motives and how it relates to its Anglo-American counterpart; and determine whether the two are fundamentally different or show any parallels. This study will not only illuminate the Arabic side, thereby providing a fresh perspective on several texts, but will also help deepen the understanding and appreciation of literary journalism as a global phenomenon rather than a Western one. Theories and definitions by such Anglo-American scholars in the field as Norman Sims, Thomas Connery, John Hartsock, Ben Yagoda, Kevin Kerrane, Mark Kramer, Barbarah Lounsberry, and Tom Wolfe will be utilized as a backdrop to analyze the style and purpose of a sample consisting of pieces written by 24 established Arab journalists and/or literary figures across different eras. The research will also benefit from a small group of theories relating to humor studies, sociolinguistics, literature, and definitions of literary journalism as provided by certain Arab journalism scholars such as Mar'e Madkour and Mohammed Sayed Mohammed. This study will ultimately contribute to current debates about international literary journalism in addition to introducing a new field of study to the Arab region, one that provides a better interpretation for texts that possess both literary and journalistic qualities.

Keywords: Arabic literary journalism, Anglo-American literary journalism, Literature, Journalism, History, Criticism.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

تداول نقطة التداخل بين الصحافة الأدبية العربية والانجلو-أمريكية: سبر الامكانيات وتحدي المعايير

الملخص

تعتبر الصحافة الأدبية شكلاً فنياً يجمع بين تقنيات السرد القصصي و الدقة الصححية. غير ان الابحاث العلمية حول هذا الاجال لل ديثة العهد وتقتصر في ملها على الصحافة الأدبية في الغرب. بعلى عكس الصحافة الأنلألو أميكية، لا، تتوفر أي دراسات باللغة العربية تتناول الصحافة الأدبية العربية باعتبارها أسلوباً كتابياً مستقلاً بحد ذاته. إضافة إلى ذلك، لا توجد سوى دراسة وا دة باجنجليزية. فادها ان الإنتاج العربي في هذا الاجال شحيح. وعليه، تهدف ا ط وحة الرارنة الى تقديم ما يبين عكس ذلك من خلال ا تقصاء تاريخ الصحافة الادبية العربية وأ اليب نقدها وخصائصها وروادها، وأسباب نشأتها أيضاً. كما تتطرق الدراسة أيضاً إلى تحري علاقة الصحافة الأدبية العربية بظنيرتها الانجلو أميكية،،، دي تقارب قما او ا- اختلافهما. مالا، لا، تهد ذذ الدراسة الى تليط الضوء على الجزء العربي والنظور الى موعة من النصوص من منظور ريد ف ط. بل تهدف ايضا الى تعيي ا ا ام بهذا الفط الكتلي بى المستوى الإنلالي نيس ف ط الغبي.

تستند الدراسة الالية ة لى نظ يات الصحافة الأدبية ومفاهيم وضعها نقاد وعلماء أنجلو-أميكين و ثل نورمان سيمز، توماس كوني، جون

هارتهـــوك،،بـــه يـــاجودا، كيفـــين كـــرينن مـــارك كريمـــور باربـــاره لاونزبيـــري وتـــوم وولـــف. حيـــث أنّ لهـــذذ االاـــاهيم والنظريـــاتودوراً هامـــاً فـــي تحليـــل أســـلوب وأغـــراض نمـــاذذ تـــارة كتبتـــتت ـنن قبـــلل أربـــع وعشـــر وو كاتبا/كاتبـــة عرفـــوا ـنن خـــلال أعمـــالهههفـــي ـــلل الصـــحافة أو الادب العربـــيي عبـــور فتـــرات نيـــة ممتلفـــة. كمـــا ســـتتطرر الدراســـة إلـــى مموعـــة مـــن النظريـــاتونتت الصـــلة بالفكاهـــةوالادب وعلـــم اللغويـــات الاجتماعيـــة إإـــافة إلـــى مفـــاهيم الصـــحافة الأدبيـــة اســـتناداً إلـــى بـــاحثين عـــرب مثـــل عـــي مـــدكور ومحمـــد ســـيد محمـــد. ســـيكون لـــذذذالدراســـرود ة ـــام فـــيي الانـــاظجاجراجلايـــ ة ـــولل الصـــحافة الأدبيـــة ملعالميـــة كمـــ ت ا ـــههفـــيي تقـــديمم مـــنهج بحثـــيي يـــد منفصـــلل بذاتـــه بإمكانـــه تـــوفيمم تفسيرات أفضلل للنصوص وتي تجمع بنن الصحافة والادب

مفـاهيم البحـث الرئيسـية: الصـحافة الأدبيـة العربيـة،،الصـحافة الأدبيـة الانجلـو أمميكيـة،، الاببب، الصاافة،،التاريخ،،النقد.

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In the name of God I shall begin, *Besm El-lah.*

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I saved the best for last, to my children – Saif and Salam. I want to thank you for understanding when sometimes mommy missed play time , meal time or school time because she had to work. It’s been a long and hard ride for all of us, but mom did it so you would know - you can do it too.

Dedication

To my eternal cheerleader: Mama – for her boundless love and support

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Classical Arabic
CS	Code-Switching
ECA	Egyptian Colloquial Arabic
LCA	Lebanese Colloquial Arabic
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Literary journalism is defined as "detailed reporting presented with techniques usually associated with novels or short stories" (Wolfe, 1973, p. 15). John Hartsock, a leading scholar in the field, argues that its roots date back to the classical period in the western tradition (2000, p. 81). Nonetheless, its academic study is comparatively recent and problematic, largely due to its being a "borderland" (Maguire, 2014) or, as Keeble and Tulloch call it, "a disputed terrain" (2012) where different traditions and practices intersect, among which are the memoir, the sketch, the essay, travel narratives, life writing, crime narratives, war narratives, popular history, cultural reflection, journalistic columns, and others. Nomenclature is another area of dispute. Tom Wolfe called it *new journalism* (1973), while Connery (1992), Hartsock (2000), and Sims (2008) refer to it as literary journalism. *Creative nonfiction* is another designation (Forché & Gerard, 2001; Gutkind, 2005, 2008) as well as *new new journalism* (Boynton 2005). Other less common synonyms include: *factual fiction, literature of fact, faction, journlit, point of view journalism, para-journalism, personal journalism, dramatic nonfiction, the new nonfiction, artistic nonfiction, nonfiction story,* and *new reportage*. Each has its advocates and a "range" in terms of what falls underneath it.

Because the defining lines overlap, experts in the field have a difficult time distinguishing a set of values that allows us to differentiate between "good" and "bad" literary journalism. Hartsock, for example, divides scholars into two groups: those who take a narrower view as to whom they will permit to be practitioners, and those who take a broader view in looking at the genre. In his book *A Sourcebook of*

American Literary Journalism, Thomas Connery sets a prerequisite for inclusion that requires a professional involvement in the journalism industry. Meanwhile, Anderson and Judith Paterson, faculty members at Maryland's College of Journalism, look at most literary nonfiction as part of the form and include M. F. K. Fisher's culinary essays *How to Cook a Wolf* and Art Spiegelman's comic biographical tale *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* as ♫art of their "literary journalism twelve best" list (Hartsock, 2000, pp. 9-10).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Such a lack of consensus perhaps proposes a problem for Anglo-American literary journalism. However, it provides ample opportunities for exploring the Arabic form, as scholarly work and criticism of it is non-existent thus far. It is unrecognized by Western experts, understandably, due to the lack of translations as well as of bilingual researchers in the field. Some Arabic journalism scholars, particularly Egyptians such as Reda Fawzi Najm, Mohammed Sayed Mohammed, and Mar'e Madkour, have discussed the concept, however, in a limited and different manner from their Western counterparts. They do not view literary journalism as a form of writing with criteria that set it apart from other forms, but rather as an extension of literature that has found refuge in newspapers, magazines, and other journalistic venues.

This research will attempt to rectify this lack of critical study by loosely following the example of Norman Sims in his *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* and John C. Hartsock in his *History of American Literary Journalism.* Both prominent scholars in the field, the former traced the progression of literary journalism in the 20th century by examining cultural connections, powerful examples from various eras, ways in which the political and economic climate influenced editors,

and readers' perceptions of literary journalism alike. The latter went back to basics, tracing the form's origins and examining different examples from different time periods. They both combined history and criticism to create a flexible historical account that serves the overall understanding of the form. Similarly, this research will attempt to create a fluid historical account of Arabic literary journalism, tracing its roots and exploring examples from different time periods while attempting to apply Western theoretical perspectives. This will be exercised with caution knowing that when literature and journalism intersect in the Arab region, the resulting 'literary journalism' may only loosely resemble the Anglo-American one, or bear no resemblance to it at all. That is what this study aims to achieve through utilizing Western theories and definitions of literary journalism; an understanding of differences as well as similarities, should there be any, rather than forcing the Arabic form to fit into the Anglo-American mold. Having said that, it is also important to note that this is by no means a comprehensive, exhaustive historical account, there is much more work to be done, more areas to uncover and works to explore. This study is but a step in the right direction.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 General Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of Arabic literary journalism?
- What are the core differences and/or parallels between Arabic and Anglo-American literary journalism?

1.3.2 Specific Research Questions

- What are the social, political and cultural factors that contributed to the emergence and popularization of Arabic literary journalism, and how much do

these resonate with the factors prompting the emergence and popularization of Anglo-American literary journalism?

- How far back can we trace the roots of Arabic literary journalism?
- How does censorship influence Arabic literary journalism?
- What are the stylistic differences between Anglo-American literary journalism, and Arabic literary journalism?
- Where does composition of scenes and/or characters, as a literary technique stand in both Anglo-American and Arabic literary journalism?
- What is the function of humor in Arabic literary journalism?
- What purpose does writing in dialect serve in literary journalism?
- What purpose does writing behind a mask serve in literary journalism?
- What role does audience response play in Arabic literary journalism?
- What is the effect of the internet on modern day Arabic literary journalism?
- Where does Arabic literary journalism stand on the issue of accuracy?
- What qualities can be used to determine 'good' from 'bad' Arabic literary journalism?

First, while Chapter One constitutes the introduction, methodology and literature review. Chapter Two looks closely at the joint history and relationship of literature and journalism through an investigation of Quranic stories, mythology, proverbs, *Mu'alaqaat* 'Assemblies', war narratives, and *al-qass* 'narration'. This is important because it establishes the origins of Arabic literary journalism. At root, the form is the love child of literature and journalism at their best. This did not just come about

in the modern age. There is a history and deeply rooted traditions in Arab and Islamic culture that laid the groundwork for the actual birth of the form. This section takes an etymological approach in examining both the literary and the news story and how the news story morphed in meaning through time, as well as instances in which the latter fused with the literary story to create something new. Types of humor that are relevant are also surveyed in this section; as this is a pivotal tool in literary journalistic expression in the region, it is important to gain a sense of how it was viewed and used in different time periods throughout history. From Moses to *Jahiliyya* 'Pre-Islam' to the Quran to collections of Hadith all the way to the Abbasid Caliphate, when one of the pioneers of Arabic literary journalism lived. This is explored in the third chapter, which examines Al Jahith, one of Arabs earliest literary journalists. The history and types of humor are also surveyed, namely the concept of incongruity and how that was expressed through his subtle humor. This section highlights the inadequacy of literary theory in encompassing the essence of the Jahithian style and investigates the reasons why Al Jahith is at once a literary man and a journalist. Related concepts of Anglo-American literary journalism, such as scene construction, the glorification of the ordinary, and "the gentleman with a seat in the grandstand," are touched upon as palpable in Al Jahith's writing.

Chapter Four focuses on 18th–19th century literary journalism manifested in travel writing in relation to *Ṭalab al 'Ilm* 'seeking knowledge'. The chapter touches upon epistolary journalism, the *Maqamah* 'Assembly' and the sketch, character types, Christopher Wilson's concept of "mirroring," Realism versus Moralism, writing behind a mask, and how such concepts relate to literary journalism at the time as demonstrated in Rifa'a Al Tahtawi's *Takhlis Al Ibriz Fi Talkhis Bariz*, Mohammed Al Muwaylihi's *Fatra Min Al Zaman*, and Ali Mubarak's *'Alam El-Deen* and in

newspapers such as *Al Waqa'e Al Mesreyah, Mesbah Al Sharq, Abbu Naddara,* and *Al Tankeet Wa Al Tabkeet*.

The Fifth Chapter sheds light on the essay as a possible 20th century literary journalistic expression as well as a natural progression of the 19th century sketch. The chapter branches out to investigate journalists from around the region with a focus on those who were also skilled fiction writers, such as Ghassan Kanafany and Rashad Abou Shawar from Palestine, Zakariya Tamer and Mohammed Al Maghout from Syria, Sa'eed Freeha from Lebanon, and Taha Hussain, Mahmoud Al Sa'dani, and Mustafa Ameen from Egypt. The chapter explores different types of essays using Chris Anderson's theory of literary essays as well as how each type carries out its "persuasive" function through voice, humor, and dialect.

Chapter Six continues to examine the progression of essay writing in the 21st century as well as highlighting the role of the World Wide Web in the literary journalistic production of this period. This chapter zooms in again on Egypt and examines columnists such as Yousif Ma'ati, Omar Taher, Jalal 'Amer, Akram Al Qassas, Jalal Ameen, and Gehan Gharabawi, as well as bloggers, such as Mahmoud Salem, Wael Abbas, and Nawarah Nejm. The chapter explores concepts like Jalal Ameen's *Al Qabeliyah* Le-Al *Taba'eyah* 'Susceptibility to be led' and Reem Bassiouney's take on code switching and what that might mean for Egyptian columnists in this era. This section also investigates parallels between Egyptian column writing of the period and Gonzo journalism, a form of journalism that thrived in 1960s America and is considered an integral part in the history of literary journalism.

Chapter Seven will tie up loose ends in terms of reflecting on key issues explored in individual chapters, in addition to elaborating on some of the problems facing the study of literary journalism today, along with a possible approach for re-

searching the international variety in a way that is inclusive and beneficial to the overall form. Also, it will identify characteristics of Arabic literary journalism that have arisen during the study and investigate how the latter might be similar and/or different from the Anglo-American form.

1.4 Relevant Literature

1.4.1 Anglo-American Literary Journalism: Theories, Definitions and Characteristics

Creative nonfiction, new journalism, participatory journalism, literary reportage, saturation reporting, and artful literary nonfiction are some of the titles used to refer to a genre roughly defined as an art form that combines the power of truth with the dramatic effect of fiction. However, "literary journalism" as nomenclature is historically advantaged. John Hartsock writes that Hutchins Hapgood described his writing in terms that scholars today recognize as literary journalism in a 1905 article published in *Bookman* magazine. Two years later, another article was published in the same periodical entitled "Confessions of a Literary Journalist" (Hartsock, 2000, p. 9). Later, in 1937 Edwin H. Ford, a journalism professor in the University of Minnesota, published his monograph *A Bibliography of Literary Journalism in America* (Sims, 2008, p. 8). Norman Sims also used the term in his 1984 anthology *The Literary Journalists.*

Historian Thomas B. Connery defines literary journalism as "nonfiction printed prose whose verifiable content is shaped and transformed into a story or sketch by use of narrative and rhetorical techniques usually associated with fiction" (1992, p. xiv). Some still insist on using the term "New Journalism," which was popularized by Tom Wolfe in the 1960s. The latter defines it simply as "reporting that reads like fiction" (Wolfe, 1973). He outlines four narrative devices common to the

new journalists that connect them to fiction writers: scene-by-scene construction, complete dialogue as opposed to quotes, varying the point of view even to use of a third-person point of view, and status details that distinguish people, societies, and subcultures (1973). After Wolfe, those who tried to analyze new journalism generally used his ideas as a basis or as points of departure. James E. Murphy, for example, tried to simplify Wolfe's four characteristics. He defines new journalism as "an artistic, creative, literary reporting form with three basic traits: dramatic literary techniques, intensive reporting, and reporting of generally acknowledged subjectivity" (Connery, 1992, p. 4).

A decade later, Norman Sims expanded on Wolfe's characteristics in his 1984 anthology *The Literary Journalists* and developed his own "boundaries of the form" comprising five preconditions: immersion reporting or what Wolfe calls "saturating reporting," structure (each piece has its own dynamic and does not conform to a journalistic formula), accuracy, voice (personal), responsibility towards the writer's subjects, and underlying meaning or symbolism (1984, p. 8). Similarly, Barbara Lounsberry draws on Wolfe and Sims' example, identifying documentable subject matter, scene, exhaustive research, and fine writing as features of what she calls "literary or artistic nonfiction" (1990, p. xv).

Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda theorized a framework according to which they chose fifty-eight pieces to comprise their historical anthology *The Art of Facts.* They chose extracts from what they thought were outstanding examples of literary journalism based on factuality, currency, innovation, dialogue, and a process of active fact gathering (Kerrane & Yagoda, 1997). Mark Kramer did not lay down specific prerequisites, but rather a list of traits common to literary journalists. He wrote that they immerse themselves in their subjects' worlds and in background research, they

work out implicit covenants about accuracy and candor with readers and with sources, they write mostly about routine events and in an intimate voice that is informal, frank, and ironic, their style is plain and spare, they write from a disengaged and mobile stance from which they tell stories and address readers directly, and their structure is mixed between primary narrative and tales and digressions (Kramer, 1995, pp. 21-31).

1.4.2 Early Versus Modern Anglo-American Literary Journalism

Both Connery and Hartsock acknowledge that literary journalism has a long tradition that dates back to as early as the 16th century. Hartsock goes one step further, arguing that its antecedents can be traced to the classical period. He enlists Plato's account of the execution of Socrates in 399 B.C.E. as an example (2000, p. 81). He identifies the printed ballad, travel writing, diaries, memoirs, pamphlets, and essay periodicals as the second phase of literary journalistic progression in conjunction with the introduction of the printing press. He particularly emphasized the influence of the personal essay or essay periodicals pioneered by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison at the beginning of the 18th century on literary journalism today. The influence came from what Allen calls their "dramatic quality," such as writing through a fictional persona and making use of dialogue and humor, among other literary techniques, to deliver their message. Their journalistic quality was also unprecedented, for both the *Tatler* (1709–1711) and later, the *Spectator* (1711–1712) had the interest and format of a newspaper as we know it today. They came out at regular intervals, reserved a running title and dateline, and were printed on both sides of a folio half sheet just as contemporary newspapers are. They supplied news of the town and everyday concerns of its people in the realms of manners, morals, literature, and the arts

(R. J. Allen, 1970, p. vii). Hartsock concludes that the third and final phase started in the 19th century and is continuing today.

Connery's historical view is less comprehensive and more focused on American literary journalism. He identifies three time periods in which a significant amount of works in the field were produced: First, there was the 1890s with the works of Richard Harding Davis, George Ade, Abraham Cahan, Julian Ralph, Stephan Crane, Theodore Dreiser, and Hutchins Hapgood. From Britain he mentions Daniel Defoe, William Hazlitt, and Charles Dickens. The second time period was the 1930s to 1950s through the works of James Agee, Joseph Mitchell, John Hersey, Ernest Hemingway, Lillian Ross, and Truman Capote. The third time period is the 1960s onwards with the works of Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, and Gay Talese.

Norman Sims takes a historical approach as well. He adds to Connery's list of early practitioners the description of Samuel Johnson's tour of the Hebrides Islands in 1773, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland.* He argues that the "American" story began in the 19th century, when newspaper columnists and humorists produced narrative pieces that often had the style and voice of literary journalism. The "sketch" was popularized by the likes of Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Stephan Crane, Opie Read, Jack London, George Ade, and Finley Peter Dunne. He credits the developments of the 20th century, especially after the First World War, from literary journalism to travel writing, citing John Reed, John Dos Passos, and Ernest Hemingway as examples. He then establishes that American culture in the forties and fifties did not lend itself easily to literary journalism, as the Second World War was a hard news event filled with death and disaster (Sims, 2008, p. 165). Literary journalism did not disappear but found refuge in magazines like *The New Yorker*, which

harbored talents such as John Hersey, A.J. Liebling, Joseph Mitchell, and Lillian Ross.

By the 1970s few terms had wider currency and less uniformity of meaning than literary journalism (Dennis, 1971). On the one hand, some vigorously oppose any integration of journalism with fiction, arguing that it breaks the cycle of trust between the reader and author. Conservatives such as Norman Sims and Mark Kramer insist that there is no room for composite scenes or characters, misstated chronology, or falsification of the proportion of events in literary journalistic works (Sims & Kramer, 1995, p. 25). John McPhee, as quoted by Sims in *True Stories*, says, "What you can't do is make a composite character, where I come from a composite character was a fiction. And you don't get inside their heads and think for them" (2008, pp. 3–4). Others, such as *The New Yorker* writer Alastair Reid, claim there is a truth that is harder to get at than the truth yielded by fact (O'Rourke, 2003, para 5).

This division on where to draw the line between fact and fiction is deeply rooted in the history of the genre. Composite characters or/and scenes are frowned upon by most today, yet were part of the journalistic landscape early on. Reporters had the freedom to harness any fictional technique available to them, including invading the heads of subjects and composing scenes and/or characters, without being accused of fabricating or breaking the trust cycle. By the 1940s, works of this nature were shunned by magazines, and although some practitioners of that era still resorted to composite characters, such as Mitchell, Liebling, and John Hersey in one of his World War II pieces, this practice was slowly melting away. Tom Wolfe did cite Hersey's "Joe is Home Now" and Liebling's "Colonel Stingy" as "Not Half Bad Candidates" (1973) in literary history for the new journalism, yet after several scandals, including a Pulitzer Prize retraction in 1981, and efforts to restore the public's

faith in the genre, many insist on eschewing all fictional techniques that compromise the accuracy of the story altogether.

1.4.3 Arabic Literary Journalism

There is not much academic research lending itself to the study of literary journalism in this region; in fact, when the term *Al Sahafah Al Adabiyah AAl Arabiyah* 'Arabic literary journalism' is used, it typically refers to a different dynamic than what Anglo-Americans identify as literary journalism. Elisabeth Kendall, for example, uses the term in *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt* to refer to "any press content pertaining to creative literature, be it serialized novels, poems, short stories, plays, critical articles and studies, the texts of panel discussions and debates, and so on" (Kendall, 2006, p. 4). Both Reda Fawzi Najm in *Alshafah Ala'dbiah B Msr Fi Alnsf Ala'oul Mn Alkrn Ala'shrin 'Egyptian Literary Journalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century'* and Shukri Faisal in *Al Sahafah Al Adabiyah Wejha Jadida Fi Derasat Al Adab Al Mu'aser 'Literary Journalism: A New Direction in the Study of Contemporary Literature and Its History'* (1960) do not provide a clear-cut definition of what they view as "literary journalism" and only focus on showcase examples, and it is inferred from context that, as with Kendall, any journal that pays special attention to works of literature is filed under "literary journalism".

In fact, Nejm writes in the preface that "journalism was considered the only refuge for many poets, literary figures, and critics to publish their work" (2010, p. 9). Mohammed Sayed Mohammed writes in *Al Sahafah Bayn Al Tareekh Wa Al Adab* '*Journalism between History and Literature*' about literary journalism in connection to what he identifies as the "literary magazine." He says "magazine" in Arabic dic-

tionaries used to be a synonym for a periodical or newspaper (1985, p. 83) and defines it as "a periodical in which literature occupies a significant chunk of the space" (1985, p. 86).

Farooq Khoursheed goes one step further than Nejm by placing "literary magazines" outside the practice of journalism altogether. He says they resemble newspapers in format and the fact that they come out at regular intervals, yet their "literary" content goes against the communicative purpose of journalism, which he sums up as a process of "gathering news, dispersing it to as many people as possible, either in a subjective or objective manner" (1961, pp. 31-39). One can infer from his classification of literary magazines that he too identifies Arabic literary journalism as journalism *about* literature, rather than journalism that *is* literature.

Mar'e Madkour in *Sahafat Al Adab Fe Mesr (Literary Journalism in Egypt)* focuses less on defining literary journalism and more on its history and origins. He argues that it started with the French campaign in Egypt and flourished when Rafa'a Al Tahtawe came back from a study opportunity in France and was appointed chief editor of *Al Waqa'e Al Mesreya/ Egyptian News,* after which literature took its place as part of Egyptian journalism. Al Tahtawe was a man of letters; he wrote poetry and was fond of using literary techniques like assonance in his articles. He dedicated a regular slot in the paper to literary excerpts and translations of Western literature. Madkour says the relationship continued to develop until journalism became a synonym for literature (2002, p. 43). He says the two disciplines truly became one when Khedive Abdullah Abu Al Su'ood ordered the establishment of *Wadi Al Neel (The Valley of the Nile),* a weekly publication that featured sections from classical works of literature and history (2002, p. 44).

It is also worth mentioning that the view of literary journalism as solely journalism that caters to works of literature is shared by researchers from other parts of the region. In a study entitled *Al Sahafah Al Adabiyah Fi Al Mamlakah Al Arabiyah Al Su'oodiya 1924–1988 'Literary Journalism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1924–1988'*, Ghazi AwadAllah focuses on literary articles and magazines and concludes that journalism had a pivotal role to play in the development of Saudi poetry and the art of storytelling (1988). Furthermore, Lebanese researcher Nadine Al As'ad characterizes literary journalism up to the First World War as pure literature because most of those who worked as journalists were first and foremost literary figures (As'ad, n.d). Internationally, the only attempt at locating literary journalism in the region was via an article entitled "Literary Journalism in the Middle East: The Paradox of Arab Exceptionalism" by David Abrahamson and Ibrahim Abusharif, which maintained that there was a "relative absence" (2012, p. 1) of writing that bears a resemblance to the form in the region.

In short, there is a gap between Western literary journalism, which is an art form it its own right, and what Arabic literary journalism is defined to be so far. This study will attempt to bridge this gap and expand our understanding of literary journalism. Current research suggests that even though there is literary journalism, there is no integration between literature and reporting. In other words, it refers to the form as journalism about literature, not journalism with literary potential. The goal is to explore other possibilities to see whether, not unlike Anglo-American literary journalism, there are examples where both literature and journalism meet to form a practice worthy of the status of an independent discipline. Moreover, while the Anglo-American form is relatively well defined to the point of making distinctions between literary journalism, creative nonfiction, essay writing, memoirs, travel writing, etc.,

such divisions are yet to be made about Arabic texts. Thus, this study looks at sketches, essay periodicals, journalistic columns, travel memoirs, and even blogs as possible literary journalistic manifestations.

1.5 Method of Research

This is a qualitative study based on textual analysis of a predominantly Arabic sample across different eras. The texts will be analyzed per their style (the literary techniques used in combination with reportage, authorial voice and intentions, in addition to audience response are all considered part of the discussion on style) and purpose (what are the political, social, and economic factors that were present and perhaps directly or indirectly influenced the writing of a column or essay).

The research will make use of two categories of theoretical perspectives: first, the overall framework will be a combination of theories and definitions from several contemporary Anglo-American literary journalism scholars, such as Mark Kramer, Norman Sims, and Tom Wolfe, as well as some Arab journalists who have written about *Al Adab Al Sahafe* 'literary journalism' and tried to define it, such as Mar'e Madkor, Mahmoud Adham, and Mohammed Sayed Mohammed.

The second category comprises theories that will be used to analyze the style and purpose of the sample. These include theories of humor such as superiority, incongruity, and release. Theories from linguistics, particularly code switching, will be employed to analyze the style.

While the aim is to illuminate Arabic literary journalism, and thus the sample includes but not limited to pieces written by approximately 24 Arab authors, examples of Anglo-American literary journalism by Richard Steel, Joseph Addison, Finley

Peter Dunne, George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, Stephen Crane, and others will be used as means of comparison.

While the study includes samples from various areas around the region, such as Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Lebanon, much of the sample and several chapters are dedicated to Egypt, for the following reasons:

1. An integral part of the study concerns journalism in its contemporary form, which did not exist in the region until 1798 (Tarraze, 1913), when the French campaign led by Bonaparte introduced the printing press and started several newspapers in Egypt. Even though there was a print medium in the region earlier than that (in Lebanon and Istanbul), the Egyptian is significant because of the East/West encounter, how that factored in the rise of *Al Nahdah* 'Renaissance', and how that manifested in the writing of the period.

2. While *Al Nahdah* 'Renaissance' was more or less the same phenomenon around the Arab world, the pace at which it occurred differed, and that in part is the reason to continue to zoom in on Egypt in exploring the face of Arabic literary journalism in the 19th century. Syria and Lebanon were greatly affected by the 1850s Syrian civil war/Mount Lebanon war, when many Christians fled to Egypt or Europe. Iraq (as well as Syria and Lebanon to some extent) was under heavy censorship by the Ottoman Empire, and the Arabian Peninsula's nomadic nature kept the area fairly traditional and isolated until the discovery of oil in early 20th century. This is not to claim that Egyptians were the only ones producing works of literary journalistic merit at the time. Syrian native Faransis Marrash (1836–1873) and Lebanese born Salim Al-Bustani (1848–1884) contributed significantly to *Al Nahdah*; however, their writing

was for the most part done outside their homeland. In addition, most of the Gulf Region, the countries of the Maghreb (except for Libya), and Sudan were overlooked. Reasons for this include their late emergence and/or their heavy dependence on journalists from other countries, and in addition the censorship there, which was extremely suffocating, left no room for creativity. Journalism in Sudan was introduced by the British via the Egyptians. Lord Cromer delegated the journalists Fares Nemr, Yaqub Sarrouf, and Shahen Mcarious, the founders of *Al Muqattam* newspaper in Egypt, to start *Al Sudan*, a semi-weekly news publication, the first issue of which appeared in 1903 (Lateef, 1992, p. 20). Sudanese journalism was controlled by the British and heavily influenced by Egyptians, as some held key jobs and brought their local practices into the job. In addition, the first press law was introduced in 1930, and according to Lateef (1992) was very restrictive. Iraq's columnists were under strict press laws from 1909. The Ottoman Publications Act was modified in 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1931 but was never annulled. It was replaced with a new act in 1933 and remained in force until 1954 (Busttani, 1950, p. 98). In the Gulf, *Al Kuwait,* founded in 1928, was the first magazine in the country. As *Al Kuwait* had no local printing house, it was printed in Egypt. According to Ezzat (1983) the first local printing presses were introduced to Kuwait in 1947, Bahrain in 1938, Qatar in 1960, and the United Arab Emirates in 1968, and the government's official newspaper had been printed in Oman locally since 1952. Journalism in the Gulf flourished under the patronage of local governments. *Al Kuwait* magazine started with the support of the president and remains in print to this day. In the United Arab Emirates *Al Khaleej Times* started in 1978 with the support of Dubai's gover-

nor, as did *Al Bayan* on 1980. Ezzat argues that many of the Gulf's news establishments were launched with the financial support of governments, and that therefore there is a general ambiance of carefulness or, as the author puts it, "an overall avoidance of substantial issues" (1983, p. 96). Overall, literary journalism can flourish under harsh circumstances, yet it still needs, however small, a window to exist. This is not to claim that there is no literary journalism in those areas, for there might be; however, examining this is the subject of future research.

3. In addition to pioneering the journalistic movement in its contemporary form, giving birth to some of the brightest literary and journalistic figures in the region, and being a hub as well as refuge for other Arab writers, studies on Arabic literary journalism are almost exclusively written by Egyptian scholars about Egyptian writing. It is only logical to take this as a starting point and build on the existing research.

Due to this study being the first of its kind, in that there are no previous studies on Arabic literary journalism as an art form. The form does not only lack scholarly mass, there is no discussion on it in this context thus far. Therefore, the researcher opted for a synthesis approach whereby a combination of theoretical perspectives are utilized to analyze and compare the understudied Arabic form against its more established Anglo-American. Because the goal of this study is essentially to compare the Arabic against the Anglo-American to the end of illuminating the Arabic; the first set of theories are – naturally - theories and definitions of the form set out by leading Western scholars in the field. This first set will help determine the differences as well as the parallels between the two varieties, it will act as a backdrop against which the sample chosen is evaluated for its literary journalistic merits. The second set of theo-

ries such as those concerning humor, code switching, voice and others will help analyze Arabic columns independently. These will shed light on what makes Arabic columns literary and journalistic away from Anglo-American criteria. Both sets of theoretical perspectives will work simultaneously to make sense of the sample chosen and eventually paint a picture of what constitute as Arabic literary journalism both independently, and in comparison to the Anglo-American tradition. The researcher felt this was the method best suited to answer the questions proposed by this thesis. Uncertainty is the biggest challenge facing this research as the columns and pieces chosen very considerably in terms of stylistics and purpose, additionally – the sample is sourced from different time periods which proposes additional challenges. What could work for a group of articles, might not for another.

1.6 References and Data Collection

This research utilizes two sets of sources, primary and secondary. Primary sources include sample texts subject to analysis, such as Al Jahith's *Book of Misers* and *Book of Animals*, Mohammed Al Muwaylihi's *Fatra Min Al Zaman*, and Ali Mubarak's *'Alam Al Deen*, as well as the collected essays of Ghassan Kanafany, Rashad Abou Shawer, Mustafa Ameen, Taha Hussain, Yousif Ma'ati, Khalid El-Khemisi, Jalal Ameen, Omer Taher, Gihan Gharabawi, and others. Additionally, the web pages of Egyptian bloggers such as Nawara Nejm, Wael Abbas, and Mahmoud Salem constitute another body of primary sources. Secondary sources are those related to the literature review that provide the theoretical perspectives necessary to fully explore the chosen texts. These include but not limited to: Norman Sims's *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism,* John C. Hartsock's *A History of American Literary Journalism,* Tom Wolfe's *New Journalism,* Chris Anderson's *Literary Non-Fiction: Theory, Criticism and Pedagogy,* Barabarah Lounsberry's *The Art Of Fact,*

Reem Bassiouney's *Arabic and the Media* and *Arabic Sociolinguistics*, Khalid Keshtainy's *Arab Political Humor,* Antonin Obrdlik's *Gallows Humor*, Nicole Force *Humor's Hidden Power,* and Mohammed El-Nawawy & Seher Khamis's *Egyptian Revolution 2.0*.

1.7 Potential Contributions and Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study, one of which is the difficulty of translating literary texts from Arabic to English. Vernacular, culture-bound metaphors and the rhythmic flow of some texts prove to be difficult to translate while keeping their aesthetic value and staying true to the intended message. Some passages are bound to lose some of their literary merit in the process. However, the researcher will rectify this by including the original text when necessary.

Another limitation is the difficulty of obtaining some of the Arabic primary sources on account of their being outdated and scattered. Other than the essays/articles published in book form, online databases of certain newspapers and magazines do not include older articles. The author attempted to contact some of the well-known Egyptian news establishments, such as *Al Ahram,* and *Akhbar l-Youm,* via email and phone to no avail.

Finally, the third limitation is related to the scope of this research. As the title suggests, this is a study of "Arabic literary journalism." However, the Arab world is too vast a geographical entity for this research to be as comprehensive as hoped. The researcher chose to focus on Egypt, an influential player in the region that has acted as a beacon of intellectual light throughout history. However, there is still much to be investigated and more research to be done on other parts of the region to arrive at a better understanding of "Arabic" literary journalism.

Chapter 2: Arabic Literary Journalism: Historical Roots

2.1 En Route to a Contextualization of Arabic Literary Journalism

Attempting to put what constitutes "Arabic literary journalism" in context is challenging because on a scholarly level and from an Anglo-American perspective, it simply does not exist. Therefore, to arrive at an understanding of it, and ultimately a definition, one must first take the path least favored by many Anglo-American literary journalists, such as Norman Sims, who writes:

> Many scholars started with the perception that such journalism was "literary" and based their scholarship of the genre on literary criticism and theory. That poses a potential problem. We must be careful that our scholarship does not just mimic that of one sector of the academy. Given a comparative definition offered by Wolfe that literary journalism reads like a novel or a short story, we run the risk of not examining literary journalism on its own terms. (2009, p. 9)

A predictable approach, granted, but a necessary one nonetheless as a starting point to explore the origins of the form. Literature and journalism in this region have had a unique relationship that resembles, in Mohammed Sayed Mohammed's words, Siamese twins growing in one womb, splitting at birth and each going on its separate, unique path[1] (1985, p. 28), and this section will follow this view. This research will not attempt to fight the hazy borderlines but function in light of them and attempt to explore just how intertwined literature and journalism are by first studying the root of both *al-qessah* 'the literary story' and *al-khabar* 'the news story', and instances

[1] According to the same author the split occurred around the time of *Al Nahdah* 'Renaissance', which is defined as a movement of cultural revival that took place in the Arab region around the nineteenth century (Allen, 1995, p. 2).

throughout history where the two have met. I will also look at a practice that turned into a profession: *al-qassass* ‘narration’ and how it relates to the birth of literary journalism. I explore humor as an essential and constantly utilized technique that, among other functions, counter plays the incongruous reality of the Arab/Islamic region at different eras.

2.2 Al-Qessah ‘the Literary Story’ and Al-Khabar ‘the News Story’: History, Etymology, and Translucent Defining Lines

From a general standpoint, literary and news stories share a number of similarities, the first of which is their function as means of communication (Sharaf & Khafajy, 1980). Just as people communicate their thoughts through words or body gestures, a short story or novel can be an expression of (usually) the author’s sentiments and/or opinions that he/she wishes to share with the world. The same is true of news stories whose essential function is to connect people together through the delivery of news and events from around the world.

They also historically share the same origins. Let us take the first story in the history of mankind, Qabeel (Cain) and Habeel (Abel), the sons of Adam and Eve. The tale of the first murder in history has been passed down from one generation to the next (Wahed, 2009, p. 15), thus fulfilling in one way or another the communicative purpose of reporting. Yet it has the structure of a short story through its plot: the gradual progression of events starting from the conflict between the brothers on who will marry the more beautiful twin, to their sacrifice to God and Cain’s resentment of God favoring Abel, thus proving his brother to be more worthy or in some sense “holier” than he (Zuhaily, 1992), climax (Cain murdering Abel), character development (Cain’s shift from a place of brotherly affection to feelings of envy and rage) and gradual resolve (different interpretations offer different kinds of resolution). In one

account he runs away with his bride and has children who ultimately die in Noah's Flood, another 2portrays him suffering a harsh punishment from God, and in both cases there is a sense of fulfilment, a full circle. This is the earliest example of where literature and reporting can and have met.

In Lisan-Al-Arab, Ibn Manzour defines the "story" in terms that further illustrate the intertwining of the latter with reportage when he writes:

القصة: الخبر وهو القصص. و قص علي خبر يقصه قصا و القصص:

هو الخبر المقصوص.

Al-qessah 'a tale': news narrated. To report one's news is

to narrate them. (as cited in Mohammed, 1985).

The root of *al-qassah* is *al-qass*, which is to follow a track (Al-Othaimeen, 2008, p. 57). As the Islamic scholar, Mohammed Mutawalli Al Sha^{c}rawi explains, in ancient times Arabs tracked the footprints of those suspected of a crime. The direction, shape, and size of tracks left on the ground enabled people to find out the whereabouts, gender, and a rough estimate of the age of the person being tracked (2002, p. 236). Therefore, telling a story about someone else is narrating a *qessah* (noun: tale or story) because, even if not literally, the narrator had to follow a track to get the details that make up the story. It was only recently that *al-qessah* 'story' became synonymous with fiction. Al Sha^{c}rawi claimed humans adopted *al-qassas* 'narration' as a concept and changed what it means by adding imagery, plot and a protagonist, but that is far from *al-qassas* as portrayed in the Quran, which he describes as "truthful accounts" (2002, p. 236). His understanding of *al-qessas* influenced his interpretation of this verse in sourat Yusuf:

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ ٱلْقَصَصِ(3)

3. We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of **stories**

These stories are superior to any other, Al Sha[c] rawi argues, because they reflect reality (2002, p. 236). These accounts do not serve as historical records as much as lessons. Abbas Mahmoud Al Aqqad argues that the function of Quranic stories is to preach, teach, and strengthen the resolve of Muslims (1973). Today, autobiographies and biographies, two forms of writing that share fundamental characteristics with literary journalism, commonly translate to *qessat Hayat (قصة حياة) 'A Life's Story'*, as they are literally a track of someone's life. However, a fictional story is also referred to as *qessah* 'story', which adds to the tension and confusion between the old and new renderings of the word. This bewilderment is arguably a direct result of human arrogance and intervention, as in the Quran, *al-qassas* has two clear interpretations, both showcased in sourat *Al-Kahf (The Cave)*:

قَالَ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ فَارْتَدَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا (64)

[(Moses)] said: That was what we were seeking after: So they went back **on their footsteps, following** (the path they had come)

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى(13)

We **narrate** to thee (Muhammad) their story in truth...

In sourat *Al Qasas 'The Story'* … of Moses, verse 11:

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ فَبَصُرَتْ بِهِ عَن جُنُبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ(11)

> And she said to the sister (of Moses): **"Trace him**." So she (the sister) watched him from a distance, and they perceived not.

Naquss (verb; to narrate) in verse 13 is another derivative of the root word *al-qass*. It refers here to 'telling' as opposed to verse 11; when Moses' mother is instructed by God to cast the child onto the water, she asks the daughter to *qusseeh* 'follow' her brother. There are volumes of studies devoted to the interpretation of *qessas al-Quran* (Quranic stories), and stories such as this and of Moses and Pharaoh are featured a number of times in the holy scripture—*Al-Baqara 'The Cow', Al-Qasas 'The Stories', Taha, Al-Kahaf 'The Cave', Al-Nesaa 'The Women'*, to mention a few—for a number of reasons, among which are: a) to reassure the deliverance of the moral value implied, for despite occurring in more than one sourah, the emphasis is different each time; for instance, in *Taha* the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh's sorcerers is highlighted while *Al-A*^{c} *raf 'The Hights'* concerns instead the circumstance that led to the drowning of Pharaoh and his followers, and each implies a different moral lesson. b) To showcase the divine eloquence of language. Going back to Moses, his story is mentioned in many sourahs, and *Al-Qasas 'The Stories'* is almost entirely devoted to him. Other sourahs highlight different stages in Moses' journey; each is uniquely versed and none contradicts the others, which further validates the factual quality of Quranic tales (Al-Othaimeen, 2008, pp. 59-60).

Islam Mahmoud Derbalah defines Quranic stories as "historical facts in the form of beautiful imagery and eloquent phrases" (Derbalah, n.d, p. 10). This is not to claim that Quran is necessarily a work of literary journalism, but that it does share some of its characteristics in terms of communicating the news and events of past generations and offering moral education while maintaining the elegance of the language.

There are more than a few places in the history of this region where *al-qessah* ‘story’ and *al-khabar* ‘news’ was molded into one; the Quran is a fundamental example, myth is another. Proverbs are a further unique, universal example. Defined as a “succinct and pithy saying in general use, expressing commonly held ideas and beliefs” (The-Encyclopædia-Britannica, 2013). Proverbs act as an important part of a nation’s story, lifestyle, beliefs, and ethical code. They resemble an oral folk tale summarizing a part of human experience in a brief and eloquent matter (J. Taher & Taher, 2012, pp. 23-24).

2.2.1 *Al-Qessah* ‘Story’ and *Al-Khabar* ‘News’ in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Kaa’ba in the *aljahiliyya* ‘pre-Islamic’ era was a central hub for collecting and/or spreading news as well as storytelling. It was the equivalent of what is known today as a community center around which different activities took place. It was venerated well before Islam as tribes from all around the Arabian Peninsula met in Mecca to pay pilgrimage. Additionally, written contracts were kept inside it and the best *Mu’alaqat* ‘Assemblies’ were hung on its curtains (Mohammed, 1985, p. 30). At that time *al-qessah* ‘story’ and *al-khabar* ‘news’ converged in the form of tales of sorcery and djinns or demons. The word *ustoorah* ‘myth’ is etymologically related to Greek/Latin *historia* (Ajeenah, 1994, p. 16), defined in *Lisan-Al-Arab ‘The Arab Tongue’* thus:

في اللغة هه الاباطيل. اطاسلاير: احاديث لا نظام لها. سطّرها: ألّفها. وسطّر عليني أي أتانا بالاسا.ريط ويقال هو يسطّر بما لا أصل له أي يؤلف.

Falsehoods. Unsubstantiated anecdotes or compositions.

(Manzour, 1968, p. 363)

Mythology was featured in the Quran in multiple sourahs in an accusatory context. An example from sourat Al-An'am (The Cattle):

حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلاَّ أَسَاطِيرُ الأَوَّلِين (25)

Those who disbelieve say "this is not but **legends of the former peoples."**

This is where the concept of myth relates to the discussion of *al-qessah* 'story', *al-khabar* 'news', and ultimately Arabic literary journalism. Mohammed Ajeenah maintain that we cannot fully explore mythology unless we accept there is truth deeply rooted in the concept, one that speaks not of individuals but of an entire group (Ajeenah, 1994, p. 10). Once this realization is attained, Pre-Islamic mythology becomes an open window through which we can explore the essence of life before Islam, like a collection of old newspapers depicting a sliver of life during a certain era. If we accept such an argument, then we can appreciate the complexity of the word *ustoorah* 'myth' instead of immediately shunning it as synonymous with fiction. The Quran is once again a good example; in the eyes of the few believers, the Prophet Mohammed's message was truth and the tales of the past peoples (such as Moses and Pharaoh) were facts, yet to the majority, it was a myth.

In addition, the reason mythology exists was initially to make sense of the world or explain some unexplainable phenomenon or ritual whose origins people had forgotten (Mohammed, 1985, p. 28). In the beginning, myth, story, and news were all terms sprung from the same core concept: documenting the events and people of the past in the present (Ajeenah, 1994, p. 19); and much like Anglo-American literary journalism today, there was once one united core concept inclusive of most of these

forms, though as time passed, through scholarship subtle differences became major dividing lines: *ustoorah* ‘myth’, *qessah* ‘story’, *khabar* ‘news story’, etc.

The second occasion where *al-qessah* ‘story’ and *al-khabar* ‘news’ converged in *al Jahiliyya* was war songs’: epic war narratives that were ‘sung’ or narrated using rhyming prose. For instance *‘ayam al-‘arab* ‘Arab days’, such as *Dahis Wa Al-Ghabraa’*, the forty-year tribal war that saw the end of the adventurous poet and ancient symbol of tribal romance, Antrah Ibn Shaddad. Tales of heroism and triumph in battle were not merely a source of entertainment, but also part of what we call today motivational speech. The best *qassaseen* ‘narrators’ accompanied warriors to the battlefield. Through narrating tales of past heroes like Ibn Shaddad in an enticing manner, the might of fighters was sharpened and their desire to emerge victorious was fueled. This practice continued after the rise of Islam. Mohammed writes that Sa’ad Bin Abi Waqqas, commander-in-chief of the army at *Ma’rakat Al-Qadisiyyah* ‘the Battle of Al-Qadisiyyah’, appointed three skilled narrators: Amro Bin Ma’d Yakrib, Qais Bin Hubairah, and Sharhabeel Bin Al-sammat (1985, pp. 29–30) to encourage soldiers to give their best in the fight fundamentally by dressing up age old tales and events in stimulating metaphors and blood-surging imagery.

2.2.2 *Al-Qessah* ‘Story’ and *Al-Khabar* ‘News’ at the Dawn of Islam

Quranic stories, as discussed previously, are an important illustration of where reporting and story-telling met in early Islam. This holy book delivered by an illiterate middle aged man through the revelation of Gabriel flabbergasted his tribe, who sought not only to reduce all its teachings to mere “legends of the former peoples” but also to counteract its *qessas* ‘stories’ with “their *qessas*.” This sub-culture, so to speak, emerged as a natural reaction against fear of the unfamiliar. They saw

this new faith as a threat to everything they had believed in for generations. Thus, whenever Mohammed gathered people around to preach and teach, there would be another circle soon after conducted by the best *qass* 'narrator' Quriash had to offer in order to deflate the effectiveness of his message (Mohammed, 1985, p. 31).

Apart from the Quran, *al-qassas* 'narration' was primarily preformed in religious quarters, usually after the conclusion of prayer, when worshipers gather around the *al-qass* 'narrator' and listen to him recite stories of essentially two types, one took the carrot-and-stick approach in delivering moral messages while also being entertaining. This type includes but is not limited to stories about Prophet Mohammed, past nations and those who were doomed versus those who prospered, Arabian mythology and folk tales, etc. The second type was one that suffered more damage as a result of falsehood and lack of authenticity, which is the collection and recording of Hadith[2] (Hamza, 1971).

Tamim Al Dari was the first unofficial *qass* 'narrator' who led a circle in the mosque of the Prophet Mohammed. He was denied permission to practice during the rule of the caliphs Abu Baker Al Seddeek and Omar Bin Al Khattab, and was finally granted consent by Othman Bin Affan (Mohammed, 1985, p. 38). *Al-qassas* 'narration' became an official position during Umayyad rule, specifically under Muawiyah Ibn Abi-Sufyan, who realized that this practice could play to his advantage. According to Mohammed, *al-qassas* 'narration' was beneficial to governance, as it performed a similar function to that of our modern-day media apparatus (1985, p. 40). It soon became a cultural sensation as the circles filled the mosques and government

[2] Hadith is the compilation of the sayings, teachings, and Quranic commentary by the Prophet Mohammed that was collected through oral testimonies and written down over an approximate period of two centuries after his death.

courts, to such an extent that during Umayyad rule a *qass* ‘narrator’ was also a governmental employee, and it was not unorthodox that a judge would also be a *qass* ‘narrator’ by direct order of the Caliph (Hamza, 1971, pp. 77–78).

Mu’awiyah appointed Sulaiman Bin Omar Al Teji as the first judge and *qass* ‘narrator’ in Egypt in 38 (AH), who then soon was released from judiciary duties to solely practice *al qassas* ‘narration’. With its propagation, falsehood and rumors slowly plagued the practice as many of the *qassaseen* ‘narrators’ were not as interested in truthfulness as they were in gaining popularity, so that by the reign of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, all practitioners had their “contracts” terminated with the exception of Al Hasan Al Basri, for he was known to travel great lengths to verify the things he reported, especially when it came to Hadith.

Through the midwifery of *al-qassas* ‘narration’, Muslims were introduced to folk tales and myths from other religions like Judaism and Christianity. This was one of the reasons it took almost two centuries to collect and record Hadith, for it took painstaking efforts to pursue, record, check, and recheck potential material. The dwindling state of factuality in *al-qassas* ‘narration’ had a double-edged effect: it was a source of entertainment, a “marketing” strategy for Caliphs, and the starting point of what we today identify as literature, and in this research it is also considered the earliest manifestation of literary journalism in the Arab region, oral yet carrying enough potential to be associated with the form. However, it also had disadvantages, as mentioned before, when it came to recording Hadith and Islamic history.

The acceptance of a body of narratives from Jewish and Christian folktale rather than from documented sources that quote Prophet Mohammed and the Quran, such as *Isra’iliyyat* (إسرائيليات) , is one harmful side effect of *al-qass* ‘narration’. Ka’b

Al-Ahbar, a former Yameni Rabbi convert, was a prominent figure in reporting these. He lived and died during the reign of Othman Bin Affan and many of his interpretations are disputed, for some take him as a trusted *mufasser* 'interpreter' of the Quran while other scholars consider his efforts attempts to impose "Jewish concepts and myths upon Islam" (Hamza, 1971, p. 39).

Despite the efforts of some Caliphs to contain what was turning into a pandemic, *al-qassas* continued to spread. Those who recited the Quran became *qassaseen* as their circles grew too many to count, and those who were professional competed for popularity, so that it was not uncommon for orators to plot against each other. This continued well into the Abbasid Caliphate, until in 279 (AH) (Mohammed, 1985, p. 40) when a Caliph issued a bill banning any *qass* 'narrator', fortune teller, or astrologer from practicing in mosques or streets.

2.3 Humor and the Birth of Arabic Literary Journalism

Described as a "way of intentionally eliciting a feeling of non-seriousness" (Chafe, 2007), "humor" is an umbrella term under which many branches are placed: sarcasm, irony, parody, satire, etc. Arabs as a group are not thought of as "funny," particularly in the West. Being the hub of conflict that it is, one author concluded following the uproar against the ridiculing Danish cartoons of Prophet Mohammed that the Arab world "lacks a sense of humor" (Force, 2011, p. 19). This, as will later be shown, is historically inaccurate, and indeed is not even possible, as humor by nature is the offspring of malfunction and contradiction, which are not in short supply in the region. Francis Hutcheson's "Thoughts on Laughter" as well as Kant and Joachim Ritter put forth the view that we laugh as a response to a perception of *incongruity* (P. L. Berger, 1997, p. 22). The very origin of the word *comedy*, according to Aristo-

tle, derives from *komodia;* the song of the *komos*, which was a frenzied crowd participating in the Dionysian rites. Dionysus in Greek mythology is the god of darkness and primeval passions; his nemesis is Apollo, the god of the Sun, light, and reason (Berger, 1997, p. 16).

The point here is if the world were sufficiently "reasonable," humor with all of its derivatives would not exist, because, like Dionysus and Apollo, the comic defies reason, yet both are nevertheless linked, as humor sees through "the facades of the social order" (Berger, 1997, p. 35). Some, such as Chafe, view humor as a survival mechanism essential to restoring "human equilibrium" (2007, p. 11), others as a tool of resistance against oppression, yet in all scenarios it feeds off contradictions, the absurdity of reality as opposed to how it is supposed to be, which is in abundance when it comes to the Arab world.

Humor comes in multiple forms, but this section focuses on three types: Malicious and bawdy, as in the *Hijja'* poems, predominantly composed during the pre-Islamic era; innocuous and didactic, such as those of the Prophet Mohammed; and satirical and reformist, such as those of Al Jahith. These forms are not entirely separate or specific to a certain era; for example, Abu Al Hayan Al Tawhedi, a fourth-century (AH) philosopher, was greatly influenced by the Jahithian style, yet his humor was deeply dark and cynical, resembling that which was commonly practiced in *Al-Jahiliyya*.

2.3.1 *Hijja* and the Dilemma of Exploring Arabic Humor

Attempting to identify and/or classify Arabic humor, especially classical examples, is a difficult task made yet more difficult by the fact that this research is in English, while the comic effect in this context depends not solely on what words

mean but on how they are spoken, what they sound like, and how well the "composer" can play with the vowels. This "linguistic humor" (Kishtainy, 1985, p. 13) is the product of nomads who were not in one place long enough to leave a legacy. Therefore, playing with language in a smooth, rhythmic fashion was to natives of the Arabian Peninsula both entertainment and self, or a collective expression of unity, anger, or passion. Their memory was their sole source of records of the past, and what little future generations inherited can only be fully appreciated by those who not only understand but can fathom the complexity of the Arabic language.

Defined as "merciless onslaught on the enemy" (Kishtainy, 1985, p. 16), the very translation of *hijja* illustrates the dilemma of transposing a "picture" fully from language to another. Kishtainy uses *satire* as the closest English rendering of the term, but that could not be further from the truth. The Arabs of *al-Jahiliyya* were, just like their environment, direct and frank. There was no room or need for hidden meaning, which is a pre-requisite for satire. As warfare between tribes was constant, words were as much of a weapon as swords and spears. As the tribe's semi-official poet ridicules, curses, and exposes the faults of an enemy, murder would be a possible outcome. Such was the fate of Al Mutanabbi, one of the greatest medieval Arab poets, who was not born in *al-Jahiliyya*, yet the story of his death is both a classic example of the outcome of publicly slandering another through *hijja* and a true testament of the role humor played in various aspects of tribal life. Al Mutanabbi mocked Dhabba Al Atbi in a long eloquently versed poem, yet vulgar in depicting Al Atbi's mother as a prostitute. He wrote:

مـــا أنصـــف القـــوم ضـــبة وأهـــه الطرطقـــة

رمـــوا بـــ رأر أبيـــه وبـــاكوا الأم غلقـــة

ومـــا عليـــك مـــن العـــار أن أمـــك قحقـــة

ومـــا يشـــق علـــى الكلـــب أن يكـــون ابـــن كلقـــة

هطيضضا مم تأاهلهو إنملضضم صلبه.

People did no justice to Dhabba

Or his sagging-breasted dwarf of a mother.

They flung aside his father's head,

and mounted his mother by force.

Is it such a disgrace

That your mother is a whore?

Or that a dog is aggrieved

That he is a bitch's son?

She suffered no harm when she was topped,

He who topped her harmed his loins. (Kishtainy, 1985, p. 16)

Although Kishtainy serves the meaning well, it is not the sole source of power here. The original text exhibited a rhythmic flow through what is termed *qafeya mutlaqah* 'perfect rhythm' placed at the final syllable of each line. The comic effect lies in the way words flow in each line until the end, when the word that makes the *wazn* 'metre' is appropriately marked with the diacritic *sukun.* This circular symbol indicates that the consonant attached to it is not followed by a vowel, which forces an immediate halt to the sentence, and thereby an emphasis on the word at the same time, and it helps that the word emphasized is also the most vulgar. The combination of sound along with its position in the sentence and its aggressiveness creates what Ibn Al Mutran, a 12th-century doctor, called "astonishment" (Kishtainy, 1985, p. 5), which he cited as the source of laughter. This is not achieved in every line, as the poem was not intended for mere laughter. Thus, it is not entirely unexpected for the comic effect to fly over the heads of a non-Arabic-speaking audience, for the English

rendering reads as distasteful, while in Arabic it is bitterly humorous, powerfully ridiculing, and eloquently insulting—so powerful in fact that, enraged by the public disgrace to his family, Al-Atbi's uncle lay in wait for the poet as he journeyed from Baghdad and murdered him (Kishtainy, 1985).

2.3.2 Humor at the Wake of Islam

Although laughter is as old as humanity itself, there is no doubt that Islam changed the way people laugh by discouraging malicious humor. This was not permanent, as highlighted in the section above, for poets and authors much later did go back to old ways that departed from Islamic conduct, and this, along with other factors, is what gave rise to other forms of humorous writing.

Humor at the dawn of Islam was a means to both teach and entertain. There is no record of the Prophet Mohammed actually getting angry; on the contrary, it was said that he used to laugh until his molars appeared (Obaidi, 2010). He once said, "I joke but I speak nothing but the truth" (Kishtainy, 1985), indirectly stating that humor is not only acceptable, but encouraged so long it is not hurtful or based on falsehood. There are lessons to be learnt even when it comes to the innocent pranks he played with his companions. Such is the case of the encounter with Zuhair, a street vendor who was not particularly pleasant-looking. He was selling goods when the Prophet approached him from behind and embraced him, shouting "would anyone like to buy this man." Zuhair replied "in the name of Allah, Prophet of God, no one would want to buy damaged goods." The Prophet then said: "in the eyes of God, you are not damaged goods," or in another narration, "in the eyes of God, you are precious" (Obaidi, 2010, p. 147). This friendly exchange carried several subtexts. First, being the revered messenger of God whom everyone respected and took after, for

him to express such a sentiment physically and verbally towards a street vendor whose outlook might frighten potential customers was the equivalent of a marketing boost, and by saying "you are precious" he not only uplifted the man's spirit, but by addressing a perhaps not too pleasant-looking man who was yet still of worth in the eyes of his creator, he also taught valuable lessons of humility and equality. Prophet Mohammed's humor was part of his calling; it was not for mere entertainment, as he said, "much laughter kills the heart" (Obaidi, 2010, p. 56), but he nonetheless thought it was indispensable, saying that resorting to it is like "adding salt to a pot" (Obaidi, 2010, p. 56).

It was said he was most cheerful with children and his family (Manzour, 1968), and he too enjoyed and equally participated in word play. Anas Ibn Malik[3] narrates that the prophet used to constantly joke with Malik's younger sibling saying:

يا أبا عمير ماذا فعل النفير؟

Oh *Aba Omair*, what did the little bird do?

Notice how phonetics come into play here: by rhyming the boy's name with another pleasant creature, Omair and *Nufair,*[4] the aim is to delight and establish a bond with the boy. Another instance of didactic humor based on word play was narrated by Al Hassan[5] thus: "he (peace be upon him) once told an elderly woman: No one of old age enters heaven. As the woman's face changed in sadness, he followed: Because those who will reside in heaven are resurrected as youthful. Then he recited,

[3] He was servant of the Prophet for ten years.

[4] *Nufair* comes from *nufr* 'nightingale', a bird with a pleasing song. Alternatively known as *Bulbul*.

[5] Al Hassan Bin Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, Mohammed's grandson.

> we have created them of special creation **(35)**And made them pure and undefiled**(36)** full of love (for their mates) equal in age**(37)** **(**Al Waqe'ah 'The Inevitable Event')

He could have recited the verse from the beginning, and it would not have caused her any sadness, but this way he increased her happiness because she experienced a momentary feeling of loss followed by the relief of validation, which was more euphoric than if humor were not part of the conversation.

Finding examples of innocuous laughter is a challenge, and perhaps Gruner was not half wrong when he called humor a "game" of winners and losers (2011). In his book he argued that all of its facets can be explained according to the superiority theory. The oldest approach to humor studies is that of the 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who argued that "the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others" (Martin, 2007, p. 44).

Let us take an example many can relate to, Mr. Bean, the central character in a contemporary popular British TV series, who is clumsy, gullible, and constantly in troublesome situations. According to this approach humor arises as a result of our feeling smarter than him. The feeling of relief that we are somehow "above" falling victim to such situations provides a pleasant sensation coupled with other elements such as a punch line, translating into a sudden burst of laughter. Granted, there are other hypotheses that support the existence of what Freud calls "harmless wit." However, Freud was not entirely successful in the illustrations he put forward of such pure humor. In the section titled *The Tendencies of Wit* he presented a few jokes that rely on word play and argued for their "harmlessness," and while that might be true

in the sense they are not aggressive, there is almost always a "butt of the joke," the difference lying in the severity of the insult, which is very little yet still present, as in the following instance: "Not only did he disbelieve in Ghosts, but he was not ever afraid of them" (Freud, 1916, p. 181). True, this joke leans heavily, as Freud rightfully pointed out, on the absurd, but it is clear the target is an individual who contradicts himself, and thus perhaps it is possible to consider this example, as with other illustrations Freud filed under harmless wit, using the superiority theory. This if anything proves the rarity of innocuous humor, as rare as the last Messenger of God, who was not necessarily a joker but uniquely exhibited a type of humor seldom found, one that sought teaching without malice. The reason innocuous humor as well as *Hijja* is surveyed here is because humor is a pivotal technique that Arab literary journalists both old and recent have resorted to for different reasons that will be highlighted in coming chapters. Furthermore, it is viewed here as a spectrum, and it is important to identify the extremes to fully understand and place other forms along the line. Al Jahith, for instance, is the focal point of analysis in terms of the birth of Arabic literary journalism. He also had a distinct sense of humor that played a key role in delivering his message. It was didactic, reformist, and sometimes aggressive, and in the following chapter, his place on this spectrum will, I hope, be determined.

2.4 Conclusion

In his book *A History of American Literary Journalism,* John Hartsock claims literary journalism is deeply rooted in Western history, perhaps all the way back to the classical period (Hartsock, 2000, p. 81). In similar fashion, I wanted to explore the possibility of Arabic literary journalism having a long history and determine just how deep those roots were planted. To do so, the research established first that literature, journalism and ultimately literary journalism in the region are branches of the

same mother tree, and to explore the latter one must first look into the history of both literature and journalism. Such a path is not favored by some contemporary Western literary journalism scholars, because the only form they know developed while being viewed in the light of other disciplines, which is not the case in the Arab world. This research thus needed to investigate the relationship between *al-qessah* 'story' and *al-khabar* 'news' not separately but jointly. Thus, a somewhat etymological approach in casting light on the word *qessah* 'story' was followed. It is defined by the most well-known dictionary of the Arabic language, the *Lisan Al-Arab* as news narrated (الخبخ) المقصوص. I also examined its history, its root word *al-qassas*, and how its meaning changed through time by eliciting examples of its usage from the Quran and juxtaposing that against the way it was exploited, for example, during the Abbasid Caliphate. Other sources where *al-qessah* 'story' and *al-khabar* 'news' were met included Quranic stories, proverbs, mythology, war songs in pre-Islamic Arabia, Hadith, and Isra'iliyyat. This chapter also introduced an essential tool for the study of Arabic literary journalism, humor, and looked at the different facets of its expression and how they changed from one era to another.

Chapter 3: A Walk amongst the Pioneers: An Examination of Al-Jahith and his *Book of Misers*

3.1 Background

Abu Othman Amro Bin Bahr Bin Mahboub Al Basri Al Kanani, nicknamed Al Jahith,[6] was born in Al Basra in 159 AH[7] during the reign of Al Mahdi, the third Caliph of the Abbasid Dynasty, and died in 255 AH. Orphaned from a young age, Al Jahith earned his keep by selling fish and bread in the markets of Al Basra. He developed a love for knowledge from an early age and became part of a group of young learners who would gather at the mosque,[8] the equivalent of an open university then, and acquire knowledge from various scholars of philosophy, rhetoric, philology, theology, and lexicography. Al Jahith was not particularly pleasant-looking but he was intelligent, quick to think, and naturally humorous, and had a rare ability to absorb and memorize large bulks of information, traits that helped him develop a unique style and earned him high positions in the courts of the Caliphs. Living in dire circumstances did not stop him from satisfying his hunger for knowledge; he used to visit *al warraqeen*[9] shops and would not leave even after they closed. He wrote about his mother so disapproving of him spending long periods of time reading instead of working that she once brought him a plate full of books for lunch. When he asked why, she replied, "this is what you bring home" (Murtada, 1898).

[6] The literal translation is "protruding" in reference to his bulging eyeballs.

[7] After Hijra.

[8] Also known as *kuttab* or *masjideen*.

[9] What we now identify as a book shop.

3.2 His Success Factors

3.2.1 Ancestry

Al Jahith was comical, and judging by the example above, this was in part passed on from his mother. It seems that laughter followed him even to his death, which he allegedly suffered as the result of a havy book case falling onto his frail body (Zaid, 2011). He was known for his amusing anecdotes that spared no one, including himself. He wrote:

> I was never ashamed of my appearance until I met these two women. One I saw in Al Askar;[10] she was tall and I wanted to joke with her, so I said when we were having supper: why don't you come down to eat? She replied: why don't you come up and see the world? The other came to my door asking for a favor. I followed her to a Jewish jeweler where she muttered something, then pointed at me and walked away. When she left, I asked the jeweler what she meant. He said: she came to me with a piece of jewelry asking to engrave a picture of the devil on it. I said I have never seen the devil. She then left for some time and came back with you (J. Jaber, n.d.).

If there is something to take away from this anecdote, it is not only the genuine fondness of laughter Al Jahith had, which drew people to seek his company, but that this third century (AH) philosopher managed to unlock the mysteries of laughter before Freud or Hobbes did and made it work for him in various ways. One way was as a coping mechanism, something modern-day humor enthusiasts insist upon, such

[10] A city in Egypt, currently part of Cairo, that locals call Zainhum.

as Allen Klein, who stated, much of the suffering we experience is not a result of our difficulties, but how we view them. It is not so much the actual event that causes us pain as how we relate to it (Klein, 1989). He argues that humor allows us to have a more positive outlook towards suffering, which in turn makes the process of coping smoother and allows misfortune to cause us less physiological and physical damage.

A similar claim is made by Nichole Force, who wrote that humor provides distance and a chance to heal (Force, 2011). What Al Jahith lacked in appearance, he more than made up for in intelligence, knowledge and vigilance. He chose to laugh at his shortcomings instead of being crippled by them, which helped him focus on the good and be at peace with the bad and become one of the most celebrated philosophers and humorists of his time. This would have been hard had he not been naturally "funny," like Abu Hayan Al Tawhedi, for instance, a fourth-century (AH) philosopher often referred to as the second Jahith (Ibrahim, n.d). He struggled with poverty and was orphaned from a young age just like his predecessor; however, what he did not share with Al Jahith was a pessimist view of life and people. He wrote in one of his letters: "I am satisfied with solitude, accustomed to silence. I can endure harm and am at complete loss of hope in everything around me" (Tawhedi, 1301(H)).

3.2.2 Environment and Politics

There were two colliding forces that fed off each other and perhaps contributed to the writings of Al Jahith: 1) the rapid social, political and economic developments and, 2) the multiple incongruities of the Abbasid period. The Abbasid Dynasty was erected on the ruins of the Ummayad Caliphate, and because of a lack of trust and fear of losing control over their newly acquired empire, the Abbasid Caliphs turned to non-Arabs for support, which spurred what later became known as *Al*

Shu'ubiyya[11]. Non-Arabs slowly made their way up to key positions, and the *Al Baramekah* 'Barmakids'[12] to mention one, were revered ministers, particularly during the rule of Haroon Al Rasheed. The military was predominantly made up of Turks as well as people of Khorasan (J. Jaber, n.d.). This was not a problem during the first century of their rule, for the caliphs had the upper hand and enough power to intimidate their rivals into submission. When Al Rashid noticed the ever-increasing power of the Baramekah, he tried and succeeded in containing it. However, the dispute between Al Ameen and Al Ma'moon, in which the latter, aided by *Al Shu'ubiyya*, killed his rival and took the throne, supplied the movement with more power. By 222 AH, with the death of Al Watheq, according Al Khudari the second era of their rule started, during which twelve caliphs ruled beginning with Al Mutawakel and ending with Al Mustakfi, followed by a third period when the caliph was a mere facade, a tool in the hands of his ministers (Khudari, 2005).

Being born in the first hundred years, Al Jahith witnessed the height of the Abbasid power, particularly during the rule of Al Rashid who, according Al Khudari, was generous and cared for the advancement of the sciences, literature, and economy (2005), but he also observed the early warning signs. He tried to combat them in the way he knew best, through the written word. In response to *Al Shu'ubiyya*'s rhetoric of Persian supremacy, Al Jahith dedicated entire works to defending Arabs. *Al Bayan Wa Al Tabyeen 'The Book of Eloquence and Demonstration'* is among his most revered books; however, this study does not draw many examples from it because even though it has a great deal of artistic merit, its main purpose was to fire back at

[11] A reference to non-Arab Muslims. As a movement, it aimed towards the preservation of Persian culture and viewed Arabs as a less refined race. They fought against the Arabization of Islam and had a significant role in the erection of subgroups such as Al Qarametah and Al Nusairiyah (Musawi, 2003).

[12] Of Persian descent, originally from Balkh, which is now part of Afghanistan.

Al Shu'ubiyya. Therefore, he moves from seriousness to humor, from poetry to prose, and from fact to fiction solely to showcase Arabs' mastery of language and rhetoric. That motive, according to Zaid, crippled the work and drowned it in confusion (2011). Additionally, the purpose of this chapter is to explore his literary journalistic merit as well as his humor, and that will be more adequately achieved focusing on his *Book of Misers,* and to a lesser degree his *Book of Animals*.[13]

From an architectural point of view, Baghdad was an astounding city, particularly during Al Rashid's rule. Al Khudari writes that it was a hub for students from all over the world, all teaching in the mosques. There was rarely a scholar or a scientist who was recognized as such without travelling to Baghdad and studying at the hands of its learned (Khudari, 2005).

As for translation, there was no real interest during the Ummayad rule. However, because of the integration of Persians into the fabric of society, interest in their knowledge increased. The House of Wisdom was a grand library established by Haroon Al Rashid in which books were procured from all over the world. Al Ma'moon carried on his father's legacy by writing to Rome asking the Byzantine Emperor for permission to translate from their books (Khudari, 2005). Al Jahith benefited a great deal from the nationwide interest in knowledge. Yaqout Al Hamawi said of his love of books, "never have I seen someone as passionate about books and the sciences as Al Jahith" (Khudari, 2005). He prospered as he studied at the hands of Al Asma'e, Abi Said Al Ansari, Al Akhfash, Ibrahim Al Nasik, and Mohammed Bin And Al Malek Al Aayad. However, the rapid developments on various fronts were bound to

[13] There is also his infamous *Letter of Squaring and Circling.* While that might be an abundant source for literary journalism analysis, particularly the satirical, the humor there is malicious and was allegedly directed against a person toward whom Al Jahith harbored feelings of jealousy and intense dislike, and is thus perhaps more of an early example of sensational journalism, one worth exploring in future research.

have a negative side. As there was reasonable political and economic stability, extravagance was the norm. This did not mean there was no poverty; it only meant the gap between different classes of society had widened. The rise of the elite class fed the division, and according to Ba'eera was reflected in the writings of Al Jahith, particularly in *The Book of Misers* (Ba'eera, 2012).

Incongruities infested the Abbasid society in multiple ways. There was the beauty of architecture and the rise of the elite against the wide spread of beggars and, naturally, misers; the infiltration of non-Islamic conduct such as alcoholism and prostitution against the abundance of mosques; and the penetration of non-Arabs into the structure of governance. On the one hand, the caliphs depended on them as soldiers, generals, and high government officials. On the other, there was a clandestine mutual distrust that manifested itself in movements like *Al Shu'ubiyya* that on the surface called for equality between Arabs and non-Arabs but in truth viewed the former as camel-riding, culturally challenged, Bedouin inferiors. Perhaps a fitting example would be that of Al Jahith and Sahl Bin Haroon, who was an influential figure whom the former actually viewed as a mentor. Nonetheless, Haroon was an Arab-hater, which he made clear in his letter praising misery (Kurd, 1937). Despite such a sentiment he was very close to Al Ma'moon and was appointed his finance minister. Notwithstanding Al Jahith's unsympathetic attitude toward *Al Shu'ubiyya*, he praised Haroon on more than one occasion, particularly his simplistic style that resembled that of infamous Ibn Al Muqafa'a (Zaid, 2011).

The tension between Arabs and non-Arabs, however negative, had a positive effect on literary production, for authors such as Al Jahith felt the threat at hand and found that rich soil for creativity. The debate that took place his *Book of Animals* between a rooster and a dog is such an example. He called them Ma'bad and Al Naz-

zam, clearly fictional characters who openly ridiculed each other. The rooster called the dog a cannibal, grave digger, and corpse feaster. Defensive, the dog fires back with "loyal, patient and kind" (Daif, n.d). He used the rooster reference again, writing:

> I am accustomed to roosters picking up seeds off the ground to feed the hen. Except for the roosters of Marro, I saw them snatching seeds from the beaks of their hens, and I knew then, their miserly demeanor has seeped into their waters and infected their animals (Hajeri, n.d).

To understand the stylistic properties of both references, one must consider what the rooster stands for. Despite his simplistic, minimalist style, Al Jahith did not shy away from exploiting symbolism to its fullest potential. According to Daif, a rooster is representative of *Al Shu'ubiya* due to the abundance in their towns and on their streets (Daif, n.d), while the dog stands for Arabs, who customarily own dogs to protect their cattle. Consequently, the debate between Nassam and Ma'bad, along with the roosters of Marro, is an indication of the difference between Arabs and *Al Shu'ubiya* intended to defend the former against claims of Persian superiority.

3.2.3 Theology

Al Jahith belonged to Al Mu'tazila, which is a doctrine that emphasizes logic, science, and rationality. Individuals who belonged to this group believed the mind should be the judge even when it comes to religion (J. Jaber, n.d.). Adherents of Al Mu'tazila believe humans are the creators of their own actions and therefore should take responsibility for them. This methodical way of thinking is reflected in his writings, for he did not take anything for granted even if it came from Aristotle, whom he called the "man of logic" (Alzubi, n.d.). He, as with Al Ghazali and Descartes,

viewed uncertainty as the first step towards obtaining truth, as he wrote in *The Book of Animals*:

و بعد ههنا فاعرف موضع الشك و حالاتها الموجبة له, لتعرف بها
مواضع اليقين و الحالات الموجبة له وتعلم الشك في المشكوك فيه تعلما, فلو
لم يكن في ذلك الا تعرف التوقف ثم التثبت

Know when to place doubt, and know when to rest assured.
Learn to doubt what needs to be doubted. This process is
necessary to learn how to stop and verify. (Haron, 1967)

The dedication to truth prompted him to quote multiple sources to validate one piece of information. He was also reluctant to let his own biases guide him when presenting an issue. Going back to the debate between the rooster and the dog, the rooster enlisted the dog's negatives, which in turn were negated by the dog, who produced a list of positive qualities. The author could thus rationally discuss and highlight both sides and let readers decide for themselves.

3.3 His Relevance to the Study of Literary Journalism

Among the problematic areas of literary journalism scholarship today is a lack of consensus in terms of its defining parameters; where one should draw the line between fact and fiction is a question greatly debated. Much like the form, Al Jahith himself is conceivably "disputed terrain," for he is argued to be "a literature man and a journalist all in one" (Adham, 1986). His celebrated work *The Book of Misers* is considered an essential stage in the birth of the Arabic "story" (Ba'eera, 2012). He has been discussed and several of his works explored in light of literary theory and criticism (Zaid, 2011). He is also viewed by some as the Arabs' first journalist (Ad-

ham, 1986), and several of his books have been analyzed using communication theories (Adham, 1986; Madkor, 2002; Sharaf & Khafajy, 1980).

It is also worth mentioning the slings and arrows on both fronts. Ba'eera addresses the difficulty of rendering anecdotes from his *Book of Misers* using literary theories that his writing is the product of two stages: first recording (or reporting), then filtering or creating (Ba'eera, 2012), which produces literature that is different in structure to modern Arabic literature. Granted, there are other factors, but it is certainly insufficient to tackle a work that is both journalistic and literary using literary theories. Equally, however, examining his works from a journalistic standpoint gives rise to issues of accuracy, considering that much of his material derives from *al-qassas* 'narration', which, as discussed in Chapter Two, was plagued with falsehood during the Abbassid period, and despite his constant attempts to filter and check sources, there is no possible way to know for sure whether a certain story took place (except for those where the author was personally present or that had been validated by more than one source). However, this is not to deny his journalistic efforts, but only to emphasize that any attempt to examine his work journalistically must be accompanied by a literary examination, as both make no sense separately. There is a need to try and highlight what makes him a literary and a journalistic figure all in one. Such is a necessary step if he is to be argued to be a literary journalist.

One way to appreciate his journalistic side is to observe his transparency with the reader. He chose his words carefully to subtly indicate both his level of involvement in a story and the degree to which he is certain it took place.

حدثني أبو اسااسلرباريربن سيار النظام قال: قلت ممة ..

Abu Ishaaq Ibrahim Bin Sayaar Al Nazzam **conversed** with me. He said:… (Hajeri, 1990, p. 26)

حدثني أبو الههاه النوانششوشد قال: **حدثني** أبو ا لاجوج لاشاعر قال: ..

Abu Al Hejaa Al Nurshwani **conversed** with me. He said: Abu Al Ajwas Al Sha'er **conversed** with me. He said... (Hajeri, 1990, p. 45)

حكي أبو اساسلرباريرربن سيير النظام عنجارج المروي ..

Abu Ishaaq Ibrahim Bin Sayaar Al Nazzam **narrated** of his neighbor from Maroo. (Hajeri, 1990, p. 28)

و **زعم** أصحابنا ان خررانية توافروا في منزل ..

Friends of ours **claimed** that people from Khorasan were together in a house. (Hajeri, 1990, p. 18)

قال م ثنث بن بشير ..

Muthna Ibn Basheer **said...** (Hajeri, 1990, p. 20)

وقيل اصبح ثمامة ..

It was said that Thumamah became... (Hajeri, 1990, p. 28)

Al Jahith is transparent with his reader; he knows when he has done a story justice and when his narrative fails to capture the essence of a scene. His anecdote on Ja'far Al Tartose's mustache is an excellent example of this. The latter had visited a friend, who as a gesture of welcome gifted him some fragrance that he applied to his mustache. After some time, his mustache began to itch, but Al-Tartosi would not touch it for fear the scent would rub off. Al-Jahith captures the picture of the latter's

miserliness and how he tried to rub his mustache from the inside of his mouth, and ends the story with this note:

إنما يطيب لي جدا إإا رأيت الحكاية بعيكك لان الكتاب لا يصور لك كل‌ششءش

ولا يأتأ لك على كنه.

It would have been of great pleasure to me if you (the reader)

Could witness the story with your own eyes, as the book does

Not portray things the way they are. (Hajeri, 1990, p. 50)

In line with his Al Mu'tazela views, he valued rationality and took a systematic approach to his writing. His material might originate from *al qassas* 'narration' which, considering how it passed from one mouth to another, had become quite chaotic. He countered this with constant efforts to document who and where (though not when) a certain anecdote was retrieved. Ba'eera notes that even in his choice of opening statements, there is journalistic integrity. She says there are underlying indications shown by the words *akhbarani* 'told' (اخبرنر) and *hadathani* (حدثني). The first suggests that the reporter (Al-Jahith) had distanced himself from a story (2012), like a modern-day disclaimer, while the other suggests a shared responsibility for the veracity of a story. From a literary journalistic prospective, *hadathani* (حدثني) translates to 'conversed', which suggests a two-way interaction that the reporter retrieved from memory. This may indicate a filtering effect, as arguably memory and imagination are, as Raban claimed, Siamese twins that cannot be pulled apart (1989). It can also be argued from a truth versus fact viewpoint, that his transparency perhaps resembles that of Joseph Mitchell when he wrote *Old Mr. Flood.* The latter made clear that his main character is the product of his imagination, but that should not take away from the truthfulness that Mr. Flood as a symbolic figure. Such transparency creates a cir-

cle of trust with the reader, which is a literary journalistic necessity, in Anglo-America at least.

In the third account, Al Jahith wrote *haka* (حكا) ‘narrated’. While this does not provide evidence of a two-way conversation, thus ruling out our author’s involvement in the course of the story, it does indicate that the storyteller might, so to speak, be himself narrating from what he believed to be from memory.

There are times where the author remained neutral, where perhaps he found no reason to doubt or affirm the veracity of a certain anecdote; such was the case when he writes *qal* (قال) ‘said’. He was able to harness doubt to his advantage, for he did not shy away from accounts that he knew or suspected to be blatant lies. He writes in the final account *za’am* (زعم) ‘claimed’. This is not necessarily to suggest the source is not being accurate, at least not directly; rather, by writing this he is disengaging from the story, urging the reader to question and not take anything for granted. There are also times where he points fingers. He included in his *Book of Misers* an account narrated by Al Haitham Bin Adey, who was a *qass* ‘narrator’ by profession and was allegedly not trustworthy. As he was known for occasionally accrediting his writings to other trusted individuals such as And Al Malek Ibn Omair (Hajeri, 1990), Al Jahith quoted from a questionable source and made sure the reader was aware of such, he wrote:

> وانا اتهم هها الحديث لأن فيه ما لا يجوج ان يتكلم به عربر يعرف مـ اذذذ
>
> الـعرر وهو مم احاديث الهيثم
>
> I denounce this as one of Al Haitham’s accounts, for it contains a subject matter an Arab whose aware of his people’s conduct, would not bring up. (Hajeri, 1990, p. 421).

On other occasions, he questioned the authority of the anecdote narrated, yet left the decision up to the reader. Thus, he wrote in *The Book of Animals*:

و لكنها رواية احببت ان تسمعها, ولا يعجبني الاقرار بهذا الخبخ و ك ذلذ لا يعجبني الانكار له و لكن ليكن قلبك الى انكاره اميل

This is a story I wished you to read; I do not fancy validating or rejecting it, though your heart should lean towards rejection. (Haron, 1967, p. 34)

On his literary side, a large portion of that shone through what Hajeri calls *al qessah al mashhadeya* or the "single scene story" (1990, p. 91), which he defines as simple narrative that does not have a beginning or an end in which the author is merely attempting to capture one picture and one charge of emotion. From a literary journalistic prospective, it is a prerequisite to some, Tom Wolfe and Barbara Lounsberry to mention a few. In *The Book of Misers* most one-scene anecdotes revolved around one character, naturally exhibiting a miserly behavior. Al Jahith describes Al Aswari as he eats:

وكان اذا أكل ذذذ عقلهه و جحظت عينه و سكر و سدر وانبهور و تربد وجهه وضغبب ولم يسمع و لم يبصرر فلما رأيت ما يعتريه وما يعتري الطعام منهه صرر لا آذن له الا ونحن نأكل التمر و الجلجِ والباقلي .و لمفيججني قط وأنا اكل تمرا الا استفه سفاً،وححاححسواً، وزدا به زدوا ولاوجدج ك ثيثاً إلا تناول القصعة كجمجمة الثورث ثم يأخذ بحضنيها، ثم لا ززل ينهشها طولا وعرضا ورفعا وخفضا، حتى يأتي عليها جميعا. ولم يفل تمرم قط مم تمرم ولا رمى بنواةقطط ولا نزع قمعا ولا نفف عنه قشرا، ولا فتشه مخافة السوس والدود. ثم ما رأيته الا وكأنه طالب ثأرأ عاشش مغتلم او جا ئئ م قفور.

Whenever he ate, his mind was absent, his eyeballs bulged as if he was intoxicated, astonished. His face changed color as he grew angrier, blind and

> deaf to all but what is before him. When I saw what came of him and what came of food because of him I abstained from inviting him to meals, unless they consist of dates, nuts, or lentils, and even then, the dates are inhaled, sipped, feasted. And if they are plump, he would embrace them first, tear into them from all directions second. He never separated one from the other, discarded the core, disengaged the root, peeled the outer skin, or inspected them for warms.When it came to food he was after revenge, a lustful lover, a hungry man struck by a cold winter. (Hajeri, n.d)

Glorification of the ordinary is a concept at whose altar literary journalists like to worship. The "focus on ordinary people," as Sims included in his list of genre "characteristics" (2008), is something Al Jahith practiced many centuries ago. AHajeri writes that when it came to his misers, the former mastered psychological analysis; the type stemmed from observing subjects and documenting their natural, raw conduct, how they speak, their movements, and how they react to different situations. He argues that Al Jahith immersed himself deeply in his characters to try and interpret what makes those characters unique, especially the most trivial, spontaneous details that speak volumes of their true miserly nature. Aided by exceptional powers of observation, he painted a picture around the twitching motion of one's moustache and used that to make conclusions about someone's miserly behavior, as in the story of Abi Jafar Al Tartousi, his account of the poised Basri judge who would sit still for so many hours in the mosque that worshippers begin to worry. His encounter with a persistent fly, who would leave his nostril only to land on his eyelash, is not just a comical account, but also tucks lessons in between the lines. The above example is no different in terms of picking on the changes in someone's face and the way he behaved in the presence of food, purposefully exaggerating his ac-

tions using literary techniques like similes and metaphors. In the original text he used onomatopoeia in the form of *hassahu hasswan* ‘sipped’. Even though *hassahu hasswan* was not followed by a sound word, because the three expressions *saffan*, *hasswan*, and *zadwan* were rhythmic, the sound effect of the word *hasswan* continued to enhance the overall expression of gluttony.

3.4 Conclusion

I argue that Al Jahith is amongst the pioneers of the Arabic form for several reasons. First, while he was not the first to collect anecdotes about misers, he was the first to add a creative, literary, and equally comical flare to them. Being part of Al Mu’tazelah, he did not take anything for granted and was diligent in getting the facts straight, transparent with the reader, and current in his issues, all traits identified by Anglo-American scholars (Kevin Kerran and Ben Yagoda to mention a few) as part of what defines literary journalism. He used subtle humor effectively on several fronts, first as a literary technique that adds a certain flavor to what might appear as a redundant subject, thus making his reporting more reader friendly, and second, as a means of commenting on how, as Hussain claims, Abbasid society veered away from its natural course, thus becoming a target for ridicule (A. A. H. M. Hussain, 1988). The one point of disagreement here is that Hussain seems to suggest Al Jahith was humorous merely to shed a light on problems, rather than attempting to make a difference. This chapter supports the notion of him being a reformist. If we assume we function according to two modes, the serious and humorous, the first is naturally logical and consistent, while the other feeds off ambiguity and contradiction. Micheal Mulkey writes that when communication occurs and the serious mode is inadequate at capturing the multiplicity of realities created by different perceptions, that is when humor is best introduced (Martin, 2007). Al Jahith’s environment was plagued with

contradictions and ambiguity, and when he ridiculed them, he was not just highlighting but neutralizing them. Whether his attempts were successful or not is a different question, one best answered in future research.

Finally, Al Jahith's reporting was bold and did not shy away from bringing the reader inside his subject's head. This is something Tom Wolfe writes about centuries later as part of what he termed the "new" journalism. He says the kind of reporting new journalism requires is one that does not subscribe to the concept of the "literary gentleman with a seat in the grandstand" (1973, p. 58). The latter is one too shy and too much of a gentleman to ask the hard questions and do the type of reporting that enables the reader to feel as if he not only understands the character's point of view but can also feel it. Al Jahith did not hesitate to explore what it means to be miserly; his writing abandoned the safety of the grandstand and plunged into the psyche of the subjects. He was indeed a new journalist.

Chapter 4: 18th–19th Century Arabic Literary Journalism: Travel Writing, Epistolary Journalism, Al-Maqamah, and the Sketch

4.1 Introduction

This chapter makes a substantial jump chronologically that may seem counter-intuitive when one is trying to investigate the "history" of Arabic literary journalism. Indeed, there might be plenty of traces that can be explored from the Middle Ages until the late 17th century; however, an integral part of the study is concerned with journalism, and that in its contemporary meaning did not exist in the region before the printing press was brought to Egypt by the French in 1798[14] (Tarraze, 1913).

Furthermore, another essential element here is exploring parallels between West and East. Not that there was no means of contact, but the nature of Western influence in the East changed drastically with *Al Nahdah*[15]'Renaissance', which again blossomed in the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus, it would be worth exploring whether Egyptian writers were directly influenced by Western ones or if there are any measurably significant similarities between Western and Arabic journalists of approximately the same period.

4.2 The Heart of 18th–19th Century Arabic Literary Journalism: Travel Writing

Embarking on a voyage to seek knowledge in one form or another is a familiar concept in the history of the Arab Islamic region. At a time when *al-qassas*/narration and heresy were not mutually exclusive, one of the few Hadith nar-

[14] It is worth noting here this was not the *first* printing medium in the Arab/Islamic world. Other printing presses had been established in Lebanon and Istanbul. However, the significance of this point in history is in the encounter between West and East and how that factored into the rise of *Al Nahdah* as well as the development of Arabic literary journalism.

[15] A wide-scale movement of revival in the Arab world in which re-examination of the cultural heritage written in the classical period was trending among the writers and thinkers of the period (R. Allen, 1992, p. 19).

rators Imam Ali Ibn Abi Taleb entrusted was Al Hassan Al Basri, because he was known to be so vigilant in his process of collecting them that he would travel great distance to verify one narration.

Ṭalab al 'Ilm 'the quest for knowledge' is not only encouraged but an obligation featured in many versus of the Quran and Hadith. It is also worth noting the way followers of the religion are encouraged to seek such. Notice that the word *'ilm* 'knowledge' is preceded by *ṭalab* 'to ask'. The language of every verse or Hadith emphasizes in one way or another the pursuit, the journey itself. Maybe because it is a matter of fact that the journey to knowledge is one of hardship and uncertainty, especially in the Middle Ages when travelers wandered for such long periods of time that sometimes they met their death before reaching their destination. Thus, what is more important is to have "intent" and attempt to fulfil it. This is clearer in the narration of Anas Ibn Malik, who heard Prophet Mohammed say, "**Seeking** knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim" (Yazeed & Qazwini, 2007, p. 222). In another narration Abu Hurairah said, "The Prophet said whoever **follows a path** in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise" (Yazeed & Qazwini, 2007, p. 222); the reference to "path" here could be both literal and metaphorical, but either way it serves the purpose of highlighting the process rather than the end result. Thus, the history of the region is abundant in accounts of poets, scholars, Hadith enthusiasts, and even regular people travelling afar for *Hajj* or to document Hadith.

The motivation behind travel narratives changed little from the time of the Prophet to the Middle Ages to the period we are investigating; it is always *ṭalab al 'ilm*. Nonetheless, there is a key element missing from the narrative of medieval travelers like Ibn Battuta or Ibn Jubayre that makes the 18th and 19th century travel narratives of writers like Al Tahtawi and Al Muwaylihi a richer soil for investigation

here: the latter belonged to a generation that witnessed firsthand the tension resulting from the collision of East against West.

There are records of Ibn Battuta's legendary travels to various foreign societies that are "contemptuous" (Baali & Wardi, 1981, p. 5) of their customs. This might also have to do with the relative stability of the Islamic empire at the time and what that allowed in terms of scientific study was that there was "no conflict of conscious" (Baali & Wardi, 1981, p. 5). His journey or that of Ibn Jubayre was first and foremost a religious one (to pay *Hajj*), not because they were escaping a certain political situation or particularly curious about "western advances"; they were not "searching" for answers in the societies they visited. Ibn Battuta, albeit fascinated by certain aspects of life in China, was reluctant to immerse himself in it. He would observe their eating habits and admire their silk craftsmanship, yet would often join large groups of pilgrims or work for a Muslim merchant, and when he arrived in China he was hosted by a Muslim judge.

Perhaps Ibn Battuta's voyages are better filed under "travelogue," which according to John Russell differs from "travel literature" in one key aspect: "a searching quality" (2000, p. 2). He argues that the authors of travelogues have found and are sharing the knowledge of what they found. On the other hand, great travel books turn into pilgrimages charting the processes of discovery. The crux of the stories in these books rests on what impeded their authors and led them into side paths (2000, p. 2). Unlike Ibn Battuta, Rafa'ah Al Tahtawi for example did not write *Takhlis Al Ibriz Fi Talkhis Bariz* as a travelogue. As this chapter will further illustrate, Al Tahtawi's travel writing was not intentional. He journeyed for a purpose and found himself following another. His journey was one of discovery, not description.

At the end of a long period when the Islamic empire was nearing its end and the sole focus was not on advancing the sciences but countering the multiple threats facing it, and after the collapse of the empire into regional dynasties, several of them came under attack from European crusaders and Asian Tatars up to the Napoleon invasion of Egypt (Shihibi, 2009) and the technological advances of the French expedition being introduced to the Arabs thereby, this not only impacted the region economically but also intellectually. The campaign left no rock unturned in its search to mold minds into believing they had the people's best interests at heart, including manipulation of the written word via newspapers and pamphlets. The first paper Napoleon initiated was *Le Courrier de l'Égypte* (1798) in French and Arabic, in which members of the campaign wrote a variety of articles on many subjects. In one particular issue a French poet wrote a highly symbolic account describing the struggle among Western powers to take control of Egypt,

في ارض غير ارضه

وفي غيبيه استولي النمر الم غتصغ علي السلطة

و فرض حكمه اباهرلاه

ومن بين الحيوانات جميعها: الثعلب الماكر والذ ئذ لاشررر

هما اللذان تبعاه ف قة

كان كل شيد قد ضاع

حتحد الامل

ةججفوجظهه الاسد ممة ثانية

اسسع افراد الشعب والتفوف ممحووه وررين منه العون

In a land other than his

In (his) absence the vicious tiger seized control

Imposed his terrorizing reign

The devious fox and ferocious wolf

were amongst the animals, the only ones that followed

All was lost

Even hope

out of the blue, the lion emerges once more

And all the peoples gather around, pleading his aid. (Abdoh, 1949)

The lion, king of the jungle, refers to the French, while the tiger running second is the British. The fox might be Turkey, and Madkour argues that the wolf refers to Russia (Madkor, 2002). The first two lines are an assertion of territory, claiming the tiger was intruding on the lion's turf, while the poem concludes with the latter reappearing as the hero that the people were waiting for. The same tone was a running thread in what Madkor calls "the pamphlets war" (Madkor, 2002). The French army would send one after the other, trying to win the masses over only to be met with more resistance. All of them start with the basmalah, the Islamic supplication, in an attempt to tap into people's religious beliefs and make them accept the invader's claims that they too are "faithful Muslims" (Madkor, 2002). He resorted again to religious discourse during his siege of Acre in 1799 in his statement that "Through the grace of God I am here, and God has made the dissemination of justice my purpose" (Madkor, 2002).

4.3 Mohammed Ali and the Aftermath of the French Evacuation

The campaign ended but its influence remained, and curiosity among learned Egyptians regarding the concepts of democracy and free speech was mounting. Mohammed Ali came to power seeking to build a state that would rival those of Europe. He wanted to modernize Egypt by sending missions to Europe, particularly France, Italy, and England. Major literary powerhouses were sent off to Europe to help this aim, Hasan Ibn Muhammed Al-Attar and later his student Rifa'a Al Tahtawi, who arguably was the "first Arab to venture to Europe and write about his experience" (Shihibi, 2009). Many French citizens chose to stay in Egypt and some worked as translators for *Al Waqa'i' Al Masrya 'Egyptian Affairs'* a newspaper started by Mohammed Ali in 1828.

Originally an imam 'leader' of worship but ending as a student, Rifa'a Al Tahtawi took advantage of his visit to learn French. He read works by Voltaire, Racine, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. He made plenty of notes on French lifestyle and customs and held conversations with French orientalists, which he published in book form in 1834. *Takhlis Al Ibriz Fi Talkhis Bariz* is written in plain prose, as its primarily goal was to educate the Egyptian masses on French culture. It comprises six essays, the first two dealing with the journey to France, the third a description of the French way of life, the fourth giving details on the delegation in which Al Tahtawi participated, the fifth a summary of political happenings in France after the Revolution, and the sixth giving more details on technical subjects that were mentioned in the introduction. *Takhlis Al Ibriz* is among a number of works written during the 19th century commenting on societies both Western and Oriental within both fictional and factual frameworks. Other works that fall into this category include *'Alam El-Deen* by Ali Mubarak and *Fatra Min Al Zaman* by Mohammed Al-Muwaylihi.

He returned to Egypt and started *Madrasat Al Alsun* 'The School of Languages' in 1835 with the end of graduating a generation of enlightened translators to serve as link between Arabic and European literature, translating more than 2000 books and pamphlets into Arabic for publication by an official printing press. He then initiated *Qalam Al Tarjamah 'The Translation Pen'* in 1841, and was appointed head of *Al Waqa'i,* where he posted excerpts from classical works of Arabic literature and news from around the world, which was feasible considering the abundance of translators (Madkor, 2002). He had a passion for *saj'* and other rhyming prose, on which Madkor comments "when Al Tahtawi took charge of *Al Waqa'i'* he gave literature its place in the daily newspaper" (Madkor, 2002). The latter also argues that at the time the relationship between literature and journalism was intertwined to the point of journalism being viewed as an extension of literature. Following was a period of recession that lasted from 1848–1863, but then during the reign of Khedive Ismail (1863) *Al Waqa'i'* was given more resources and became a regular publication appearing in separate Arabic and Turkish issues. The title "journalist" was a synonym for a "man of letters," especially after the Khedive selected Abdullah Abu Al Saa'od to start *Wadi Al Neel 'Valley of the Nile'* as a popular scientific and political weekly in which multiple pages taken out of classical works of literature and history appeared (Madkor, 2002). Ibrahim Al Muwilihy and Othman Jalal started the literarily oriented periodical *Nuzhat Al Afkar 'Wandering Thoughts',* and Ali Pasha Mubarak launched *Rawdat Al Madares* in 1870 and appointed Al Tahtawi as editor-in-chief. It is not clear whether it was a magazine or a newspaper, but it specialized in the sciences and literature and regularly included excerpts from various classical sources (Sawi, 1985). Jamal Al Deen Al Afghani was welcomed by Khedive Ismail in 1871. In 1880 Mohammed Abdul assumed editorial control of *Al Waqa'i* and

wrote the main feature article. He started a section dedicated to social criticism characterized by boldness and directness (Sawi, 1985).

When Khedive Tawfiq took the throne, there was a plethora of publications calling for freedom of expression, which was a source of concern for his administration, prompting the exile of Jamal Al Deen Al Afghani. This proved of little effect in silencing dissent; to the contrary, periodicals became stronger, albeit their content was less frank and more on the "literary" side (Mute'e, 1981). Perhaps this inclination was further encouraged by the Press Law of 1881 regulating how newspapers were published and giving government greater control over them, which was the decision that Abbas Mahmoud Al Aqad described as having "killed freedom of journalism in Egypt" (Rafi'e, 1966). However, the question that is proposed here and will be dwelled upon later is: Did it?

4.4 Back to Basics: the Essay Periodical Versus Letters of Travel Writers

This research maintains that the seed of modern Arabic literary journalism blossomed in the 19th century. However, when discussing Anglo-American literary journalism, we really must start from the late 17th century, if only because the foundation of periodical writing which played a major role in the development of the form flourished then. According to Allen, 18th century English writers brought to perfection three minor forms of writing: The ballad opera, the letter, and the periodical essay (R. J. Allen, 1970). In this context, we are only interested in the last two. Allen enlists two currents visible in the development of the essay in the 17th century: conveying a moment of personal reflection on whatever subject occurred to the author, and pursuing general human truth and seeking the enlightenment of the reader (1970).

The word *essay* in its contemporary meaning was introduced to the Western world by Montaigne in France in 1580 and by Francis Bacon in Britain in 1597, and by the beginning of the 18th century, when the successful playwright Richard Steele and his longtime friend Addison decided to try their hand at it, was still relatively new. Periodicals flourished between 1690 and 1770, and Addison and Steele played a major role in this. They started *The Tatler* in (1709–1711) and later *The Spectator* (1711–1712 and 1714), both writing under pseudonyms. Both periodicals were journalistic as they had the format and interest of a newspaper and came out at regular intervals. *The Tatler* supplied news of the town and met the everyday concern of people for the realities of manners (R. J. Allen, 1970), as its motto was, "All the doings of mankind shall form the motley subject of my page."

On the other hand, it is arguable that essay writing was practiced in Arabic/Islamic history before Bacon ever did in the form of letters and *Maqamat*/Assemblies (Sharaf, 2000). The former varied in purpose from religious and congratulatory to condolatory. Regardless of their purpose, letters were written using the finest of literary techniques. Al Jahith wrote a plethora of these that had the format, interest, and appeal of an essay, as did Shehab Al Deen Al Halabi, Al Ghazali, Al Qalqashandi, and Salah El-Deen Al Safadi (Nahal, 2013).

Abd Al Aziz Ateeq defines a letter as a "piece of artistic prose short or long depending on the author, it incorporates poetry versed by the author himself or another. It is written in eloquent words and graceful style and can also be humorous" (1976). In the 18th and19th centuries, epistolary journalism was practiced by travel writers such as Al Tahtawi and Mohammed Al Muwaylihi when in France. The latter wrote many letters that were published as articles before eventually collecting them in a book.

Epistolary journalism practiced by Egyptian travel writers demonstrates the transformation of letters from information-based to literary texts through use of techniques usually associated with fiction. Norman Sims notes that travel writing and memoirs, forms that were particularly popular in the 19th century, are "forms that traditionally allow writers more voice. Standard reporting hides the voice of the writer, but literary journalism gives that voice an opportunity to enter the story" (1995, p. 3). Thus, it is safe to conclude that not unlike the British, one form of Arabic literary journalistic production at the time manifested itself through the letters of travel writers that had the interest of essay periodicals.

4.5 Maqamah, the Sketch, and Character Types

To explore 18th–19th century Arabic literary journalism, talking about *Maqamah* 'Assembly' is inescapable, especially that revived by Mohammed Al Muwaylihi. In doing so one needs to explore it from two different angles. In keeping with the theme of *Al Nahdah, Fatra Min Al Zaman* will be discussed in terms of old and new, the old being the history of this art from, inherently Arabic, and the new from an Anglo-American point of view.

A literary form that combines narrative prose and poetry, its name *Maqamah* 'Assembly' had gradually developed in meaning from, as Roger Allen argues, a "tribal assembly to a gathering at which sermonettes were delivered to people of great importance and to the more general sense of 'lecture'" (1992). In the past the word described a form that combines the literary with the social. According to Allen, on the literary level the genre presented from the outset a delight in the manipulation of words for its own sake, and this tendency was fostered and stimulated by the use

of *saj'*.[16] The form owes its stylistic and narrative properties to two classical figures: Badi' Al-Zaman Al-Hamadhani (969–1008) and Abu Muhammed Al Hariri (1054–1122). Through his character, Isa Ibn Hisham, Al Hamadhani, according to Allen, catered to the narrative element of his art while Al Hariri spent much time perfecting the language in each of his fifty *Maqamat* 'Assemblies'. Unfortunately, as influential as he was, Allen argues his ability to practice verbal jugglery did not lead to an expansion of the narrative possibilities of the genre.

Among those who wrote variations of the *Maqamah* during *Al Nahdah* were Nasif Al Yazji (1800–1871) and Ahmed Faris Al-Shedyaq (1804–1887). Both being Christian, they had the common intent of reviving classical Arabic in all its glory. However, like Al Hariri and Al Hamadhani, Al Yazji wrote *Majma' Al Bahrayn*, echoing Al Hariri by using rare words and grammatically complicated phrases. There was little narrative content, as the work was merely used as vehicle to demonstrate the author's stylistic muscle (R. Allen, 1992). At this time Al Shedyaq, who had travelled widely, drew upon a wide experience both literary and cultural. He escaped Lebanon after his brother was hounded to death by the Maronite patriarch for changing his faith, and much of his work reflects his hatred of the clergy (R. Allen, 1992). He published *Al Saq Ala-Al-Saq Fima Huwa Al-Faryaq* (الساسد علىساساسد فيما هوق الاارياق) in 1855, and like his predecessor he wrote in the introduction that his aim was to "reveal peculiarities and rarities of language" and to "show the laudable and blameworthy qualities of women" (Al-Shidyaq, 1855).

Allen points out that the mere use of "*Al-Faryaq*" in the title, as well as the attacks on the clergy, is autobiographical. The book also contains passages describ-

[16] Allen defines it as "rhyming prose," a kind of discourse made up of a series of normally short phrases ending with the same rhyme that traced its origins in the Arabic literary tradition back to the seers of the pre-Islamic period and most notably to the text of the Quran" (1992, p. 15).

ing the medical profession and a comparison between eastern and western societies. It covers visits to London, Paris, and Cambridge as Faryaq and his wife compare the conditions of women in the east and the west. In addition to paying more care to the narrative, Al Shedyq says:

> For an author, rhyming prose is like walking on a wooden leg … I think it takes more trouble to write rhyming prose than poetry … anyone who wants to hear a discussion made up entirely of rhyming prose can read Al-Hariri's Maqamat or the *Nawabigh* of Al- Zamakhshari. (Al-Shidyaq, 1855)

Therefore, Al Shedyaq emerges as a carrier of Al-Hamadhani tradition; however, unlike Al Yazji, there is more of a narrative interest folded in between the fancy phrases (R. Allen, 1992).

It was not until Mohammed Al Muwaylihi that the *Maqamah* 'Assembly' fully catered to the narrative. Allen claims that "by using certain aspects of the form...as means of treating the social and cultural problems of the day and of expressing the author's own views on what he saw during his travels" (R. Allen, 1992). He concludes that *Hadith Isa Ibn Hisham* gave way to other forms of expression, such fiction readily accessible to the public, and since journalism and fiction were intertwined and shared the same predecessors, it is safe to say that Al Muwaylihi's *Hadith Isa Ibn Hisham* equally contributed to the development of literary journalism.

Mohammed began to publish in November 1898 under the title *Fatra Min al-Zaman 'A Period of Time'* the articles that he was later to transform into the book *Hadith Isa Ibn Hisham*, which appeared each week on the front page of the *Misbah Al Sharq* newspaper (R. Allen, 1992). He continued to publish these articles until

June 1900, when he went to England to cover the state visit of the Khedive to the homeland of Queen Victoria. Muhammed sent back articles describing his visit to London and then went to Paris to visit the Great Exhibition, which he described for the readers of the newspaper in a series of episodes entitled "Paris."

In using Isa Ibn Hisham as the name of one of the characters in his series of articles Al Muwaylihi was consciously reminding his readers of Maqamat Badi' Al Zaman Al Hamadhani, in whose writings a character of this name appears as narrator. Al Muwaylihi describes Egyptian society in detail. To do so he uses a literary device where he depicts one character who is eager to see all aspects of contemporary Egyptian life and a second who is willing to take him on a tour of Cairene society (R. Allen, 1992). Al Shihibi compares this device to that of Montesquieu in his *Persian Letters* (1689–1755), where a Persian nobleman and his assistant are transplanted into the heart of French culture and assume the role of spectators (Shihibi, 2009).

Fatra Min Al Zaman has been published in ten editions. It has been regarded by many critics as the beginning of modern Arabic literature (R. Allen, 1992). However, the author himself regarded the work as journalism, for he writes in the preface to the third edition that he had to make many changes to the text, including omissions and additions, to suite the purpose of the book, as the original content had an ephemeral quality. This point has been almost forgotten by critics; indeed, Allen writes that the purpose as well as the milieu in which the articles appeared have been overlooked (R. Allen, 1992) in favor of the narrative style, which is interesting considering that it is neither a *Maqamah* 'Assembly' nor a short story.

Unlike Al Shedyaq, his motivation for writing was not lexical; he harnessed his style to his reformist endeavors. The link between *Fatra Min Al Zaman* and *Maqamat Al Hamadhani* is twofold—the name of Isa Ibn Hisham, and the use of *saj'* (only in certain descriptive passages that paved the way for the actual story). Roger Allen took note of the inadequacy of mainly focusing on the stylistic merit of *Fatra Min Al Zaman* and gave detailed accounts of the conditions that surrounded Al Muwaylihi during the writing of his episodes. For the use of narrative techniques that paved the way for modern Arabic literature, his journalistic interest in reporting and commenting on the status quo of Cairene society and the fact that episodes of *Fatra Min Al Zaman* do not quite fit the criteria of a short story, a *Maqamah*, or a standard journalistic article, this study argues for a better fit in a form of literary journalism: the *sketch*.

Norman Sims argues that the core of 19th century literary journalism was a simple widespread prose form used in newspapers called the *sketch*. Defined as a "brief vignette often about a seemingly inconsequential aspect of daily life, which allowed the writer to experiment with his writing voice and perspective, these could be factual or fictional, funny or straight, informative or descriptive" (Sims, 2008). The foremost practitioner of this art form was Mark Twain, whose sketches often contained fictionalized elements, which writers would subsequently eschew due to the rising professional standards of the job (Roiland, 2011, p. 22)

Columnists such as Finley Peter Dunne and George Ade also wrote sketches. They depicted individuals in the city of Chicago trying to find their way in the modern world. Ade started his column *Stories of the Streets and of the Town* in 1893 and Dunne a year before that gave birth to *Mr. Dooley*, a bachelor Irishman running a saloon on Ar-rchey Road (Archer Avenue) in the center of Chicago's poor Irish pop-

ulation (Dunne, 1963). Ade's fictional character types included Pink Marsh, an African American who worked in a barbershop, and Min Sargent, a woman office worker who was among the incoming wave of female urban workers, and his community portraits included workers, representatives of ethnic and religious groups, farmers, shopkeepers, and housewives (Sims, 2008). Ade pulled the names of his character types from urban slang like the "Caddy" and the "Tycoon."

Despite borrowing the name of his lead character from Al Hamadhani, and like Mr. Dooley, Isa Ibn Hisham was a character type in the sense that he did not develop as a character but was a vehicle through which the author could express his distaste for the status quo. Roger Allen seems to agree, for he writes that *Fatra Min Al Zaman* is not a story, even though it did have some of the characteristics of a work of literature like characters and a narrative thread. Nonetheless, those characters were mere symbols or "types" in the sense that they did not develop and the story lines never seem to continue as Al Muwaylihi moves from one theme to another, using his characters and the situations they get into as a vehicle for his commentary (R. Allen, 1992).

Robert Hutchinson writes that through the persona of Mr. Dooley Dunne saw "a perfect opportunity to speak out against the corruption apparent at all levels of Chicago life during the 1890s" (Dunne, 1963). Unlike the latter, Isa Ibn Hisham did not speak in dialect, nor did any of the other characters. However, Al Muwaylihi was equally successful in capturing the essence of Egyptian society at the time, and he did so with great light-heartedness within the eloquent phrasing. When he wanted to comment on the corruption of the police force in the second chapter, he constructed a scene revolving around the Pasha, an unassuming stranger coming from a different era. Ibn Hisham, the local commentator explaining the ways of this modern society

to the Pasha, and a donkey man make a commotion to draw the attention of a policeman nearby, whom Al Muwaylihi depicted satirically preoccupied with extorting fruit sellers and playing with a baby in the street rather than doing his job. *Fatra Min Al Zaman* portrayed other character types, like the Judge, Lawyer, Inspector, and Doctor, and like Pink Marsh and the "Roomer," each type embodied a distinct symbolic world within society.

Others who wrote sketches containing "types" were Yaqub Sanu' and Abdullah Al Nadeem. The first issue of *Abu Naddara Zarqa,* dated 7th August 1878, depicted a scene with several symbolic characters, such as Sheik Al Hara/ شيخ الحارة/Head of the Clan as Khedive Ismael, *Abu Naddara* 'the Man with Spectacles', symbolizing Sanu' and by extension the Egyptian middle class, and *Abu Al-Gulb Al-Fallah* (أبو الغلب الفلاح) 'Abu-Al-Gulb the Peasant', symbolizing the working class in Egypt. The sketch features a caricature of Sheik Al Hara on his knees begging Abu Naddara to stop publishing his newspaper, while Abu Naddara stands tall with his cane and spectacles with Abu-Gulb Al-Falah next to him (Abdou, 1953), insinuating unity among the Egyptian public. Abu-Gulb converses in rural Egyptian dialect, encouraging Abu Naddara to keep writing. The dialogue makes use of masculine rhyme and is written in both Cairene and Saidi dialect, the two most widely spoken varieties of Arabic in Egypt (Figure 1[17]).

Al Nadeem, like Ade, pulled the names of his characters from slang, like the typical peasant characters Zu'ee (زعيط) son of Mu'eet'(معيط)and M'eekah (معيكة) who speak in Saidi. Ali Mubarak also wrote sketches later collected in a book, '*Alam El-Deen/*علم الدين. The author explained that it would be more reader friendly, and

[17] Appendix, P. 193.

thus "more people would benefit from the information it provides" (A. Mubarak, 1882). He asserts that the basic purpose of the work is to pass on as much information as possible, to compare the past with the present, and to compare conditions in the orient with those in the western world, all using two contrasting fictional character.

Mubarak divided the book into chapters named *musamarat*, which in Arabic translates to "night talk." The book contains 125 sketches or *musamarah*, each dealing with a different topic and varying in length, written solely in standard Arabic; one *musamarah* was on marriage, another was on the decision of ʻAlam El-Deen to travel abroad, and some were in a form of conversation between ʻAlam El-Deen and an Englishman, such as Musamarah 7, which was lengthy and presented detailed information about trains and how they function.

Both the Arabic and Anglo-American character "types" explored here had one function in common: forming a symbolic reality or a mirror in which people saw themselves and their problems. Readers had to find themselves and their inner convictions in those characters, otherwise creating the persona of Mu'eet and ridiculing him by magnifying his vanities would have been pointless. Mu'eet as Al Nadeem depicted him, vain and shallow after his Western education, had to exist in real life.

Egypt in the 18th and 19th centuries was undergoing major changes and passing over ever greater hurdles. Many successfully managed to identify with the common man like Sannu', who, according to Elisabeth Kendall, was responsible for the real birth of Egyptian journalism with both a political and a literary impact. He identified with ordinary Egyptians and expressed his political opposition through the midwifery of satirical journalism. Within his choice of writing in dialect, he was at-

tempting to capture the tone of the Egyptian national consciousness (2006). Such realism was also popular among Anglo-American 19th century literary journalists, as Christopher Wilson argues, for "in order to mirror the common life, an author had to rely on skills of observation, a knowledge of manners and customs and an adeptness at mimicking speech" (C. Wilson, 1985), and according to Sims writers such as Dunne, Twain, Ade, and Opie Read achieved all three, particularly the ability to mimic speech (2008).

It can be argued that in their efforts to mirror reality Ya'qub Sanu' and Abdullah Al Nadeem were successful Realists, while the likes of Rafa'ah Al Tahtawi, Mohammed Al Muwaylihi, and Ali Mubarak who subscribed to *Al Nahdah* in their fondness for reviving classical Arabic through elevated prose and their desire to reform were Moralists. A Moralist's character type, like Samuel Johnson's Mr. Rambler (1750–1752), "scarcely develop[s]" (Italia, 2005), as it only acts as vehicle for criticism and ultimately change.

4.6 The Spectator, the Humorist, and Sugar Coating a Bitter Pill

Using humor and storytelling to dress up facts seems to be a running thread in the literary journalistic writing of the period. In the preface to the first issue of *Abbu Naddara*, Sannu' wrote:

> *.. ولابدومومئد العقول مما فاكهة تخفف عن العقل اتعابه التي نالها مما اعمال الفكر.. فمن اجل ذلك رأينا ان ننشر ججنالا يزيل عن النفوس بؤسها. علي انه ليس الغرض منه ممرد الضضك بل معه الاشتمال علي الاكمموالمواعظ الاسنة، علي وجه لا تمل منه النفوس ولا تسآم، فهو جد لبس لباس الهزل..*
>
> The mind needs a break from the usual business of intellectualism, and for that we decided to publish this journal. To relieve

> the stress of tired souls, however, this publication aims not only to entice laughter, but also to install good values in a way that does not repel the reader. Therefore, this is seriousness dressed up as humor (Sannu', 1877/1295).

Mohammed Al Muwaylihi took a similar stand. In his preface to *Fatra Min Al Zaman*, he writes:

> ِحديث عيسى بن هَشام—وإن كان في نفسه موضوًعا على نسق التخييل و
>
> التصوير فهو حقيقة متّبرجة في ثوب خيالٍ لا أنه خيال ممبوك في قالَب حقيقة،
>
> ااا ا ذ ندلاح ةا اخلا ذ ا ا ل العصلا وا اوآلا ااا وا ذ ذ صم ماعطو ا ال نا فر
>
> مختَلف طبقاتهم مم النقائص التي يتعين اجتنابها والفضائل التي يحجب التّزامها

> Even though the narrative of Hadith Isa Ibn Hisham itself is presented in an imaginary and figurative form, it is a true picture which has been dressed up in an imaginary garb, (not)[18] a fantasy shaped in a realistic form. We have tried to use it to comment on the morals and conditions of present day people, to mention the shortcomings of various classes of people which should be avoided, and the qualities which should be maintained (R. Allen, 1992).

Ali Mubarak's intentions to mask information is even more pronounced. His choice of naming each sketch a *musamarah* conjures up a specific image and feel for an Arab reader. Derived from *samar*, which translates to "night talk," it is arguably the author's desire to set the mood for the book to read like a lighthearted conversa-

[18] Allen's translation of this particular line is "…or rather a fantasy". I have changed it to"not a fantasy" to better serve the original text.

tion desert travelers exchange around the camp fire. He says in the introduction to *'Alam El-Deen*:

> وقد رأيت النفوس كثيرا ما تميل الى القصص وملح الكلام بخلاف الفنون البحتة و العللم الممضة، فقد تعرض عنها في كثيث مم الأحيين. فحداني هها أيامنظارظيي لديوان المعارف الى عمل كتاب اضمنه كثيرا ممفوفوفئد في أسأوب حكاية لطيفة ينشط الناظظ الى مطالعتها فيجد في طريقه تلكفوفوفئد ينالها عفوف بلا عناء ححصا على تعميم الاائدة.

> Souls are often fond of storytelling, unlike pure arts and sciences which on account of their tediousness and the demands of daily life are refrained from. I was inspired during my post in Dewan Al Ma'aref to author a book with great benefit in the form of a pleasant story. In doing so, the reader grows eager to learn and the process of spreading knowledge is not so troublesome (A. B. Mubarak, 1882, p. 7).

The fictional part entailed the creation of character(s). Coupled with a comical effect, writing behind a mask is essential for a Moralist, such as Al Muwaylihi and Mubarak arguably were, because like Addison and Steele, among their motives was to be critical, which opened the door for personal attacks and censorship. Italia argues that Isaac Bickerstaff, Steele's "*eidolon*"[19] (Italia, 2005) allowed for censuring the faults of his society without exposing himself to danger or charges of hypocrisy. The device "brilliantly combines wit with morality, ironic

[19] Derived from the Greek meaning "ghost."

distance with direct appeal" (Italia, 2005). Steel argues for the same liberating effects "[t]hat might pass for humor, in *the Spectator* which would look like Arrogance in a writer who sets his name to his work. The fictitious person might contemn those who disapproved him, and extoll his own performances without giving offence" (R. J. Allen, 1970). Hutchinson writes the same about Dunne's character "because Mr. Dooley was so funny and meant only half of what he said no one, not even persons directly named, could long take offence" (Dunne, 1963). The interesting thing about humor, as Freud teaches us, is that it allows us to discuss taboos more freely. In using humor there is always a double meaning, the literal and that between the lines, and a humorist can always deny what has been implied. The use of such devices was not specific to Sanu', Al Nadeem, or Al Muwaylihi, for there were numerous periodicals that dealt with issues of the day with a humorous flair, some of which were *Al Munadamah* (1896) by Hasan Subhi, *Al Tafreej* (1896) by Mohammed Abd Al Jaleel, *Hemarat Munyeti* (1896) by Mohammed Tawfeeq, and *Al A'freet* (1897) by Aziz Fahmi.

Another device particular to Al Muwaylihi and Mubarak that is inherently literary journalistic and allows for preaching without arrogance is what Kramer and Yagoda call the "I-am-camera" school (1997) or the Spectator: the observer who is aware that the story is not about him. This applies to Isa Ibn Hisham, whose creation may have been inspired by Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), in which the author transplants a Persian nobleman and his assistant in the heart of French culture. Like the Pasha, the Persian is a curious spectator who asks a lot of questions, and so was 'Alam El-Deen. These characters do not enforce judgment, they do not lecture the reader, they converse with him. Information as well as a comical effect is transmitted by the scene-

by-scene construction, a criterion deemed necessary by Tom Wolfe for any worthwhile work of "new journalism." When Al Muwaylihi wanted to comment on the corruption in the police force, he did not approach the subject directly or from a place of authority, but immersed Isa Ibn Hisham in a situation where he was a fly on the wall, simply observing and painting a picture while letting the reader be the judge, the comedy was, unlike Al-Nadeem and Sannu's, more subtle.

Another device worth mentioning here is one particular to Sanu' and Al Nadeem which also contributes to them arguably being good examples of 19th century Realists, which is creating a voice through plain style. Sims says the transformation to vernacular prose accompanied the earliest rise of journalism in England, which was the foundation of literary journalism (2008). He argues that voice, style, and tone help define the relationship between the author and the reader, and perhaps this is why Sannu' was described as "the tongue through which Egyptians expressed their sentiment" (Abdou, 1953). In using dialect, he is not only creating voice, he is asserting that he is one with the common man. By relinquishing all complicated structures and any extra rhetorical fluff, he surrenders his position as a source of authority. Johnson writes in *The Rambler* that in order to learn from a Moralist, readers must confess their ignorance and allow those from whom they learn to be their superior (Italia, 2005). This is what led Sannu' as well as Al Nadeem not only to write in the vernacular, but to borrow foreign words and transliterate them into Arabic for comical effect, for as Realists as opposed to Moralists, they do not claim to have the answers to today's problems; they are not in constant competition with the reader. They stumble along *with* the reader in pursuit of them.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to study 18th–19th century Arabic literary journalism through the exploration of three intertwined forms: letters (especially those of travel writers), *Maqamah* 'Assemblies', and the sketch as earlier forms of essays. The focus was on Al Tahtawi's *Takhlis Al Ibriz Fi Talkhis Bariz,* Al Muwaylihi's *Fatra Min Al Zaman,* and Mubarak's *'Alam El-Deen*, as well as newspapers such as *Al Waqa'e Al Mesreyah, Mesbah Al Sharq, Abbu Naddara*, and *Al Tankeet Wa Al Tabkeet.* Although no doubt there are many more worth exploring, this section makes no claims beyond introducing further research. They were investigated and compared against western practitioners such as Steele, Addison, and Johnson from England and Twain, Dunne, and Ade from America using Anglo-American theories and characteristics of the form as a backdrop to explain and analyze the literary journalistic merits of the aforementioned works.

One thing to notice is that classifications of this period's writing fails to capture the full essence of those works, as Allen made clear in his investigation of *Fatra Min Al Zaman.* He says critics have overlooked all but the work's literary merit (R. Allen, 1992), which, granted, is essential. However, there is a journalistic aspect that deserves equal attention.

In Allen's view, the latter constitutes the start of modern Arabic literature. Ibrahim Al 'Arees, on the other hand, questions whether or not Mohammed Hasanien Hykal's *Zainab* is truly the first Arabic novel and encourages us not to overlook works such as *'Alam El-Deen* (2010), while another critic's vote goes to Khalil Al Khouri's *Wei, Ethan Lastu Be Efrangi/(* وي ... اذن لاسد

نرفاپرر) *'Wow, So I am not European'* (Fadel, October 25. 2012). On the other end of the spectrum, Jan Dayeh in an article entitled *Did Khalil Khuri Truly Pioneer the Arabic Novel?* answered this question by saying that no, he did not. Among his reasons was that the introduction as well as the end to his "novel" in context resembled the journalistic articles he wrote in his newspaper *Hadeeqat Al Akhbar 'The Garden of News'* (November 28, 2007).

The confusion is certainly understandable as works like this, both journalistic in interest and literary in style, place them in a no-man's-land classification-wise. Such attempts to mold and conform such works into a preexisting canon is unnecessary when there is a better fit that allows for the appreciation of these texts for what they are. Whether it is epistolary journalism, a *Maqamah* 'Assembly', or a sketch, it is a continuation of what Al Jahith started more than ten centuries ago, a form of literary journalistic expression.

Chapter 5: Arabic Literary Journalism in the 20th Century: Muckraking the Art of Essay Writing

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to investigate the essay as a natural progression of the 19th century sketch. It looks at the circumstances that prompted its emergence, analyzes different types of it using Chris Anderson's theory of literary essays as a backdrop, and discusses the way the Anglo-American readership differs from that in the Middle East with regards to composing characters and the overall integration of fictional elements in nonfiction. This chapter also looks at the way literary journalistic writing has evolved from the previous century by examining some common techniques: the use of humor, voice, dialect, and writing behind a mask.

This thesis focuses on Egypt as a hub of literary activity. However, in the context of this timeframe it is more fruitful to branch out to other neighboring countries and examine some of their literary journalistic production. This is a conscious decision made mainly because this century witnessed the birth of one of the key issues that united the entire region in mutual feelings of anger and despair, the Arab/Palestinian crises and by a lesser extent Pan-Arabism, a nationalist ideology that rose and fell in this timeframe. This is also an era when Egypt and Syria presented, if only for a while, a united front. Many Arab writers were either writing in Egypt or learnt at the feet of Egyptians. In this spirit, this section looks at essays written by Ghassan Kanafany and Rashad Abou Shawar from Palestine, Zakariya Tamer and Mohammed Al Maghout from Syria, Sa'eed Freeha from Lebanon, and Taha Hussain, Mahmoud Al Sa'dani, and Mustafa Ameen from Egypt. On the Anglo-American front, much of the theory utilized in this context is from Tom Wolfe's *New Journalism,* Chris Anderson's *Literary Non-Fiction: Theory, Criticism and Peda-*

gogy, John Hartsock's *A History of American Literary Journalism,* and Norman Sims' *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism.*

5.2 Politics and Arabic Literary Journalism: Necessity is the Mother of Invention

There are arguably two factors that went into the shaping of Arab literary journalists of this century. First was the continuation (if not escalation) of censorship that made it essential for opinions to be masked, and second was the desire of fiction writers to take part in political discourse.

It is arguable that Anglo-American literary journalism developed to become somewhat of a luxury, all the while being a necessity in the Arab region. Sims argues that changes in literary style often accompany periods of social stress or political struggle (2008, p. 91), and while this is not to claim there was none of that in America, journalists in the United States have the luxury of choosing between taking the standard or the literary route and the freedom to seek appropriate platforms. True, the factual trend of this century marginalized the sketch, pushing the likes of Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos after World War I to fiction (Sims, 2008, p. 59). It was no longer mainstream to have literary aspirations and simultaneously be an integral part of the news-reporting industry, yet, and unlike the Arab region, editors had a major role to play in this, not governments.

Lincoln Steffens was city editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser* from 1897 until 1902 (C. P. Wilson, Fall, 1981), where he encouraged his writers to experiment and only required them to write well and be open to learning (Mooney-Melvin, 2000). George Ade's sketches between 1890 to 1900 about life in Chicago were so detailed and well-crafted that his editor at the time, Charles H. Dennis, gave

him and illustrator John McCutcheon two vertical columns of space on the editorial page (Sims, 2008, p. 63). Dennis said it was because when his (Ade) copy went to the copy desk in the city room where "in the massacre necessary to bring everything down to volume that would fit the restricted space allotted to local news, Ade's articles suffered grievous mutilation" (Ade, 1941, p. xii). In a word, editors had reasonable autonomy over the direction of their papers. On the other hand, news production in the Arab region at the same time was controlled either by the Ottomans, press laws implemented by the Ottomans, or later a foreign occupier or the press law enacted by a foreign occupier and/or a local government (which often was appointed by a foreign occupier).

Sims argues that the modern era began with the rise of mass-circulated magazines and newspaper in the 1890s. He argues that editors had two responses to this. Some became too "fact" conscious, encouraging their reporters to write in an almost scientific fashion, while others still appreciated storytelling and encouraged theirs to be more narrative (2008, p. 58). The sketch as a standard news story did not survive the factual trend of the 20th century, and so it was pushed to the "column," thus becoming a playing field for Eugene Field, George Ade, and Finley Peter Dunne; and again with the Second World War, Sims argues, the spirit of literary journalism was not appreciated. However, with the establishment of *The New Yorker* in 1939, a venue that promised to cover contemporary news as well as being a magazine of humor, criticism, and short fiction became home for many literary journalists over the years.

Sims writes that newspapers did not pay well for features, yet *The New Yorker* gave writers more time to work, more space in print, superb editing, more money, and autonomy. In return the result was some of the best writing in America (Sims,

2008, p. 169). The magazine was an opportunity for the likes of Lillian Ross, A. J. Liebling, and Joseph Mitchell to pursue their 'literary' endeavors in nonfiction.

In the Arab region, 19th century chronicles of travel writers, epistolary journalism, and sketches found refuge in columns/newspapers. Starting a news daily or weekly was reasonably feasible. Such writing was not necessarily pushed to the side in the century that followed, but as the region changed, restrictions on journalists became more pronounced. In 1881, a Publication Act was issued that gave authorities more power over the written word. The British Consul General at the time, Lord Cromer, did not enforce it, and journalism in Egypt prospered during the period 1883 until 1907. Publications multiplied so that by 1903 there were 176 newspapers, 133 of which were published in Cairo (R. M. F. Nejm, 2010, p. 10). As the years went by, criticizing the government and the British became the norm, so that the decision was finally made to invoke the publication act again, putting an immediate and permanent halt to major establishments like the *Al Lewaa'*, *Al Mu'ayad*, and *Al Jaredah* newspapers.

Despite his popularity as an advocate for Pan-Arabism, the late Egyptian president Jamal Abd El-Nasser ordered the imprisonment of many journalists. Salah Eisa, an Egyptian columnist at *Al Hurreyah (The Freedom)* weekly in Lebanon was arrested and tortured for 35 days in 1966 following a series of articles titled Al Thawra Bayn Al Maseer Wa Al Masseer (الثورة بين المسيد والصمير) 'The Uprising between Now and the Future' (Muneer, 2005, pp. 31-35). Jamal Al Ghitani was arrested the same year on account of his communist inclinations, which he often expressed in short nonfiction published in *Al Adaab (The Arts)* magazine. Mahmoud Ameen Al 'Alam was writing a column alongside Ehsan Abd Al Qudous in *Rose El Yousef* entitled Hawel An Tafham 'Try to Understand' in 1954; he also was arrested and tor-

tured in 1959 (Muneer, 2005, p. 273). *Akher Sa'aah* 'The Last Hour' was suspended in 1938 and its owner Mustafa Ameen sentenced to six months in prison for strongly criticizing Crown Prince Mohammed Ali of Egypt (H. Jaber, 2009, p. 74).

It was not until February 9, 1974, that Nasser's successor President Anwar Al Sadat decided to cancel press censorship except for matters relating to the military. Some imprisoned journalists like Mustafa Ameen[20] were pardoned and released, while others returned from exile, like Mustafa's brother Ali. It was then that editors resumed reasonable control and became the deciders of what was printed in their papers, yet even then, the government was constantly interfering. For instance, Ameen went back to *Akhbar El Youm*, a newspaper he and his brother started the same year, that was rapidly becoming oppositional. Exasperated by the constant criticism, in 1976 the President changed the entire editorial board, then once again ordered a forty days' halt to Mustafa's weekly column Al Mawqef Al Sayasi 'A Political Stance' (Al Sadat Wa Akhbar El Youm, 2014).

The oldest established newspaper in the region, *Al Ahram* (1876), set out to be scientific, historical, and literary. As soon as it became involved in politics, punishment ensued. On August 24, 1922, an article was published after the exile of Sa'd Zaghlul attacking Britain. The newspaper received a three-day suspension, and upon its return, having learnt their lesson, the editors made it clear to their writers that *Al Ahram* catered to their "literary side" (Madkor, 2002, p. 190) more than anything else. From then on it stayed politically neutral, at least until the 1952 revolution.

[20] A journalist and columnist. He is considered with his twin brother Ali the father of modern Arabic journalism.

Rose El Yousef (1925), started by Fatema Al Yousef, was a popular satirical magazine that honed many talents over the years, but it did not escape frequent notices and interruptions from the government, one of which from 1928 read:

حيث ان مجلة "روز الـ ويسد" مامالت تسن ش حافبجالقول ل ومنكر الاقا صيص،

والامعان بالـ كذذ والاخلاتق سنة مزرية فـرشبـ الصحافة، مفسدة للأخلاق

والآدبـب فقف قررنا: ١. ننذر روزاو يـسو ٢. على مملة روز الـ ويسد ان

تنشر هها لاقفار في صدر اول عدد يصدر منها.٣. على محافظهالعاصمة تنفيذ

هها لاقفار.

> As Rose El Yousef maintains its policy of obscenity, fabrication, and insistence on falsification and the corruption of morals, which constitute a crime against the honor of journalism, we have decided the following: first to warn the magazine, second that *Rose Al Yousef* must print this notice on the front page of its upcoming issue, and third that the responsibility for implementing this decree falls on the governor of the capital. (H. Jaber, 2009, p. 110).

Madkor claims literature was the sole solace for journalists in times of political turmoil (2002, p. 185), yet it is unclear what he meant by this was reporting in the guise of fiction, or, as in the case of *Al Ahram* after its forced pause; actual fiction.

This thesis favors the former, for journalists dressed up facts so deeply to the point of composing characters, scenes, and plots to avoid trouble. However, that required a great deal of talent, and thus was not always successful. The columnists that

carried out this type of writing with ease were accomplished at fiction first, Ghassan Kanafany, Taha Hussain, Mohammed Hasanien Haykal, and Zakariyah Tamer, to mention a few. Also, for an Arab writer at the time, being devoted to fiction was not an option. Between Britain declaring war on the Ottoman empire in 1914, the Sykes-Picot Agreement dividing the region into Western controlled colonies, thus breaking the promise Britain made to the Arabs,[21] the Orabi revolt of 1919 in Egypt, and then the Palestinian/Zionist struggle, seldom was a writer solely committed to literature. Ibrahim Al Mazeny, Mohammed Hassanien Haikal, Ahmed Shawqi, Abbas Mahmoud Al Al Aqqad, and Taha Hussain were writing in newspapers besides authoring books, perhaps more so of the former than the latter, so that Hussain wrote at one point in salute of a new literary publication ironically titled *Al Seyasah 'Politics'* saying, "I might be happier about Al Seyasah's catering for literature more than most for I was alone, writing about it while everyone else was preoccupied with politics" (R. M. F. Nejm, 2010, p. 44). Even when newspapers made a clear stance to stay on the side lines, such as *Al Ahram*, whose mission statement read:

لا علاقة لها بالمسائل البوليتيقية

"It will take no part in political matters"

(as cited in Madkor, 2002, p. 270),

They eventually did. Additionally, *Al Hilal*, a publication launched more than one hundred years ago to be " a scientific, historic and literary magazine" (Madkor, 2002, p. 270), also became involved in controversial matters.

[21] The Great Arab Revolt took place in June 1915, led by the Hashemite family, guardians of Hijaz against the Ottoman Empire based on the promise made by British officials of a unified Arab state.

So how did these circumstances help shape the writing of this period? What did essay and column writing during this time look like, and how did writers balance the need for engagement in politics against the constant threats of confiscation and in many cases incarceration?

5.3 A Hundred and One Ways of Telling a Story: The Essay Under the Microscope

A columnist cannot write an essay[22] without leaving a trace, a personal touch, what literary journalism enthusiasts like to call voice. Addison talks about this, arguing:

> When writing an essay it is sufficient that I have several thoughts on a subject, without troubling myself to range them in such order, that they may seem to grow out of one another, and be disposed under the proper Heads (as cited in Anderson, 1989, p. 168).

Similarly, Katharine Gerould writes:

> The basis of the essay is meditation, and it must in a measure admit the reader to the meditative process. An essay, to some extent, thinks aloud: though not in (a) loose and pointless way … the author must have made up his mind, but the essay should show how and why he made up his mind as he did (December, 1935, p. 412).

Based on such pronouncements, one can conclude that the essay is inherently subjective, aims to establish a relationship with the reader, and according to Gerould is also "persuasive" (p. 410). Although there is a multitude of essay types, Anderson

[22] While an article today is characteristically different than an essay, in this time frame such differences were not established; a column could be written to persuade or to demonstrate, and it could be a long piece of writing or a short one. Therefore, the two terms (article/essay) are used here interchangeably.

claims essayists abstain from making rigorous classifications as that contradicts the basic view of the essay being a free play of thought and feeling (1989, pp. 165-166). Some did make general distinctions based on style, like Smith, who declared "Bacon is the greatest of the serious and stately essayists—Montaigne the greatest of the garrulous and communicative" (1913, p. 40), and Aldous Huxley, who divided essay writers into the personal, the objective, and those who "do their work in the world of high abstractions" (1959, pp. v-vi). There are classifications based on topic, or as Epstein asserts, "there are literary essays, political essays, philosophical essays and historical essays". (Epstein, June 1984)

There is also the narrative essay, which Chris Anderson says has two types, those that are entirely a story, and others that contain elements of a narrative. Essays like Orwell's "Marrakesh "or Virginia Woolf's "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" are narrative, but they are not "stories." There might be "stories" of sorts in the essay but in itself is not one, as in "Marrakesh" Orwell is describing the city through his own eyes by painting several pictures using a myriad of literary techniques. So did Woolf in her perceptions of war. Anderson argues that "Thoughts on Peace" is in fact a story in the sense that the body of it is Woolf's "response to the situation represented by the bombing, her movement from agitation to analysis to uneasy peace at the end, having offered a solution to war" (1989, p. 184). However, the essay is divided; one cannot tell which part belongs to the "story" and which is merely the author talking. On the other hand, "The Death of the Moth" is clearly a story as every line services the central theme and feeds Woolf's aim of portraying the triumph of death over life. Similarly, "Shooting an Elephant" is a story as there are no passages in the essay where the author wanders off the main thread; the piece works homogenously in service of the central message, Orwell's take on imperialism.

When it comes to Arabic essays, and keeping in mind the overarching theme of literary journalism, Anderson as well as Bin Saleem's (2008) categorization will be used as a backdrop in the analytical process. The latter argues there are five distinctive yet sometimes intertwining pathways at an essayist's disposal, the literary, which is to dress up facts in the garb of a story; the rhetorical, where the language is refined and the author is keen on working in the world of abstractions; the critical or discursive, which corresponds to the formal essay where the author presents his thesis in a plain style moving from one point to another without personal involvement; the symbolic pathway; and finally the satirical.

5.3.1 Essays Dressed as Stories: the Autobiographical, and the Allegorical

There are two types of essays that this chapter aims to explore: essays dressed up in the form of a story, and those espousing elements of a narrative. The former is also divided into two, autobiographical and allegorical/symbolic essays. The autobiographical technique is used frequently, but not always successfully. Tom Wolfe explains how he measures the effectiveness of the approach with regards to new journalism:

> Any time a non-fiction writer uses an autobiographical
> approach, he is turning himself into a character in the story.
> This has a better chance of working if the writer was in fact
> a leading character. If not, the technique often fails (1973, p. 212).

Wolfe explains if the technique succeeds, the reader should feel as if he/she is in the midst of the experience, not just reading about it. Many Arab essayists took the autobiographical route, but few of them emerged triumphant. More often than not,

those that wrote compelling autobiographical narratives were also known for their fiction, and were for the most part hailing from the Levant or Egypt where the literary scene was (at the time) thriving.

Mustafa Ameen in *Sana Oula Sejn 'First Year of Prison'* is a glorious example of where writing about one's self can transcend the to writing about the human condition. In a letter addressed to his daughter, he describes in vivid detail his first days in the secret service prison where he was tortured in several ways, among which was deprivation of food and drink:

الجوع ومدته ثلاثة أيام محتملة. لكن العطش فهو شيء آخر. ذلك الشيطان البطاح. كنت

أسير في زنزانتي كالمجنون. الحرارة في تموز مؤلمة. لساني جاف، حلقي جاف. أنا عطشان

جداً حتى أني أحياناً أمد لساني على أرض الحائط بحثاً عن نقطة ماء تركها البواب وهو يغسل البلاط.

> Going hungry for three days straight is tolerable, but the agony of thirst is like being lashed. July's heat is painful; I pant around my cell in agony. My tongue is dry, my throat is dry. I am so thirsty I sometimes spread my tongue on the floor, licking its dry surface in hope of finding a drop of water the janitor had accidently left behind (M. Ameen, 1991, p. 13).

This essay takes on the traditional chronological arc of a story through rising action or build-up (the mild discomfort of not having a drink, growing more painful by the day), climax (the urgency in the narrative and his vivid description of going to extreme measures for a drop of water), then falling action:

وبانا ذا و رود الوقنسسفساساترنح، وتأيتاتتابلزززنة يفتحفيي هدوء.

وريأتتيدا تمتدفيي ظلام الزززنة تحلولكبب ماء مملج. فزعتتاتتروصنني

جننت. بأتتتجئ شبحا شلا يمكن ان يكو ن مءماء. مءنههه ربل.. بتملمامكالسراب

الذي ذير ونه في صار ا ا. ر مدت ت ييي ولمسسسفلوك ب ب ب وجدته مثلجا فعلا.

ضبقت ت على الكوب ب صعلبي ي الـ م تعشة ولإئت ت الى ل الكو ب ضيع ع ضصبعه

ت علو ى ف ى كأنه يقول لي لا تتكلم.م

As I stumbled around in circles, I saw the cell door quietly opening, a hand extended in the dark carrying a cup of what appeared to be iced water. Dismayed, I thought I had gone mad. This cannot be water. Just like those seen in a desert, this must be a mirage. I stretched my hand to touch the cup, icy indeed! Trembling, my fingers took hold of it and I saw the man who brought it placing a finger over his mouth signaling “do not make a sound” (M. Ameen, 1991, p. 14).

And finally, the resolution:

داعت ت الروح مم من ذا الكوب! عاد الدم يجري في ع وقي. ي عاد عقلي الى رأسي ت

.. ذا ذا الما من لسد غسس من الداخل.. أعاد البصور الى عيني اي ي سسسبقوة غريبة!

اغاني ي الما من ع ن الطعام.. لي ل اغاني ي ع ن الحرية. ا سسسبسعادة لم م اعرفها

ط ط ل ل ي ي تي.

Along with this drink, my soul returned! The blood came surging back to my veins. My faculties restored ... that water brought vision back to my eyes and washed me from the inside. I was overcome by strange powers. Water made me forget about food, about freedom. I experienced happiness like I’ve never known before (M. Ameen, 1991, p. 14).

The author uses this turn of events to draw conclusions about God and the universe, the story comes in full circle when one day the mystery savior introduces him-

self to Ameen and they have a conversation about why the young man had put himself in danger to help a prisoner. The young man explains that nine years ago a man from one of Giza's poor villages sent a letter to Ameen asking for help funding his lifelong dream of owning a cow. The farmer described in the letter how he had put all his life's savings into the purchase of one, for it only to die after six months. Shortly after sending the letter, a journalist from *Akhbar El-Youm*, Ameen's publication, came knocking on his door dragging the most beautiful, plump cow the man had ever seen. The essay concludes with the declaration "that man was my father" (M. Ameen, 1991, p. 15).

Although Mustafa Ameen is a journalist by vocation, he admits in one of his letters that he could never have written those essays in the manner they were written had he never been imprisoned. He writes:

في بعض الأحيين كنت تنشو راتي تعرضني لحجج تجعلني أجيب بصفتي صحفيي و

لقد كنت تنسى بأنني المضية و لي قضيتي أو فرر فيبحث و أراقب و أدرس.

كنت تنتابني صحفي أعرف كل ما يجري ثم اكتشفت بأني صحيي مرا،،

و لا ان أحدا روى لي ما مر لكنت صدقته أبدا.. كان من ا للحجا ا ن ن

وان أعيش هذه الحياة المذلة.

I sometimes felt that I was exposed to this experience because I am a journalist. I would forget I was the victim, and instead spend my time watching, researching, observing, studying. I used to think I was the journalist who knew it all. Only to discover that I was a journalist who was also an idiot. If someone had told me about the things I saw, I would not have believed them. It was necessary to be incarcerated, it was neces-

sary to live this amazing experience (M. Ameen, 1991, p. 71).

Ameen was not only able to utilize the autobiographical approach successfully, but he had fun with it. Writing other accounts using flashbacks,[23] such as the essay titled "Malek Al-Ta'theeb" 'The King of Torture' about his encounter with Hamza Basuiny, a top-ranked officer notoriously known for tormenting prisoners. Ameen depicts a picture of two huge police dogs running towards him, and in that moment, remembering the first time he saw Basuiny, the story shifts to a different location and a different time where the power structure was also different: Basuiny, an ordinary small town officer, shivering as he enters the presidential chambers where Ameen was lunching with the president.

Scene-by-scene construction, dialogue, and the recording of everyday gestures, habits, manners and other symbolic details (Wolfe, 1973, pp. 46-47) are among the techniques of realism new journalists adopted in the sixties. Yukaberoun Le-Allah Wa Yathba'hoon Al-Bashar 'They Slay People While Yelling Allahu-Akbar' on his encounter with the young man and the iced water fulfills each of the criteria Wolfe mentions in *New Journalism.* Furthermore, regarding the latter's emphasis on bald reporting as opposed to shy reporting, he says new journalists need to ask the hard questions and cross "genteel" lines to get the kind of information that would allow the reader to get inside a character's point of view. Mustafa does that in this book. He writes in the preface that he was denied ink and paper, and so he had to smuggle letters to his brother Ali, his friend Sa'eed Freeha, and others. He wrote and managed to send nine thousand letters to the outside world revealing the shocking

[23] Other essays written in mixed chronology: Masra' Al Saffah 'Death of a Killer' (p. 40), Da'wa Ela Haflat Ta'theeb 'An Invitation to a Torture Party' (pp. 51–53), and Al-Jannah Sejn 'Paradise in a Prison' (pp.73–79).

realities about the treatment of prisoners in Egyptian prisons. His reporting was so bold that when he was finally released he wanted to retrieve these letters for publication, only to find that many of his friends, panicked by the contents, had burned them, to which Ameen responds, "I do not blame them. The little Pharaohs[24] believe one letter from a political prisoner to be more dangerous than a grenade!" (1991, p. 8). This is an indication that his writing had penetrated facades, crossed genteel lines, and revealed things that can only be revealed if one lived them.

Other columnists that applied the autobiographical approach successfully include Taha Hussain in an essay titled "Lebanon" (T. Hussain, 2012, pp. 72-77), where he writes about his experiences in the Levant. The essay is written in mixed chronology starting with how the author was greeted by a longtime friend, then digresses to illuminate on the reason behind the visit, then moves ahead to what he did during his stay, integrating some internal dialogue as well as poetry. Hussain was a poet before becoming a journalist and he found difficulty writing prose that flowed freely without a rhythm (Adnan, 2009, p. 8), so it is no surprise that in a book comprising sixteen of his journalistic essays, only one fits the criteria of a "story."

The second direction taken by narrative essayists other than or along with the autobiographical is the symbolic. Among the factors that went into the production of literary journalism in the region was the inability of literary figures to remain politically neutral. One issue that united the region around mutual feelings of anger and despair was the Arab/Israeli conflict, and to a lesser extent Pan-Arabism. They were often intertwined, for it was believed and implicitly suggested (or lamented) that if the Arabs were to unite, the Palestinian dilemma would be solved. The challenge in

[24] A symbol of tyranny; Ameen here probably refers to the secret service.

writing about politics was first evading censorship, and second overcoming the ephemeral aspect to transform an otherwise rigid subject matter about "the now" to writing for all time. One thing skilled journalists did was to combine symbolism and storytelling to make powerful statements and get the message across.

A successful Western example of such balance is George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant." Orwell's autobiographical account of his time in Burma, during which he served as a policeman and had to shoot an aggressive elephant. Despite his reservations, he succumbs to pressure and the animal dies a slow painful death. Orwell puts himself squarely in the narrative, yet the story is not about him or his feelings. Anderson comments on the writer's technique that it invites the reader to identify with the author because he makes his feelings about giving in to imperialism common place (1989, p. 58), and in this sense he, the author, and the reader are equal, which is what makes the personal or communicative essay so powerful. Unlike the formal essay, it gives room for dialogue with the reader and invites him to take part. While the former strives for a relationship with the reader as well, the latter is based on the author's superiority.

Like the Orwellian technique, when Zakariya Tamer wanted to reminisce about what Palestine means to a Syrian, he wrote about food, and despite this account being in part autobiographical, it is not about him, but rather about how much the reader can relate to his symbolism.

Al Burtuqal Yakrah Aydan 'Oranges Hate Too' is about his childhood in Damascus and how oranges imported from Jaffa were the best tasting, juiciest, and easiest to peel. He wrote that whoever was caught using a knife to cut a quince or peel an orange would be treated like an idiot. He said he tried many oranges but the Palestinian ones were always the best tasting. As an adult, he yearned for that experi-

ence again, only they were now called Israeli oranges. The story then depicts an internal dialogue, a struggle of conscience when he saw a display of the plump citrus fruit in a London market. He eventually convinced himself they were innocent oranges taken against their will; it does not matter what the label says, they are still Palestinian. And so he bought one, only to come to an interesting revelation at the end, where he says:

أكأ املتهاهتم ممماً نأكأآتت نكل الجنرال موفا،،ف،فكلت البرتقالة بغيغغطمم لا

تخلف عهه الااكهه الأخرى التي لها هكل لا ئئئويلس لها أي طعم أو مكهة ف،،،، سسد

بالفرح والشماتة،،وبدا لي أن البرتقال الاسطيي يكرر الإإرائيليين أو عند،،اضما

رأُرغم على العطاء لم يعط إلا ما يعبر عن نه لهؤلاء ءلأ غرار الذين لا يمتون

إليه بوآ،،ة لصد كلل لحلم البشر ريزعمون أن لحم المأكول الذي يقتل مهانا نبذعاذلا

يكو ن هييهم لحلم المأكول الذي يقتل فل و هو يضك.ك

> I growled as if I were feasting on General Mofaz[25] himself. The orange had no taste, it was no different from those decent looking yet flavorless fruits. I rejoiced in the idea of Palestinian oranges hating Israelis too. Forced to give, they are only capable of what expresses their sentiment towards those strangers that bear no relation to them. In the end, cannibals claim the flesh of a tormented soul is not nearly as delicious as that of someone who died suddenly, laughing. (Tamer, February 7, 2012)

Abou Shawer did more or less the same in his article Al Hobb Taht Al Ta'erat 'Love under Air Raids' (2001, p. 129). It tells the story of Lina, a Palestinian Muslim woman in love with a Lebanese Maronite in the early 80s. The article has a

[25] Shaul Mofaz, a former Israeli soldier and politician.

typical story structure with an introduction, rising action (Lina's parents refusing her marriage to a non-Palestinian, non-Muslim), climax (her suitor joining the troops and disappearing into the mayhem of war), gradual resolve (he comes back, and despite all the odds they marry), and the conclusion that Rashad makes about the strength of the Palestinian soul and how incapable it is of giving up. Abou Shawer is involved in the narrative, but the story is not about him; he was there only to connect the dots, a fly on the wall. He wanted to capture a glimpse of his country and make it readily accessible to the reader through the universal concept of love. This is what being a Palestinian means to the author, and the reader can identify with it. Abou Shawer was writing amid the 1982 war in Beirut, and he successfully managed to bend a horrifying subject matter to his will and transform its ephemeral quality into a symbolic account of hope and resilience.

A key difference between an autobiographical essay and an allegorical or symbolic one is that even though they can come together on occasion, an autobiographical account, as the name implies, is sourced from real life. It involves the author as part of the narrative. On the other hand, an allegorical or symbolic essay is the opposite, for however "truthful" it might be, the reader can usually identify it for what it is, an anecdote designed to deliver a message in an oblique fashion.

Anglo-American literary journalists like to worship at the altar of reader/author trust. That bond is divine, and history stands witness of what comes of those who broke it.[26] But what if the reader is aware and fully participates? Allen

[26] A few of the scandals involving journalists who wrote fiction touted as non-fiction include Janet Cook, who won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981 only to have it retracted after her story was discredited, and more recently James Frey, who wrote *A Million Little Pieces (2003).* His book was endorsed by Oprah Winfrey, an endorsement she soon apologized for on account of the memoir comprising multiple discrepancies and exaggerations that reportedly never happened.

Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas say tyranny breeds “sharp readers” (1994, p. 5). Hartsock argues that the mainstream news style tends to deny questioning by the reader, thus “opening an epistemological gulf between the reader’s imaginative participation and what has become an objectified world” (2000, p. 56). This is evident in the most important part of the objective news story; the story lead that reveals every major detail (Fedler, 1993, p. 139), leaving no room for a question or a guess. It is possible that an Arab reader yearns for a challenge as mainstream media has left him a passive observer rather than a participant. A clever illusion does not translate to a lie but part of a game, a stimulation seldom found in state-controlled media. An Arab reader understands the risks and willingly engages in the deciphering of symbols to reach an understanding of what the author is trying to convey. Furthermore, because many accomplished journalists at the time were also skilled fiction writers (Kanafany, Hussain, Haykal, Freehah, etc.), the reader trusts in what they write and often expect their literary side to show in their journalism.

Saeed Freehah’s article Al Qubla Al Yateemah ‘The Orphaned Kiss’ (2013) in his column Al Jou’ba ‘The Pouch’ paints a picture of when Arab forces led by Prince Faisal entered Damascus following the First World War and thereby ended four centuries of Ottoman rule. Damascenes were enthralled by the arrival of the Arab rebel army, thinking it was their salvation, oblivious to the fact they were aiding yet another occupation marked by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Although Freehah narrates the story using the first person, it is clear the account is a product of his imagination as it recaps the events of a demarcating point in the history of the region. Yet the focus is on young Freehah’s journey. The boy sees the army, hears the planes. He runs from the city to be found by a Bedouin who takes him in to his village and treats him as one of his own. The boy grows up and falls in love with a

beautiful Bedouin woman named Shahrazad. in the end he is cast out, sent back home as a result of an inappropriate kiss he places on her hand as she sleeps. It is arguable the account is an extended metaphor of hope followed by disappointment.

Al Muwaten Wa Al Kalb ‘The Citizen and the Dog’ is another example of an essay harboring symbolic meaning. Mohamed Al Maghout pictures a discussion between a well-read Arab citizen, a dog, and a police officer about the fate of the Palestinian cause, among other things, and concludes with the citizen barking with the dog (Maghout, 2006), symbolizing the hopelessness the author feels towards resolving the issue. The storyline here could be an allegory for the insignificance of knowledge and/or education. In the absence of freedom, the common citizen is the equivalent of a leashed dog, his protests much like a bark, eventually dissolving in thin air.

Ghassan Kanafany wrote a column in *Al Sayyad ‘The Hunter’* magazine a year after *Al Naksah*,[27] and in almost every article he found a way to drop a hint on the matter. One in particular, entitled An Al Aqlam Aktub Wa Laysa ‘an El Kutub ‘On Pens I Write, Not Books’ (Kanafany, 1996, pp. 142-144), he starts by narrating a story of how two of his pens were borrowed and never returned. The author then elaborates the symbolic meaning of a pen to a writer, and how distressed he is to have lost them. It is not until the middle of the article that he makes an interesting connection, bringing the story full circle as he explains its allegorical significance:

من الطبيعي أن يبلبل شطلل لم تكمم مصودة متماما، ورغم فكك ليجج أن ج

لافترر من العاقة لأن تصرف ذقا ذلا ذنح جالجلجا البرعرر فجج ه حزيران لم يكن

مقصودا، ومم ذلذ فإنه من طلك ضضن نتركه يذذذلي بيته بالظم الملطوش،

[27] The Setback, alternatively known as the Six-Day War or the Third Arab/Israeli War in 1967, which resulted in Israel occupying the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Sinai, and Golan Heights.

لأنذلألألألأر اجاعهه اليجباصححلأوفلافرق بينن قلمم اصخشل وبينن السلاح الجلي لدولة

ونن الدول،يلس سكبيا ...

Naturally, stealing a pen is unintentional. However, such an act should not escape punishment, because even though the Egyptian air force commander did not intend to behave the way he did on the dawn of June the Fifth, it is ridiculous to allow him to go home carrying the stolen pen simply because he forgot to return it to its original owner. The difference between one's pen and a country's air force is not that big … (1996, p. 143).

In this instance, it is unclear what the pen stands for, perhaps the dignity that was robbed by the defeat, yet by the end it becomes obvious that Kanafany's stolen pens symbolize home, in that they are part of his existence and those who took them shall forever wallow in guilt:

هذان القلمان،،أيهاهةلمدقا،، بر رابتالىل غمو،،مراسطوارعىل ذذذا لصففة بدة

التشلم مم امدبية ملمعروفةفيي يذاذالبووق،،دلعا على يورر اشعرر رالكمبيالاتو

الوقتتتاد د ا تعملتهما أحيانا – كما يفعأ ص ي اخر – أدااا أعض عليهاه

رننتغلدنيي الم كة ... يي انزيز زز ننيي تيي.يي ومم فكككلبوسعكما الاحتفاظ

بهماههعلهما يلعانبمم كالفنبب كلم ا اولتما أن تكبتا بهما...

فالقلمم مملىل الىل يتلل لحج ونن ريشتهه ونن يلطش ... ربما تتعطل ريشتهه فينضح في

قميصيكما بورر الذي ذلا يغفل بالمام!

Those two pens – gentlemen – were used to write love letters.

> They wrote – on these pages - the crème de la crème of literary curses, they signed the bottom of tens of banknotes and bonds. And I had used them – as anybody else would – for a tool to bite on when an idea refuses to bend to my will. They are part of my life, and yet you can have them. Perhaps you will be stung by guilt every time you attempt to write with them … a pen is like a murder victim, descends from its tip when stolen … perhaps that too might break, soiling your shirts with ink that cannot be washed with water!

Perhaps Kanafany's metaphors have a different interpretation, or maybe he had no ulterior motives at all. However, this is why readers turn to columns, for there is room for questions and second guessing, there is no right or wrong answer, only possibilities and the freedom to unravel and relate to a piece of writing in multiple ways. Only a skilled writer can achieve such an effect, one who also respects the intelligence of readers by being subtle in his language, much as Kanafany does in this article. There is no explicit statement of anything, only suggestions and dropped hints. His outrage is well covered by his humor and elegant yet plain style. Still, if one looks closely it is all there. Namely, when he chooses to compare a stolen pen to a *qateel* 'murder victim' as opposed to a *mayet* 'dead person', the message is to convey how a pen loses its ability to be useful or its "soul" when snatched from its original owner. The author adds to the imagery by calling it a murder to possibly amplify the magnitude of the crime and express his anger. Perhaps to him "death" is not sufficient to express the gravity of the situation, and so in playing with one word he was able to take the tone of the article to another level.

Zakareyah Tamer experimented with allegory and symbolism as well. Enti-

tled Laa Al-Felestineyah ‘The Palestinian No’, the author sketches a fictional encounter between Israeli soldiers and the personified “No.” Under interrogation the Palestinian “No” acknowledges that it is the reason behind the public despising the occupation, it encouraged the masses to populate streets to protest injustice all around the region, and it is the reason why Palestinians would not let go of their land. The essay concludes with the rebellious negative being shot multiple times. However, it did not die; on the contrary, it emerged stronger.

What the above examples have in common is that regardless of their purpose they are mainly stories. Despite the presence of some elements of fiction, there is no violation of trust if the author makes it clear that there is a “surface story” and a “true story.” The latter, depending on the intelligence of the reader and how skilled he/she is at deciphering the author’s extended metaphors, is an expression of the status quo in its truest form; thus, there is an argument to be made for considering the inclusion of such forms of writing under the general umbrella of literary journalism.

5.3.2 Essays Espousing Elements of a Narrative: the Distractor Factor

Next to its allegorical quality, there is an argument to be made that Kanafany’s presence in ‘An Al Aqlam Aktub Wa Laysa ‘an El Kutub ‘On Pens I Write, Not Books’ takes away from the essay’s appeal as a “story.” Although the author is indeed telling one tale, he digresses, explains, and deviates so in the middle that it is, as Anderson described, hard to tell what is part of the narrative and what is the author simply talking. In a sense, the authorial voice here did not help pull the narrative together, which instead occurs when the author makes the conscious decision to put himself on the side, unassumingly being there to facilitate. Unlike Abou Shawer in “Love Under Air Raids,” Kanafany’s presence was powerful, acting as a

distraction from the main narrative thread, which does not take away from its power as a symbolic account of defeat, occupation, and loss, but might have detracted from its storytelling quality and made the overall feel of the essay more discursive than narrative.

With Bayn Al-Adab Wa Al Seyasah 'Between Literature and Politics' Taha Hussain writes an essay that somewhat resembles Orwell's "Marrakesh." He captures several scenes from the Egyptian streets, claiming in the beginning that "Egyptian life nowadays houses different phenomena, some of which is hilarious and some worthy of tears" (T. Hussain, 2012, p. 7). He resumes at describing in vivid detail both sides to his country painting several pictures in one account. Hussain also wrote in the *Al Jehad 'The Struggle'* newspaper a column called Hadith Al Arbe'aa' 'Wednesday's Talk', where every week he would write a critique of a poet from Al Jahiliyya (pre-Islamic era) in the form of a dialogue with a friend (whom he reveals to be fictional).

Does the composed character hurt the column's literary journalistic merit? One must go back to the issue of trust, and in this case the author makes the reader aware and thus it can be argued there is no breaking of the cycle. Furthermore, perhaps the reader is familiar with Hussain's fiction, and so it is not unorthodox for the reader to see glimpses of such in a journalistic piece. Maybe the reader expects and indeed enjoys it. Furthermore, the incorporation of literary techniques usually associated with the author's fiction helps mellow a rather dull subject matter.

The above examples present a case of the author's voice as a distraction from the narrative thread, but it is also possible for the language to be equally distracting. A piece enitled Sa'atun Okhra Ma' Torfah 'One More Hour with Torfah' is an ex-

ample of the kind of writing Hussain did in Hadith Al Arbe'aa'. The sentences are short and occasionally have a rhythmic flow:

قلُت:وأي غرور أكثُر مما أنت فيه؟! هاأنت ذا تُجادلني و تُحاورني ، و تُسرف في الِجدالو الِحوار، و تُظهر التمنع و الإباء ،وَ كأَنك تُريُد أُن تخذذعلي الُعهود، و تُملِي علي ورشلاو،،ط أنَت تَعَلُم حق الِعْلِم أَنك مِديِّنِ لَهذِه الأحاديث بالوجود، و أنك ما كنت لتشهد الحياة،أو لتشهدك الحياة، لو لم أخترعك اختراًعا، و أبتكرك ابتكاًرا، وأمنحك من الحياة و الَحركة مايُمكنك من أن تجادل و تُحاور،وتُ لقققالسؤولااتذ تتج الجلاج

I said: What vanity you possess?! There you are arguing and conversing at length, as if you wish me to follow your rules, when you know your mere existence depends on such talks. You would not have witnessed life, or yourself lived had I not invented, gave enough soul and movement to you to argue and converse, to ask questions and await the answer... (Hussain, 2012)

In reality, this article is more of a piece of verbal jugglery than anything else, a display of mastery over language more than a discussion of the medieval figure. It has a poetic feel due to its sophisticated wording and *saj'*. One can argue there is a storyline, but it is dwarfed by the way the article is phrased.

5.4 Is it "Arabic" Literary Journalism or is it Not: The Discursive Versus the Narrative

There is an inherit risk that comes with discussing essays espousing elements of a narrative as part of literary journalism, and that is writings bordering on the discursive, sensationalist, or muckraking.[28] Hartsock describes the position of essay

[28] A type of journalism associated with sensationalism (in that it stirs emotions), investigative and advocatory journalism. It occurs when a reporter suspects there is a problem in the business, political,

writing within literary journalism as "anomalous" (2000, p. 113), as essays are not always narrative. However, he admits that some of the earliest pioneers of the form were first and foremost essayists, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele to mention a few. Applegate, in his book *Literary Journalism: A Biographical Dictionary of Writers and Editors,* and Iona Italia's *The Rise of Literary Journalism in the Eighteenth Century: Anxious Employment* cite them as early literary journalists. Yet Hartsock writes:

> It is easy to understand why given their influence on the personal essay. But Addison and Steele in their *Tatler* and *Spectator* columns are largely discursive in their mode and only occasionally narrative. Ultimately, their purpose is exposition and persuasion, not telling a story. (p. 113)

In other words, their purpose was essentially social utility rather than artistry/fine writing, which is what modern day Anglo-American literary journalism identifies with, particularly Barbara Lounsberry, who in her *The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artists of Nonfiction* writes:

> Verifiable subject matter and exhaustive research guarantee the nonfiction side of literary journalism; the narrative form and structure disclose the writer's artistry; and finally, its polished language reveals that the goal all along has been literature. Annie Dillard calls it "fine writing," while Gay Talese calls it "writing with style." Call it what you will, care for language can be used as a strainer to separate liter-

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or social sector and investigates the problem to determine if it exists and then reports about it (Applegate, 2008, p. xxii).

> ary nonfiction from the glut of nonfiction written in pedestrian prose (1990, p. xv).

Hartsock does not dismiss Addison and Steele's position as early pioneers of the form, but he places them in a separate category as "practitioners of that discursive literary journalism commonly characterized as the 'essay'" (2000, p. 114). Contrary to what Hartsock maintains, and as displayed earlier in this chapter, Arabic essays can have a storytelling quality and a sustained narrative thread. True, essays that espouse elements of a narrative are technically discursive, but there is an argument to be made for their inclusion as part of Arabic literary journalism. The problem with the discursive mode, however, is when it crosses the line to being polemic or sensational.

Sensationalism, also known as yellow journalism, is defined as the presentation of stories in a way that is intended to provoke public interest at the expense of accuracy (Sensationalism, n.d.). Examples of sensationalism and its effects on public opinion are reflected in the role the media played in popularizing the 2003 Iraq war using dichotomous language (Hanson, 2009) or the way tabloids affected the response of people during the infamous O.J. Simpson trial (Uelmen, 1996). According to Hartsock, the major difference between sensational journalism and literary journalism is that the latter does not aim solely at shocking, but instead conveys an understanding of the subjectivities of the other (2000, p. 149).

Egyptians are guilty of this kind of writing, demonstrable in party politics and the literary wars related to them. Political discourse in this era was robust, as every party had a news outlet that relentlessly supported it. For instance, *Al Seyasah 'The Political'* newspaper, where Mohammed Hassanien Hykal and Taha Hussain wrote, was the face of the Al-Ahrar 'The Liberated' Party, while *Al-Balagh 'The Notice'*,

where Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad[29] was writing, supported the Al-Wafd 'The Delegation' Party (Nejm, 2010, pp. 36–37). *Al Kashkool 'The Notebook'* magazine occasionally mocked the Al Ahrar 'The Liberated' Party through their key figure Mohammed Hassanien Haykal. The satirical publication compared Haykal to various wild beasts week after week. In an article titled Hal 'endakum Kalb Aw Anba'h Lakum 'Do You Own a Dog or Shall I Bark for You', Haykal was compared to a lion that feasts on his enemies at night (1931), and in another he was portrayed as an enraged bull. While the articles are certainly humorous and showcase fine writing using literary techniques, seldom were they anything but lightly masked sensational journalism, designed to provoke rather than relate.

5.5 A Hundred and One Ways to Establish Voice: Dialect, Humor, and Writing Behind a Mask

Exploring the reader/author relationship when it comes to Arabic literary journalism is key to this study. In the context of essay writing, how an Arab journalist relates to his readers for the "persuasive" quality to work, and how important is tone, are the questions I hope to answer here.

In a communicative/familiar essay in which an autobiographical approach is taken, the authorial voice is clear yet not dominant. Just as in "Shooting an Elephant" there is an open dialogue the reader is invited to, the author in this sense is equal to the reader, and much like a 19th century Realist a communicative essayist stumbles along with the reader in the search for answers. On the other end of the spectrum, a formalist such as Taha Hussain resembles a 19th century Moralist who needs to place himself on higher ground for the persuasive quality to take place. A formalist need to

[29] An Egyptian poet, journalist and literary figure.

be in a place of teaching, and perhaps that is why the authorial voice is egocentric. In fact, this is precisely the complaint made by Hussain's imaginary friend in one of the latter's articles in Hadith Al Arbe'aa' 'Wednesday's Talk'.

قلت:لا ان يبدو لك لخصلتين من أمقتهما فيك فأنت لا تريد ان تتحدث الي الا في الأشياء التي لا
أحسنها ولا أتقنها وتأبى أن يظهر فيها تفوقك وعلمك لتقوم فيها مقام الأستاذ من التلميذ ذلك
وأنك تتأبى أن تعترف بأنك مشوف بالتفوق و الرغبة في الاستعلاء ... وما ضير لو رضيت أن تتحدث
عن أشياء في أن أقول فيها وتستطيع أن تسمع.

> You possess two qualities I despise – he said. You do not wish to converse but in matters I have not mastered. Matters that show your superiority, where you get to play the teacher and I the student. I never took you for the patronizing kind. And what harm can there be in listening to what I have to say and discussing a matter I know about? (T. Hussain, 2012, p. 85)

Another way to establish voice is through the vernacular. John Avlon, Jesse Angelo, and Errol Louis claim American columns relying on dialect often grow stale (2011, p. 15). This does not apply to Arabic columns. On the contrary, it is arguable that the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or Classical Arabic (CA) creates a social construct of isolation, unlike dialect, which brings the author closer to his/her readers (Bassiouney, 2010).There are a number of reasons Arab columnists resort to dialect, for it can be used to deliver the intended message in a way that even a semi-literate audience can appreciate. It can also be used to identify and consolidate ties with the reader, for when the author speaks in the language of the street, he is one with the reader, while using MSA or CA can serve as a barrier. The more sophisti-

cated the language gets, the more that feeds into the author's superiority.

When dialect is used simultaneously with MSA it creates a "punchline," a comical effect. Humor is an essential tool at an Arab writer's disposal, for it helps at creating better literary journalism. Laughter is achieved, according to Kishtainy, as a result of a moment of astonishment (1985). Schopenhauer states that "the cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just an expression of this incongruity. All laughter then is occasioned by paradox" (Ruch, 1998). Going back to the chameleon that is 'An Al Aqlam Aktub Wa Laysa 'an El Kutub 'On Pens I Write, Not Books', Kanafany is serious in what seems to be a rhetorical account of what a pen means to a writer. Yet in that earnestness about what otherwise appears ridiculous lies the comical effect. Lebanese Colloquial Arabic (LCA) helps in delivering that final "punch" that elicits laughter. When narrating the details that led to the incident, Kanafany writes in MSA, then:

ثم اعطيته القلم، فلطشه

Then I gave the pen to him, and he stole it! (1996, p. 143)

The use of LCA in one word, *latash* 'stole' after a constant stream of MSA, delivers the desired effect as it suddenly breaks the mundane linear train of thought in a moment of astonishment.

Hisham Jaber argues that every time the space for expressing one's opinion is tightened, jokes surface (2009, p. 184). Humor raises morale and enables people to co-exist with fear, constant threats, and irritations. It provides a means of persuading oneself and others that the suffering is only temporary (Obrdlik, 1942). By laughing about it, people are able to endure. This is what Mustafa Ameen writes about in his

memoir *Sana Oula Sejn 'First Year of Prison'* documenting nine years of gruesome incarceration. He maintains, "I fought suffering and loneliness with mockery and laughter" (Ameen, 1991, p. 70).

Still, the way people laugh is constantly changing. In the past, Ali Mubarak, Ya'qub Sannu', Abdulla Al Nadeem, and even Khalil Khury utilized humor in their writing to lighten the burden of teaching, to coat the bitter pill. However, the region had experienced more than a few hurdles, and some had more of a profound effect on the morale and will of people than others, Al-Nakba[30] followed by Al-Naksa[31] being the gravest. Innocuous humor no longer sufficed, and instead literary figures sought solace in black humor. According to Allan Pratt, editor of *Black Humor*, the latter "involves the humorous treatment of what is grotesque, morbid, or terrifying. And while it bitterly ridicules institutions, value systems and traditions, black humor offers neither explicit nor implicit proposals for improving, or changing the painful realities on which it focuses" (Solomon, 2011). Nichole Force calls it "gallows humor" (2011, p. 4). The original term *Galgenhumor* has been traced to the 1848 revolutions and refers to cynical humor that derives from stressful or traumatic situations (2011, p. 5). Humor such as this helps people express and equally deal with their anger—in other words, it neutralizes the situation by defusing the tension built around it.

This is what happened after *Al Naksa*; cruel jokes targeting the army, the air force, and the government started to fly to the point where Egyptian president Jamal Abd El-Nasser stood in a conference almost imploring, "Enough with the jokes" (Jaber, 2009, p. 185). Humor's effect on the ridiculed is understandably different than

[30] Literally translates to "the Catastrophe," the declaration of Israel as a state in 1948.

[31] "The Setback," otherwise known as the Six-Day War, starting on 5th June 1967.

the one doing the ridiculing. What the president did not understand is that bitter laughter was necessary for the healing process. People need to laugh in times of difficulty and instability as it is a "social" activity, and even in anger it brings people together.

There is another form of black humor that arose in this era. Kanafany calls it "Shatmonology"[32] (1996, p. 212), perfected by journalists such as Mahmoud Al Sa'dani and Fekri Abatha. According to Jaber, clever satirists sometimes resort to cursing; however, they would invent new words that do not have any meaning, and associate negative connotations to them. Al Sa'dani exploited this type of humor to its fullest. He wrote about Awlad al-camp (أولاد الكا مم)'Sons of the camp' (H. Jaber, 2009, p. 119) as a play on the insult Awlad al-kalb 'Sons of a dog', achieving both a connection to the Camp David negotiations and a negative association. Another is *hamkari* (حمقري) a combination of the two words *hemar* (حمار) 'donkey' and '*abqary* (عبقري)'genius'.

Again, there is a risk of overshooting the aim in being polemic or flat out vulgar here. As part of the party-related literary wars, *Al Sha'b 'The People'* newspaper included an article entitled Awlad al-kalb 'Sons of a dog' insulting another publication for something they published (as cited in Jaber, 2009, p. 120). The article is supposed to be humorously bitter, yet due to unskilled writing coupled with a desire to provoke, it comes across as sheer slander. Similarly, *Al-Kashkool 'The Note Book'* did not shy away from yellow journalism in its many attempts to undermine the Al-Ahrar 'The Liberated' Party by bashing its key figure Haykal.

[32] Roughly translates to "the science of *shatm*/cussing."

The final trait that will be discussed as specific to this era is writing behind a mask. In the past acquiring an *eidolon*[33] was somewhat a luxury, as it was another way of preaching without giving offense. Considering the constant tightening of space around expressing one's self, writing behind a mask became a necessity in this era.

Ghassan Kanafany's nom de plume was not revealed until his assassination. Dakroub writes "under the pseudonym of Fares Fares, Ghassan was able to emancipate himself from being Ghassan Kanafany the responsible, committed Palestinian activist." (Kanafany, 1996, p. 8). Some adopted regular names, such as Ibn Demashq and the multiple names Anees Mansour wrote under in *Akhbar El Youm (Today's News)* like Sheref Sheref, Muna Ja'afar, Ahlam Sheref, and Silvana Marilli (Madkor, 2002, p. 228). Zakariya Tamer's pen-name was Juha the Damascene. Elyas El Deeri wrote for *Al Nahar (The Day Light*) in Lebanon under the nom de plume of Al-Zayan (Jaber, 2009). Others got creative with their alter egos; in *Akhbar El Youm,* Mustafa and Ali Ameen would write articles under numerous masks, some of which are Masmas, Joe, and Elsahafi El Majhoul/The unknown journalist. Noori Thabet wrote under the pseudonyms Jadwa' Ibn Doukha and Abu Tanoos (Jaber, 2009, p. 132).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored essay writing as a possible 20th century literary journalistic manifestation. It focused on two types: story essays and essays espousing elements of a narrative. It investigated how each type carried out its "persuasive quality" through voice, humor, and use of dialect. Furthermore, this section highlighted how, compared to the 19th century, humor had shifted towards the black and bitter in

[33] An alter ego.

a necessary step to cope with the multiple periods of social, economic, and political distress that plagued this era. Writing behind a mask and the use of vernacular have also become more prolific due to the escalation of censorship that ensued this century.

This section also underlined the differences between Arabic literary journalism and its Anglo-American counterpart, particularly in terms of audience response, and one conclusion that can be made is that the Arabic readership can be more tolerant when it comes to issues of veracity, as the sociopolitical dynamic in the region demands certain restrictions that make the integration of fiction with journalism unavoidable.

Moreover, the chapter discussed the anomalous position essays hold within Anglo-American literary journalism due to them occasionally bordering on the discursive. The section argued that, unlike modern Western literary journalism, the Arabic form focuses on social utility rather than storytelling. Such allows some room for discursive essays to be part of literary journalism. However, as the chapter demonstrated, Arab columnists were not always successful in striking a balance between being discursive and engaging in sensationalism, particularly when it comes to party politics. However, there are other examples of essays espousing elements of a narrative that prove a columnist can be a literary journalist while bordering on the discursive.

Chapter 6: Between the Printed and the Digital: Arabic Literary Journalism in the 21st Century

6.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to track the progression of the essay and column as a possible Arabic literary journalistic expression, particularly in 21st century Egypt. This century saw the introduction of the World Wide Web in the region and this section will explore the way in which the latter affects literary journalism. This chapter asks questions such as: What does column writing look like in this era? Did the introduction of the Internet in the region tighten the grip governments hold over the written word or help loosen it? And where do we find literary journalism today, in blogs and other Internet-born platforms, or does it still reside in columns in the form of essays/articles?

Yousef Ma'ati, a screen writer and columnist, wrote a satirical article titled "Al Mashi Janb El-Heet" (Walking Next to the Wall). Playing on a common Arabic euphemism for avoiding discussing sensitive issues altogether, it was clear what the point of the article was: how to be critical and not get reprimanded. He starts with the remark:

> Three things if you remove them, life is guaranteed to be sweeter: your appendix, your tonsils, and your oppositional gland! (Yousef Ma'ati, 2009, p. 46)

He then tells the story of a colleague who was passionate about exposing the corruption of a certain government official. He wouldn't stop writing about it until one day he disappeared. Ma'ati learnt his friend was in jail. When released, that person had changed. Not only did he stop writing provocative articles, but became a

one-man marketing department for that same official. The author comments he then and there learnt how to be a professional "ballet dancer" tip-toeing around everything. "None can hear me; none gives me the time of the day" (2009, p. 47).

> Sometimes people try to lure me out of my gray zone. They claim I meant this or that, to which I always fiercely reply: No, that was not the point. As I utter those words, I keep a mental note to subtly shift the next article a little to the right! (2009, p. 48)

The author concludes that this is how he continues to "walk next to the wall," protected by its shadow, making peace with the fact that the pages of history will bear no memory of his writing. What Ma'ati wrote sums up the general ambiance of column writing during the reign of Mubarak. Criticism well masked.

6.2 On Writing About What One Knows: A Voice Amid the Chaos

> Art I must insist, is an individual thing – the question of one man facing certain facts and telling his individual relations to them. His first care must be to present his own concept. This I believe the essence of veritism: write of those things of which you know most and for which you care most. By doing so you will be true to yourself, true to your locality and true to your time. (Garland, 1960, p. 35)

Writing about what one knows aids in producing better literary journalism as it fulfils two preconditions: immersion reporting (Norman Sims, Mark Kramer, and Tom Wolfe) and currency (Ben Yagoda and Kevin Kerrane).

Egyptians write about what they know; that is, they live in a harsh climate of economic, social and political suffocation. Long gone is the heyday of fighting for ideals and causes that touch not only Egyptians but all Arabs. Jalal Ameen calls it *Al*

Qabeleya Le-Al Taba'eyah 'the susceptibility to be led' (2007, p. 40) which he defines as a general feeling of lethargy towards country and abstract ideals such as loyalty and dignity. Ameen says the ordinary Egyptian man has no time or energy to be invested in any of the "old" causes like the Palestinian crises or Arab nationalism (2007, pp. 40-43), he is burdened by more immediate demands, like making ends meet. *Al Qabeleya Le Al-Taba'eyah* implies a sense of loss, an identity crisis. It paints a picture of a person with no room for personal growth and no time to pause and question who he is or where his place is in the world. In the absence of the most basic human demands, one is left in a constant state of fear and chaos. The question is, how does such manifest in column writing?

One of the main techniques scrutinized in this study is code switching (CS), a concept visited in every chapter and analyzed in relation to the time frame in which it is practiced. CS is important to the study of Arabic literary journalism because it is one of many ways Arab columnists use to create voice. And if we take for granted that Egyptians do write about what they know, what does their voice look like?

In the preface to *Kalam Abeeh Khales (Obscene Talk)*, Yousif Ma'ati writes:

للي كل لـ ان زفر في اي لي اي كلاء علذين يستخدمون انوفهم واصابعهم ولغة أجسادهم

في التعبير ذ البذي اذ ع إ إ إ إ إ إ إ إ إ بالخنقة في اي لي اي كالاء المخنونين.. السالة.. المنحطيس

اهيد ذا الكباتة

> To every foul mouth, to those that use their noses, fingers and body language to indecently express a sentiment of suffocation ... to those throttled, dirty, lowly individuals ... I dedicate this book. (Yousif Ma'ati, 2010, p. 8)

In the introduction, Ma'ati writes that vernacular adds "special flavor" to our lives (p. 12) and that what we (Egyptians) go through on daily basis is not the same when expressed in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). In other words, the only way for him to write about a chaotic reality is to be one with the street and speak its tongue. Others have not made such a statement; however, the vernacular is used in the columns of this era more than any other time frame explored in this study. Jalal 'Amer in *Masr 'Ala Kaff 'Afreet* uses MSA to set scenes and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) in the title and dialogue. Interestingly, many essays in the book use more dialogues than anything else. For instance, Ezay El-Sehha? 'Are You Well?' is a two page dialogue between a police officer and a citizen ('Amer, 2010, pp. 73-74), and similarly, Lelat Al-Hadith Ma Janeesh Noum 'The Day of The Accident I Couldn't Sleep' (p. 75) and Kul Youm Men Dah 'The Same Thing Every Day' (p. 49). Gihan Al-Gharabawi, a columnist for *Al Ahram*, also writes her titles as well as dialogues in ECA, Dalla' Nafsak 'Pamper Yourself' is an example:

في يغرمرر الة اكتلب ب عنيفة قضيتها هتطوع احد أصدقيي النابهين بلهههة الجرتر

والموعظة نحصدو بم سس اعلي ي نفسد ونلت تتقضي ي عالاكتئب ب ب ذئ ائئ..ئ

ي يي و ي ي بشوفي ي)!!

> During a violent episode of depression, one of my attentive and experience friends enthusiastically advised: *If you spoil yourself, this depression will cease to exist, try it and you'll see for yourself.*[34] (Gharabawi, n.d., p. 195)

Khalid Al Khamisi in his collection *Taxi: Hawadeet Al Mashaweer 'Taxi: Conversations on the Road'* also mixes dialect with MSA; Omar Taher, Ibrahim

[34] Italics are mine, to emphasize where the author writes in vernacular.

'Eisa, Mohammed Fathi, and Jalal 'Amer belong to this category. Along with the excess use of vernacular comes the downside of crossing the line to sheer vulgarity, such as Ashraf Tawfeeq's collected essays, *Mabsouta Ya Masr 'Are You Happy, Egypt'* to mention one example. Pieces such as Ana Esme John 'My Name is John' (Tawfeeq, p. 78), Lel Munafeqeen Faqat 'For Hypocrites Only' (p. 39), Aflamek Ya mesr! 'Your Movies Egypt!' (p. 46), and Ana Nazel El-Metro 'I'm Riding the Metro' (p. 113) are entirely in vernacular. It is worth mentioning that Tawfeeq writes a long dedication in MSA to the "simple Egyptian man" (p. 6) who could not care less about the promises of the government or the hopes of the opposition—who cares more about football than his own dwindling status. Perhaps, as with Ma'ati, the exclusive use of ECA is purposeful and one of the marked differences of Egyptian column writing in this era: the disenchantment with MSA and the need to feel one with the street, all its problems and identity crises, thus moving away from the formal essay type of writing and towards the personal or familiar. This allows the author to speak from a place of humility, not superiority, thereby drawing in more readers and creating a community in a world ruled by chaos.

On the other hand, there are those that write in plain style yet seldom using dialect, like Jalal Ameen in *Matha Hadath Lel Masryeen 'What Happened to Egyptians'*; however, it is worth mentioning that his subject matter was the historical analysis of Egyptian politics. Similar use of MSA is seen in Akram Al Qassas in '*Awlam Khana* and Ahmed Khalid Tawfiq in a weekly column at *Al Dustoor 'The Constitution'* newspaper.

Comparison with 19th century sketches like those of Abdullah Al Nadeem and 20th century essays like those of Taha Hussain and Abd El-Aziz El-Beshri is inescapable. Hussain and El-Beshri seldom deviated from Modern Standard Arabic

(MSA) and/or Classical Arabic (CA). Al Nadeem was ferocious in his calls against abandoning CA, yet did not shy away from vernacular because when he used it, it was limited and in service of the narrative. Simplifying the language was necessary because his audience was semi-literate at best. However, today and thanks to late president Abd Al Nasser, Egyptians have free education, yet the detachment from MSA and CA has never been more pronounced. The question is, what has changed?

According to Bassiouney, the idea of unitedness (the one Arab nation) is largely built on language ideology (2009, p. 547), the idea that we all speak one language that happens also to be the language of the Quran: CA. She says the structures of most Arab countries were shaped during the colonization period. Egypt was colonized by Britain for seventy years (1882–1952). The latter saw what MSA and CA symbolized and they tried to weaken it (Shivtiel, 1999), first by introducing English and French as mandatory subjects in the education system, then attempting to raise the status of Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) at the expense of MSA by emphasizing the distinctiveness of the Egyptian people as descendants of the great Pharaonic civilization rather than part of the Arab Islamic world. They were trying to isolate Egypt and thereby tighten their grip on it (Bassiouney, 2009, p. 645), which worked for some time as Egyptian intellectuals started questioning MSA. Salama Musa actually declared it dead, while Lutfi Al Sayyid suggested creating a middle language between the two varieties (Suleiman, 1999, pp. 37-53).

By the 1930s and later, a process of revival and Arabization began to take place: Taha Hussain was calling for teaching MSA in language schools and Mohammed Hasanien Haykal became Minister of Education and made Arabic a mandatory subject in private schools. President Jamal Abd El Nasser stood at the United Nations summit on 28th September, 1960 and declared “ we believe in a single Arab

Nation" (Bassiouney, 2009, pp. 654-656). MSA was once more a symbol of identity, unitedness, and prestige that had been bottled up for years. Sadly, this did not last long, for the call for "one Arab nation" lived and died with Abd El Nasser, and coupled with the peace treaty with Israel in 1979, Egypt was isolated once more, and arguably so is the symbol that ties it to the rest of the Arab world.

Tension was forming with what Gumperz identifies as the "we" that is associated with home and family: What "we" speak: Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), and what "we" share with the rest of the region: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is socially distanced (1982, p. 95). The latter declined from a symbol of elitism and identity to a mark of rigidness, abstractness, and possibly shame. This tension has never been defused, but if anything escalated, what with the plethora of internal and external conflicts that to this day plague the region. Perhaps it is as Bassiouney maintained: Arabs struggle to define themselves as a group and/or individually (2009, pp. 729-730) . Code choice is at the center of this. Perhaps Egyptian columnists have yet to find that balanced voice and their jumping from one code to another, seldom using one or the other without sounding too rigid or too conversational, reflects the confusion that the Egyptian man feels. Are we Arabs or are we Egyptian?

6.3 On the 'I' in Gonzo: Literary Journalism in a Fragmented Reality

Writing about what one knows allows an author to create a voice that is not forced, distracting, or condescending, and in turn arguably aids in creating better literary journalism. Barbara Lounsberry argues that the strength of one of literary journalism's leading authors is that Norman Mailer is not fact gathering. She says his greatest works came from events in which he was an active participant (1990, p. 139). *Armies of the Night*, dealing with the 1967 anti-Vietnam war rally in Washing-

ton DC, was not a reporting job for Mailer; he was not there to write about it. He was just there, living it. Similarly, Wolfe claims that

> anytime a nonfiction writer uses an autobiographical approach, he is turning himself into a character in the story. This has a better chance of working if the writer was *in fact* a leading character. If not the technique often fails. (1973, p. 212)

Had Mailer been at the demonstration as a reporter, his presence would have been distracting. Likewise, Ma'ati or Taher does not have to chase after inspiration, they write about what they know and live. The reader soon realizes that even though this is the author's voice, it is also theirs, their neighbor's, and many others'.

It has been established that the confusion, fragmentation, and general feeling of loss with regards to one's identity is expressed in column writing through code switching (CS). It can also be argued that this period featured writing that bears a resemblance to Gonzo journalism; could this be another fragmented attempt to find one's place in the world?

One definition of Gonzo journalism is:

> Narrative technique, a form of subjective, participatory
> Literary journalism that places the narrator in the center
> Of the narrative while it spontaneously records a dark reality,
> Often fabricated. Gonzo also describes Thompson's style,
> Employing a verb-driven, "running" syntax, as well as
> Digressions, metaphors, fragments, allusions, ellipses, abrupt
> Transitions, and gaps, all of which model the narrator's

> Feelings of desperation, degradation, and despair (Mosser, 2012, p. 88).

It originated in 1970 with Hunter S. Thompson, who, feeling the pressure of an upcoming deadline, ripped pages out of his notebook and sent them to his editor. The frantic, over-the-top first-person narrative became a go-to technique in almost all his pieces, most famously in the 1972 *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.* Wolfe described Thompson's Gonzo as "a manic, highly adrenal first-person style in which Thompson's own emotions continually dominate the story" (p. 172). Bowe notes that the power of Gonzo journalism lies in its social critique and self-satire (2012). Thompson is usually outside the scenes he writes about; that is, he is a misfit, chronicling systems of accepted values that really have no value at all (Gilmore, March 24, 2005).

For a literary journalist, use of first person narrative must be exercised with caution; the 'I' can easily overshoot its aim to egocentrism, and nothing is less exciting to an Arab reader who turns to columns for a form of mental stimulation and/or release than the ranting born of self-obsession. In fact, the best thing a literary journalist can do is to keep in mind that the overarching aim of a story has little to do with the author, even if it does involve him/her personally. Ashdown describes it in terms of "extrapolating universal significance from isolated experience" (1985, p. xxx). One successful example was observed in Chapter Five, George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," as he managed to strike a balance between his use of the "I"' and making his story stretch beyond his experience. Thompson, on the other hand, was not always successful, and in fact his drug-fueled stream of consciousness can be tiresome, though in the case of *Fear and Loathing* it stands as a documentation of an era and a literary journalistic experience. Likewise, Egyptian columnists

who wrote "gonzo" in one way or another were not always effective in their employment of the first-person narrative, at least not in terms of making theirs stretch beyond their own egos. It is also worth noting that the "gonzo" quality of some Egyptian columns, like Thompson, concerns the author casting himself as a protagonist who is also an inept loser standing outside the system, documenting values that they do not fit with, like they are part of a world they do not understand, a world fragmented and chaotic, and while they report on frail attempts to form an identity that can coincide with it, all they manage to do is look more foolish. Others are simply narrating a story through their own eyes and documenting their own feelings and thoughts as they tell it, and while their voices are not manic, their accounts still meet the criteria for "gonzo" in terms of the author casting himself as a central character, the stream of consciousness quality, attention to detail, and use of vernacular.

When it comes to casting one's self as an outsider of social norms, Yousif Ma'ati mastered the technique. His "autobiographical" approach sometimes works in making meaningful statements about societal follies and the corruption of government, while at other times he is an unassuming, gullible protagonist for sheer entertainment. Titled Feqary … Feqary … Feqary,[35] Ma'ati writes an article characterized by internal monologue. The article describes the author's awkwardness when introduced by a friend to a group of people as a skilled comedian. His friend insists on Ma'ati making a joke or telling a funny story, but all the latter can do is stand there silently.

أهتسبلس..سسسفنسسسسن من هها الحمرا، كفاهيراس وبيك

كفاية ل، ة ما تكلت تت صار دهي أنا ول لل الكو ددييه تأتأ

[35] An idiom used to indicate that someone has a good sense of humor.

هكذا؟ أسس ع ر فت ى ل ج ج نممكو ددييل للههضضهاههؤلاء

الذنن نمعتهمملوفر رفتر عليا.

> This idiot is driving me insane, I think to myself. Enough, I beg of you, enough. The more you talk, the less funny I become. And is comedy possible under such circumstances? Do I press a button and comedy comes pouring out in order for those you gathered to watch me to laugh? (Yousef Ma'ati, 2007, p. 15)

The article continues, focused inwards on the author's thoughts as he frantically tries to get out of an uncomfortable situation, until the very end when, unable to meet expectations, he bursts out in tears instead, which the crowd perceives as a sketch and laughs. This is not an article that attempts to accomplish anything other than to make the reader laugh; there is no ulterior motive for the author's self-absorption, yet it is an interesting example of Egyptian gonzo in terms of the author also being the protagonist, the interior monologue that dominates the narrative, the use of vernacular, and lastly the manic quality that encapsulates the narrative.

Ma'ati used the same techniques in Watte Soutak Enta Fi Marina 'Lower Your Register … You Are at Marina!' to comment on a set of societal conventions that he did not understand. The article opens with a rather angry internal thought about his discontentedness in having to go to an upscale beach area named 'Marina.' The author does not feel like a 'Marinian' so, in order not to embarrass his wife and daughter, he buys expensive clothes as a disguise. The protagonist continues to feel out of place as his stream of consciousness comments on the way people, or as he describes them, 'Marinians' behave in such an elitist place, focusing on details such as the way they greet each other and the color of their slippers. He is cast as the out-

sider, an embarrassment who keeps trying to fake his way into the crowd, but all his attempts are in vain. His anger escalates until at the end, fed up with trying to fit in, he causes a scene. In this article, the author is a vehicle through which social criticism via self-mockery is cast.

Mohammed Fathi and Khalid Al Kemisi wrote "gonzo" as part of their experience in exploring the Egyptian streets by observing and interacting with local taxi drivers. Mukh El-Besellah 'Pea-Sized Brain' is written in the first person chronicling a short journey with a taxi driver who, according to Fathi, belongs to the know-it-all segment of society. The author resumes the article describing his emotional state as the driver starts the conversation parroting religious slurs about Maspero,[36] followed his take on America trying to "take over" Egypt, and ending with how elephants copulate. The article is characterized by both internal and external dialogue with an author who is also a central character who feels at odds with the status quo. In the preface to the same book, Fathi writes about the confusion that plagued the country after the election of Mohammed Mursi. He writes that it is not merely the people who are confused, but the president, his party affiliates, their opponents, and to some degree their supporters (2012, p. 12). Such is expressed even more loudly in this article. The stream of consciousness is chaotic, illogically jumping from one thought to another. On the one hand the article appears manic and without order; on the other, considering the context of the period in which the author is writing and the sentiment he expressed in the opening, such frenzy is perhaps purposeful.

[36] Refers to the events in October, 2011. A peaceful demonstration staged in front of the Maspero television building in Cairo turned into a massacre when security forces and the army brutally attacked protestors, killing over 24 ("Cairo Clashes Leave 24 Dead After Coptic Church Protest," 9th, October 2011). The event led to severe religious strife that divided the masses over who was at fault, the state or the demonstrators.

Khalid Al Khemisi on the other hand has a different tone. His book *Taxi: Hawadeet El Mashaweer 'Taxi: Conversations on the Road'* takes place in Mubarak's Egypt, the stream of consciousness is not dominating, sometimes the author is there as a facilitator and in others he is filtering the story through his consciousness, but the central aim of the book is to explore and document the experience of the common working Egyptian man, his struggles, hopes, and dreams. The articles are numbered not titled, the first one opening with an internal dialogue in which the author is describing the signs of aging on the driver's face in detail.

يا لاهها! ععممممممذاذ ماائا ئئ؟ئوعممعممممممم السييرة؟ ...

عدد الكم موممامممفشمههبعددججومجملماممتضغغكل

كرمشة علىلأخوىرب(بنية)،،وتصوعمنعها مصريا

نحتهه"مختار". أمامياد اللتان تضغطان على المقود فإنهما

تتمدان نتنكمشان عبرررايينها البارزة وكا ن رايينالنلل

تغغي ا رلا ضيبسة .

My God! How old is this driver? And how old is this car?

… the wrinkles on his face are as many as the stars in the sky. Each gently presses on the other creating an Egyptian face that could have been sculpted by Mukhtar.[37] As for the hands, they shrink and expand through the visible veins, as if they were Niles nourishing dry land. (Khamisi, 2008, p. 13)

[37] Mahmoud Mukhtar, a famous Egyptian sculptor.

While the author here is a central character filtering the driver's story through his psyche, his voice is not manic or fragmented. He is mixing internal with external dialogue, using the vernacular while focusing on the littlest of details and using them to connect to larger issues. In this one, he is treating the aging taxi driver as one with the land, rough around the edges yet beautiful and wise. The author says "as soon as I sat next to him, I was overwhelmed with the feeling that everything is just fine" (2008, p. 13). Despite using the first-person narrative, the author succeeds in making the story extend beyond himself. There is a sense of hopefulness that encapsulates the encounter, and it is not merely about the man, but also about a country.

Comparing Fathi and Al Khamisi in terms of their literary journalistic efforts, one thing is clear. Al Khamisi surpasses Fathi in terms of both strengths, storytelling and using his own voice without having it dominate the narrative. Fathi wrote the articles encompassed in *Mursi Wa Domo'ie Wa Ibtesamati 'My Tears, Laughs, and Mursi'* in the short period between Mursi's election and his toppling. Titles like As'elah Le Sayidy Al Ra'ees 'Questions for Mr. President' (2012, p. 81), Fasheloon Benajah Sa'ek 'Losers With Flying Colours' (p. 156), and Matha Fa'alat Mesr Ma' Heba Al Suwaidy 'What did Egypt Do for Heba Al Suwaid') (p. 87) are more in line with the traditional inverted pyramid paradigm on account of their directness, discursiveness and lack of literary finesse.

Jalal 'Amer's book *Qosr El Kalam 'Brief Talks'* chronicles articles written between 2009 and 2012, which creates a fertile ground for a comparison between these two key eras. Mahdar Ejtema' 'Meeting Minutes' is about a group of insects and other small animals in an official meeting seeking solutions regarding the unjust wolf who confiscates whatever he likes. However, as soon as the ant started talking, disagreement ensued. The story continues as the roach, fly, spider, and mice bicker

over how they should be addressed, and in the end they agree to disagree and tell the wolf to keep doing what he does ('Amer, 2012, pp. 75-76). Though the author could be casting a light on the Arab League and its failure at addressing key regional issues, it is uncertain what his intentions are, which are left for the reader to interpret. In another article the author tells a story of his time in military school in Sudan in the 1970s. On the occasion of an official visit from the late president Jamal Abd El Nasser, ‘Amer, who hates crowds, heads to a nearby park where he sees an old man standing alone. Attempting to kill time, he strikes up a conversation with the man, who responds in a polite and friendly manner. After some time the author discovers that he has been casually conversing with the Egyptian vice president (2012, p. 81). ‘Amer uses this anecdote to draw comparisons between vice presidents then and vice presidents now. In another piece entitled Fe Sehetak ‘Here’s to Your Health’ (p. 83), the author writes a satirical account characterized by word play about the deteriorating state of health care in the country:

بلبب بلحالة الصحية لمصر ريعتقدةالكثيرون لنهرا هلبلايسا ا احد وط

مدةماعمكا مم ديفيد وان فيتيمين فوريس سرسي أقارب..ب للو قم عندممتم

مصر دكتك كك اوك ردصاخد فص ثوم علي طسيس..سوسسسطريقة للانتحار الان

هههالشرر رمن الحنفية …

> Because of the current health status in Egypt, many believe that
>
> Schistosoma is amongst the conditions of Camp-David, that Vitamin C and the C virus are related, and if you have “Egypt” clogging your chest, it is advised that you consume a clove of garlic on an empty stomach. Also the easiest way to commit suicide today is to drink from the tap… ('Amer, 2012, p. 83)

‘Amer often creates several narrative threads that run in different directions at once but he always manages to pull them back together in the end. ‘Amer is perhaps intentionally creating discourse that is chaotic to speak of his reality, but the literary quality is nonetheless pronounced. Although Jalal’s style did not dramatically change after the 25th January Revolution, articles written between 2009 and 2010 espoused an element of storytelling that was reduced to a minimum in articles between 2011 and 2012. He still writes articles that run in different directions, his satire and powerful imagery are all there, but his narrative is more direct. Hinting and masking opinions in the form of suggestive stories is not noticeable. In an article titled Fak El Sah’b ‘Dismantling The People’, the first statement was “the best solution for the time being is for President Husni Mubarak to leave his post” (2012, p. 345) and he continues the article explaining why. Mata Yu’lenoun Wafat El Thawrah ‘When are They Going to Declare the Revolution Dead?’ (p. 301) is a question posed and answered throughout the article. Ehna Betou’ El Utoubes ‘We are the Bus People’ (p. 321) starts in a similar manner, proposing a statement and arguing it in an almost scientific fashion. There might be some imagery or humor interspersed, yet not enough to cross over as both “literary” and “journalistic.”

Omar Taher wrote *Kameen El-qasr El-‘Aini ‘Ambush in Al-Qasr Al-‘Aini*’ chronicling the first year after the 25th January Revolution. The opening article is narrated by his new-born daughter, a fictional account that tells the story of the Revolution through the eyes of a child. Ruqayah writes that “the revolution encouraged her early arrival” (O. Taher, 2012b, p. 29) and then she thanks protestors for sacrificing themselves so she can have a better future. As far as storytelling techniques go, this piece is where it starts and ends. Titles such as Ansaf Nojoum El-Thawra ‘Revolution’s Half-Stars’ (p. 40), Mulahathat ‘Notes’ (p. 42), Masr Youm

Arba'ah Yanayer 'Egypt on the Fourth of January' (p. 50), Kano Fe Al Tahrir 'They Were in Al-Tahrir' (p. 54), Ka'anha Deyanah Jadeedah 'Like A New Religion' (p. 58), 'Adaset Al Thawrah 'The Revolution's Lens' (p. 89), and Hal Sayos'edoka I'dam Mubarak? 'Will the Execution of Mubarak Make You Happy?' are, as the titles suggest, argumentative, to the point, and void of symbolic details. Some essays, such as El-Habib El-Majhoul 'The Mystery Lover', have voice in terms of the author speaking in the first person, employing humor in making a connection between falling in love and electing a president (pp. 79–80). However, it is still to the point; there is none of the creative illusion that opens doors for the reader to think and try to interpret what the intended message is.

Egyptian columnists mastered writing about what they know, their realities, and the writing in Mubarak's era espoused focusing on ordinary details, magnifying, distorting, and using them to connect to bigger issues, as when Ma'ati wrote about the chirping of birds outside his window (2009, pp. 50-53), a detail many take for granted. He wrote from the perspective of an angry citizen burdened by debt and unemployment. To him the singing of birds outside his window is not the romantic symbol depicted in old movies, perhaps symbolizing the good old days, but a disconcerting noise, an indication of a looming argument, and a conscious decision made to annoy him. Omar Taher wrote about the friendship that joined him with the spider residing under the sink in his bathroom (2012a, pp. 9-12). He used the same technique of focusing on trivial details in 'The Mystery Lover', where what he viewed as qualities desired in a president were nothing related to politics, but merely things that indicate his unity with the common street man, such as getting food poisoning at least once in his life, borrowing a book and never returning it, knowing the price of a pack of cigarettes and a kilo of tomatoes, and having a hint of a dialect (2012b, p.

79). Glorification of the ordinary, symbolism, and other techniques associated with fiction were certainly more prolific prior the 2011 Revolution. Granted, in the case of Taher he still wrote literary journalistic pieces after the uprising, but they were outnumbered by argumentative articles. Was this the case across other forms of journalistic expression, or was it merely present in columns?

6.4 From Mubarak to Sisi: Literary Journalism and Digital Media

In many ways, the 25th January uprising owes, if not its success, at least its existence, to a form of journalism loosely defined as "giving people the tools to publish their own content" (Miller, January 7, 2005, para. 4). It goes by multiple names: grassroots, civic, or participatory journalism; but they all refer to the same concept of regular people becoming part of the news industry. It first came about with the explosion of blogs (Miller, January 7, 2005, para. 5). Harrington and Sager, authors of *Next Wave: America's New Generation of Great Literary Journalists*, argue that literary journalism enthusiasts feared the Internet, which was supposed to be the source of the form's demise. However, by bringing an unexpected renaissance of opportunity for practitioners and readers alike (2012, p. xii), the Internet might just have achieved the opposite. New websites such as *Byliner.com, Longform.org, Atavist.com* and *LongStories.net* are collecting literary journalism from all around the world, making it more easily available to readers. Some websites are taking the role of traditional publications, assigning stories for pay, and E-books grant anyone the ability to become a publisher (xiii).

A new media revolution started in the Arab world after 1990, inspired by the introduction of both satellite television and the Internet (Khamis & Sisler, 2010). El-Nawawy and Khamis declare that the introduction of the latter represented an important "shift from the monolithic, state-controlled and government owned media

pattern to a much more pluralistic and diverse media scene" (2013, p. 4). Blogs are an excellent example, defined as a form of "online diary where anyone with access to the internet can create a platform from which they may reveal to the world whatever is on their minds" (Seymour, 2008, p. 62). Blogging is free of charge, thus is more accessible, and allows ordinary citizens to participate in the news industry, which reduces the "passive" quality created by the state-controlled media, and furthermore, the addition of an interactive comments section allows for more people to participate and express opinions. Finally, there is the added option of anonymity should the author feel obliged to conceal his/her identity.

This section focuses on Wael Abbas's *Egyptian Awareness*, Nawarah Nejm's *Popular Front of Sarcasm,* and Mahmoud Salem's *Rantings of a Sand Monkey.* The reason for this selection is because of their popularity and reasonable success both domestically and internationally, Wael Abbas and Mahmoud Salem have received international accolades for their work as civil activists. Salem won the 2011 best English language blog award in the Deutsche Welle's blog Awards of 2011 (Davies, April 20, 2011), while Abbas has won several, including the Human Rights Watch's Hellman/Hammett Award 2008 (El-Katatney, July 5, 2008). Salem writes his content in English, Nejm and Abbas in Arabic, and all of them witnessed the four key stages that have marked modern Egypt: Mubarak, Revolution, Mursi, and now Sisi.

Egyptian Awareness was founded in 2004, before which Abbas was a journalist at the *Al-Dostour* newspaper and the German news agency *dpa* (el-Nawawy & Khamis, 2013, p. 16). Abbas reports on stories that call for political change and posts videos and pictures depicting torture and other human rights violations. El-Nawawy and Khamis characterize his blog as bold and aggressive in attacking Mubarak's re-

gime, often using profanities to express the extent of his dissatisfaction with the government's policies and to vent his anger (2013, p. 16).

On March 25, 2005, Abbas wrote a long article depicting a rather romantic picture of his city: Cairo. Characterized by stream of consciousness interspersed with vernacular, Abbas opens with a discussion of a short film then digresses to describing various topics and scenes from around the city.

مش مماتوججد ا يا ... كل اوم ة ا معهاهكثوارمن لاققيب والغريب...بناس بتحبني م

اوناس عاوزة تزتخلص مم..ممنمش س عاوزة تز تا او ييف ح تا . ييط . ا ط .توززوزاجيب

عيلل يطلعد اومتين نلههه الادينة جججانيجيوججو جتجيجمتوززتل قاققتق..قمتجوز

اققاقلا؟ اول لي ة يطي تي يي لعلي الف ك ا دي و ا ب اناتفرج ج الفيلم طبب ب طب مامكنتش

قلو جاججو جتمالل لاز قلها هكلهه ديه ؟

> When are you going to marry, Wael? ... A sentiment I hear a lot from relatives and strangers alike. People that love me, and others who want to get rid of me. People who want to be happy for me…but why marry and bring children to this world who will, like me, end up addicted to this city. Why take a wife when I'm already married to Cairo…Married to Cairo? The thought crosses my mind for the first time as I watch the movie. But if I'm not married to her, why am I so attached? (Abbas, March 25, 2005)

Another article from the same year Abbas notes was denied publication in *Al Dustour*. He writes a series of Hadiths and comments on them. He does not state so directly but the Hadiths concern humility, justice, and the rights of the people to hold their ruler accountable. He con-

cludes at the end that there "is no good in people who do not advise a governor on his subjects" (Abbas, 2005). Fast forward to 2011, particularly Febrary 8, with articles entitled 'Al-Qatta Prison Massacre' and 'Mubarak's Gold in UK' both muckraking attempts containing visuals accompanied by commentary. A December 19, 2012, blog post entitled Showayet Tashreed Men Al Madi 'A Little Displacement from the Past' as well as Tawaqaf 'an El-Qalaq Wa Ebda' Fe Hob El-Khara' 'Stop Worrying and Start a Love Affair with Shit' resembles an angry rant interspersed with profanity. Qallak Wa'el Abbas Rahet 'Aleeh 'They Say, Wael Abbas' Heyday is Gone' is no different; the author engages in an aggressive rant against a critic:

قلوت تبقى فيه أللف بتعلملي لي اي كنت باعمله- للحدي - سنة 2004

دوه كان الهدف لأأأأ! لأ ولأ الأمامكنتش باشتغل أعشا فانأ ن وسسسفلا

أذ! س نافس س س فأس اس كنت باعلل لل للس تشيي عليه! مكناش بنعلم للس س

لعشان نخش خمسهههمنافمة ! مش مقلوت تكل علي ل انن متناكة تافه خدى

تمولي ل واشتوى ركامو اربيكفر راز اي تيار سسسكيخ وللل عاس .

There are thousands that do today what I used to do in 2004 on my own. This was the goal all along, I was not in competition with myself or anyone else, I was not teaching people so I can compete against them, I was merely creating a model for others to follow. No fiddling bastard who probably took a loan to buy his camera can outdo the history of Wael Abbas. (June 27, 2013)

Nawarah Nejm started her blog *Jabhat El-Tahyees El-Sha'abiyah 'Popular Front of Sarcasm'* in 2006. She is an editor and translator at the Egyptian Radio and Television Union. Her father was a famous poet and her mother a renowned writer, both of whom are known for their political activism (el-Nawawy & Khamis, 2013, p. 16). One of her earliest entries, El-Nas Fi Shawate' Kafr El-Bateekh 'People at The Shores of Kafr El-Bateekh' is written in Standard Arabic, an allegorical account characterized by deep satire, its sub-context related to the injustices the working class are subjected to by the government. When she declares in the beginning, "The name 'kafr el-bateekh' is real and located in Domyat. The name has nothing to do with the chaos that is our political life" (N. Nejm, December 28, 2008), her sarcastic tone is pronounced particularly because *bateekh*, while literally a type of fruit, is commonly used to express something going south, a doomed situation.

نحن لا نعترض على اعتقال الرجال بدون تهمة ة قدد ت ن لاى ى لا على

حجمان سوء اسذلأطفال من عائلاتهم هو لاحتى حنعترض رتقدي لميمم الدولة

لممارع السمك ليثبت ان الدولة غرتر في توسيع ميناء دمييط. وبما ان مزارع

السمك تحول دولة فك ا دممتها الدولة ولقت تملك وك من دفع تعضيوات

للأهالي اللذين ان تدا نل ا للا ترفي ي ي ي ي ي المماررع،، لذذلا ن ك المماررع

يلس لذيذا ذو لعلمكو ليهو ي ي ي ي فعليه فألي الفكر لا يستحقون التعرض يو

> We do not object – that until now, men are detained without charge, nor do we object to their wives and children being unable to see them. And we don't even object to the state destroying fish farms to expand the Dumyat port. Since the farms prevent this, the country obliterated them, killed the fish without compensating the families who had to

> take loans to participate. We understand that this is because the fish taste unappetizing, and you know what… It had a pungent odor, therefore those families do not deserve reimbursement. (December 28, 2008)

Her topics vary. On one occasion, she defends her fellow blogger Wael Abbas (December 27, 2007) as he endures criticism over sharing a visual of police abuse that turned out to be fabricated. In another of the same date, she covers French President Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 visit to Egypt, then discusses the Tunisian Revolution (December 29, 2010;December 31, 2010). She did not shy away from criticizing the government and the President; on December 25, 2010, she enclosed a speech made by Mubarak with her commentary on each line (in red font). At the end of the speech she included a video of a comical sketch taken from a film about a man who recites a poem so meaningless it was laughable, the intention being to mock the president for delivering empty speeches that no one understood, perhaps not even the man reciting them.

قووا لمن لم تصهم ثمار النمو والتنمية.. انها في الطريق إليهم (تاس بنقت

دإا إلارة إعد المنريم معاة، ضلت لها يت ممة تاخد القرور أسدع)

> Tell those who are yet to receive the yields of growth and development that they are on the way (they are stuck at the Abd El-Men'em signal, I told them over a hundred times, Metro is faster) (December 25, 2010).

Jumping forward to her 2012 posts, her discourse is more blunt and aggressive. At one point she writes that the new Brotherhood government has no problems starting a civil war and in the same post she predicts the "end of Mursi's era"

(November 29, 2012). In another post she describes them as "a movement started by an elementary school teacher" (October 27, 2012), and in yet another she calls them cowards (October 12, 2012).

In comparison to Wael Abbas, El-Nawawy and Khamis maintain that "her blog is equally fierce and outspoken when it comes to criticizing the government. However, her blog has fewer profanities and milder language than Abbas's" (2013, p. 17). Nawarah writes almost entirely in dialect, and while she does not shy away from profanity, she shows more restrain and self-policing than Abbas. Her style is generally conversational; as the title of her blog indicates, she is fond of sarcasm. However, there were glimpses of storytelling along with clever allusions prior to 2011 that were replaced by aggressive and direct speech until she stopped blogging altogether in 2014.

When Mahmoud Salem started *Ranting of a Sand Monkey* in 2004, he was along with Abbas one of the pioneers in the Egyptian blogosphere. Characterized by its bold and sarcastic tone criticizing the political status quo (el-Nawawy & Khamis, 2013, p. 18), posts on this blog of literary journalistic merit are not many, yet those available exhibit techniques such as voice, details, scene-by-scene construction, dialogue, and factuality. First is the author's eyewitness account of the 2006 Ramses statue's relocation from the town square of the same name to a less polluted spot.

> The actual walk is very close to a religious experience. Here you are walking with a prupose [sic], braving the heat, the humidity, the cars, the Egyptian public and other unpleasantness on your little quest to say your Farewell to the Statue of the last great Pharaoh. It's almost like a Funeral, and you are there to pay your last respects and say goodbye. There seem to be others that share your sentiments…You

> realize that You are close because people are everywhere...Ramses is leaving. They say he doesn't like the pollution and the dust, so he too is moving to the suburbs!
>
> "I don't understand. All this Hooplah for a false Idol? What is wrong with those people?"
>
> "This is an Idol you Kafarah."[38]
>
> …Your Blood pressure rises, and you feel like killing some people until you find this old man crying: "For 50 years I have passed by this square, and he (the statue) was there. He was Egypt to me. And now, even he is gone. I don't know what I will do when I pass by this square tomorrow and not find him standing there." (Salem, August 25, 2006)

Another example from a 2007 post, titled "The body" describing the day he learnt that his grandmother died. He tells the story of that day through moving from one scene to another, describing in detail the rituals of Islamic burial, the Egyptian culture of grief, and some flashbacks to the author's childhood:

> "The Body is washed and ready if you want to say your final good-byes to her", One of the body-washing socialites told us. I get up, and my dad gets up, and we head again for the room. The Body is laying wrapped completely, cocoon-like, except the face, awaiting our final kisses and goodbyes. The Table she is laying on is musky, smelling of Jasmine and rose water, and so does her body. The room is full of people, and they are all trying to catch the final glimpse of her before

[38] Infidels.

> she is gone forever. At that moment, her two maids had heard the news and arrived, one has been with her for 20 years, the other for 50 years. They start wailing, kissing her feet, screaming about how she is finally rested and at peace, given how much she suffered with doctors the past few months. The situation becomes too intense, people start crying again. My aunt gets up, and covers her face. Now the body is completely covered. (Salem, August 16, 2007)

Salem (SandMonkey)'s style when the thread is personal is characteristically different from when it is political. Both examples are long essays, each telling one story through a scene-by-scene construction. Salem likes to provide plenty of details and document the way he feels at every stage. There is obviously no vernacular, considering he writes in English, yet his style is plain, occasionally bordering on the conversational. Narrative essays such as these contain internal and external dialogues. There are fewer profanities in narrative essays than the politically oriented ones. Just like Nejm, prior to the 2011 uprising Salem's subject matter varied. His earlier posts were mostly for entertainment, such as "How to Overcome Masturbation," "Clooney in Jelly Beans" (February 28, 2008), "Don't Touch Your Privates in Italy" (February 29, 2008), "Why the New Elissa Album Won't Sell" (December 29, 2007), among others. He occasionally discussed politics. Like Nejm, his postings during Mubarak's reign were timid, yet criticized police brutality, such as a post entitled "The Eid Sexual Harassment Incident" (Salem, October 30, 2006). Furthermore, American politics took up a significant part of his blog, particularly the 2008 elections.

After the uprising and throughout Mursi's reign his discourse changed significantly, and while the tone remained conversational, the subject matter was almost

exclusively domestic and his style was more to the point, resembling written reports as he often used bullet points. Titles such as "The Election Campaign Blueprint" (March 31, 2011), "10 Points" (March 28, 2011), and "Egypt: A Parliamentary Plan 2011" (March 23, 2011) concern statistics and what protestors need to do to move forward and who needs to have the people's support in an almost scientific fashion. Likewise, titles such as "For the Light to Come Back" (March 30, 2012), and "On The Presidential Elections" and "A Democratic Union" (March 4, 2012) discuss presidential candidates in a methodical manner. Titles like "Game Over" (December 14, 2012), "Imagine," "Tuesday is The New Friday," and "The Game No One Wins" (December 12, 2012) are essentially criticism of the president and his party in which the author both mocks and insults him.[39] Salem stopped writing regularly after 2013. Commenting on this he wrote a post entitled "Cheating Reality" where he says that as there is nothing to write about, it has become boring to "whine" about the status quo (Salem, January 5, 2015).

Although Literary Journalism is not easily located in *Rantings of A Sand Monkey*, what one can safely conclude is that, perhaps more so than Nejm, Salem displayed glimpses of storytelling and narrative inclinations that were obliterated from 2011 and after. Mursi's era, however brief, came with a reasonable degree of freedom of speech that was evident in the level of bluntness shown in criticizing the regime. Nonetheless, that did not necessarily help elevate the literary journalistic quality of certain columns and/or blog posts. Nejm comments on how the change in governance affected her writing in an interview with BBC Arabic's Jizal Khouri. She responded to the question:

[39] In one instance calling him a "Muppet" (Salem, December 12, 2012).

- كان عندك حرية؟
- قيس سبيل المقارنة بدلوقتي؟ طبعا مقارنة بأيام مبارك و قلت يمكن لسه لنيش لكن كنت بقدر أعبر في برنامجي بهامش الحرية أكتر من قلت بكتير ناقص عوقة تركم الأخبار شوية، هما ماكانوش مسيطرين على المؤسسات. ماكانوش يدروا قووا لمؤسسة اعلامي كذا... ماكانش عندهم سيطرة و بيمنعوا، مش زي زمان طبعا.

- Did you have freedom?
- Based on what we have now? Of course. Although I was incarcerated under Mubarak's rule, I could express myself through *Popular Front of Sarcasm* far better than today. Not to mention the period in which the Brotherhood were in control. They had no authority over the state's institutions, they were not able to stop anyone, which is not the case today. The current regime has control over institutions and is exercising it, unlike the past days of Mubarak." (BBC Arabic, April 6, 2016)

Nejm's sentiment is shared by several other journalists. Gihan Al-Gharabawi, to mention one, comments:

الأدب دخل ورقة الثورة لأنه خص أبنائها، كان في أي حاجة لازم تتغير الأنظمة كلها لأنها كانت أنظمة فساد أكلى كلما كان الاستبداد أكلى أكلى لأنه يضع الأوضاع بشكل نقدي أثناء الثورة وبعد الثورة أصبحت الكتابة الساخرة في ورطة وأصبحت فيها منافسة عالية مع المواقع التواصل الاجتماعي عموما بعد الثورة ومع الشعب نفسه فكل الناس أصبحوا صحفيين الآن على الفيس بوك.

Satirical literature before the Revolution, particularly in *Al-Ahram*

> newspaper, was at its best, because the more powerful, corrupt and highhanded a regime is, the more satirical writing shines, as it provides a better critical description of the status quo. After the Revolution, satirical writing suffered immensely. It is now in a competition with social networking sites, with the youth of the Revolution and the people themselves. Everyone is now a journalist on Facebook. (Mursi, April 2, 2015, para 12)

Poet and satirist Yasir Qatamish reiterates that he faced no problems writing and publishing as there was some space for expressing oneself in Mubarak's Egypt; the only prerequisite was for the writer to maintain a safe distance between himself, politics, and the president (Mursi, April 2, 2015, para 11). Both Gharabawi and Qatamish maintain there was more room available to express opinions prior to the Revolution. The key was to be oblique and dress up criticism well enough not to get censored. Neither Nejm, Gharabawi, nor Qatamesh states this openly, but whatever wiggle room they had in the past to comment on the status quo has been obliterated.

A conclusion can be made that whatever glimpses of literary journalistic merit the three bloggers had, they demonstrated before the Revolution. They could not express their opinions directly but criticized certain governmental institutions like the police and got away with it. Because they had to steer clear of certain topics, satire and other literary techniques were a popular front. Their discourse shifted dramatically when the Islamic Brotherhood won the elections. Today, all three of them have stopped blogging regularly, with both Abbas and Nejm writing their last post in 2014, and while Salem did not stop, his postings have been significantly fewer, with only one post in 2016, which is characteristically gloomy:

> You know those horror movies where a non-suspecting family finds out that their new house is haunted? You know how they perplexingly continue to stay there because they put everything they own into that new house, while you continue to scream at them to get the fuck out? How whenever someone says that they have nowhere else to go, you scoff and wish to reach into the movie and shake them until they realize that getting out alive is all that matters? How frustrated you get as they die one by one, with the haunted house swallowing their Fear-paralyzed Asses? Well…This house is haunted.
>
> Save yourselves.
>
> Not each other. Yourselves.
>
> Stay alive.
>
> Shake off the lie that you've become.
>
> The world is only as flat as we make it to be.
>
> Find your Elsewhere (Salem, October 7, 2016).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter tracked the progression of the essay/column as well as investigated citizen journalism as a possible literary journalistic venue in 21st century Egypt. After inspecting an array of columnists as well as some of the pioneers of the Egyptian blogosphere, one can conclude that while the atmosphere before the revolution was characterized by political, social, and economic suffocation, there was still room for a degree of masked criticism that is not present under the current climate. There was an identity crisis that had been culminating for decades, manifesting itself

in the columns investigated here: a move towards the familiar essay, an increase in code switching (CS), and use of the first-person narrative in a manner that resonates with Hunter S. Thompson's Gonzo journalism.

One of the demands of the January 25 Revolution was freedom of expression, and feelings of loss were replaced or overshadowed by the sudden emancipation that lasted until Mursi's toppling. Sisi's Egypt is characteristically similar to Mubarak's, however; censorship is escalated to the point where several bloggers have either chosen to stop writing or were forced to.[40] From a literary journalistic perspective, it is evident that traces of the form are more easily located in the writings prior to the revolution, such as in Yousif Ma'ati's collected articles in *Ana La Aktub wa Lakenny Ata'mal 'I Do Not Write, I Spectate'* (2007), *Han'eesh Keda W Nmoot Keda 'We Will Live Unchanged and Die Unchanged'* (2009), *Kalam Abee'h Khales 'Obscene Talks'* (2010), part of Jalal Ameen's *Qusr El Kalam 'Brief Talks'* (2009–2010) and *Mesr 'Ala Kaff 'Afreet* (2010), Khaled El-Khamisi's *Taxi: Hawadeet El-Mashaweer 'Taxi: Conversations on the Road'* (2008), Ashraf Tawfeeq's *Mabsouta Ya Masr 'Are You Happy, Egypt'*, and Gihan El-Gharabawi *Akl 'Eesh 'Eating Bread*'. Columns written during the Revolution and after had little to no narrative quality and were mostly sensational or investigative. All limits were obliterated, along with any real need for masking opinions.

As Nejm argued, the period following the Revolution was chaotic, as the regime's grip was unable to tighten, as was evident in the bluntness of articles in Ameen's *Qosr El-Kalam 'Brief Talks'* (between 2011–2012), Omar Taher's collec-

[40] Ahmed Douma and Alaa Abd El-Fattah are two well-known Egyptian bloggers who were among the 41,000-people imprisoned from 2014 to 2015 as part of a crackdown on opposition ("Egypt: Generation of Young Activists Imprisoned In Ruthless Bid To Crush Dissent," june 30, 2015)

tion *Kameen El-Qasr El-Aini 'Ambush at El-Qasr El-Aini'* (2012), and Mohammed Fathi's *Mursi Wa Domo'ie Wa Ibtesamati 'My Tears, Laughs, and Mursi'* (2012). As far as the question of literary journalism and blogs, whatever glimpses of storytelling, scene construction, details, and symbolism are present in the three bloggers examined are to be found in the posts written before 2011, after which their posts were plagued with profanity, anger, and a to-the-point approach in commenting on the status quo. Blog posts written after the 2013 coup, such as those by SandMonkey and Nejm, are gloomy and indirect. Thus, it can be argued that while the Internet has worked in service of Anglo-American literary journalism, it certainly has done little besides harming the Arabic form.

It was argued in Chapter Five that censorship breeds intelligent readers who can grasp messages hidden in what otherwise appears to be a fictional or sarcastic account.[41] Bassem Yousif, host of the banned TV satirical program *Al-Bernamej*, maintained this in an interview with *BBC Arabic*. He said that one valuable piece of advice given to him was that "if you cannot say what you want because of fear, poke fun at it (the fear) and the audience will get it" (August 23, 2016). This is to say, perhaps a degree of censorship aids in producing better "Arabic" literary journalism, as it motivates the author to put his creativity to good use, and the reader understands this and willingly participates. This is evident in the success of columnists such as Ma'ati, Gharabawi, and others who have utilized storytelling, humor, and code switching (CS) as a façade for their criticism. Yet in the blogosphere, granted that blog posts resemble the initial premise of the "essay" in presenting a natural flow of feeling and thought without much censoring, lack of veracity becomes a problem, for as there is no silent contract between reader and author it becomes a matter of hidden

[41] Refer to pp. 104 and 105.

agendas and outright deceit. Such a sentiment was expressed in an annual Arab bloggers' forum in 2014:

> Most bloggers are suspected of being local parties' agents," Tunisian activist Malek Khadraoui said at the public forum that closed the gathering. And with no guarantee of professionalism among citizen journalists, Arab audiences are left to choose between state-controlled official media and a cacophony of online voices, with little means to discern which ones to trust (Su, January 31, 2014, para. 3).

Although a degree of fiction is integrated in what otherwise is argued to be literary journalism here, the "deceit" factor is targeted at strict laws. The reader understands that some things cannot be expressed openly in a state-controlled media outlet, and thus does not take symbolism, construction of scenes, or writing behind a mask as an attempt to belittle their intelligence, but rather to challenge it. When fabrication occurs in the blogosphere, a venue created by the people for the people, the "deceit" then becomes about the reader, which is when the cycle of trust is broken.

Egyptian journalist and satirist Mohammed Abd El-Rahman comments that what makes practicing satirical journalism a challenge after the Revolution is that monitoring across all social media platforms now comes from "the people" (Mursi, April 2, 2015, para 11). Thus, falsification is taken more "personally." This is also what Gharabawi thinks, as she has claimed that the Internet has jeopardized the production of "quality" satirical writing since "everyone is now a journalist on Facebook" (Mursi, April 2, 2015, para 12)

It can also be argued that freedom of expression is not a pre-requisite for literary journalism, at least not in this region, for all three bloggers analyzed in this

chapter were actively posting in what media-wise was arguably the most emancipated period of modern Egypt (Mursi's reign); however, their posts were significantly lacking in terms of literary merit. Nonetheless, they had been writing pieces combining active fact gathering with storytelling techniques in a time characterized by political and economic suffocation (Mubarak's reign).

Chapter 7: Reflections on Arabic Versus Anglo-American Literary Journalism: A Conclusion

This study was set out to fill a crucial gap in the criticism of an emerging form. Most if not all the research done in this field has been Western oriented. The Arab region, despite its rich culture and complex history, has been completely ignored, and this thesis aimed at rectifying this lacuna by creating a historical account of Arabic literary journalism, as well as attempting to explore the ways it corresponds to its Anglo-American counterpart. This chapter will first outline the basic premise and findings of individual chapters, and second tie up the loose ends in terms of differences and/or similarities between the two forms based on these findings, thereby providing a necessary introduction to the theory and criticism of Arabic literary journalism that will hopefully be the starter pistol for future research.

While the first chapter was the introduction, the second chapter explored the possibility of Arabic literary journalism having a long history and determined just how deep those roots were planted. To do so, the research established first that literature, journalism, and ultimately literary journalism in the region are branches of the same mother tree, and to explore the latter one must first consider the history of both literature and journalism. Such path is not favored by some contemporary Anglo-American literary journalism scholars, but because the form as they know it developed in the shadow of other disciplines, this is not the case in the Arab world.

The research investigated the relationship between *al-qessah* 'story' and *al-khabar* 'news story'. Thus, a somewhat etymological approach in casting light on the word *qessah* 'story' was followed. It is defined by the most well-known dictionary of the Arabic language, the *Lisan Al-Arab*, as *news narrated* (الخبخ المقصوص). Its root word is *al-qass*, which means 'to follow a track'. Thus, to tell a *qessah* or story an-

ciently translated to "reporting" on someone's whereabouts. Only recently has the meaning shifted to become associated with fiction. *Al-qass* has two clear meanings, both mentioned in the Quran: to follow a track, and to narrate historically accurate stories. The etymology of the term *al-qass* is the ultimate example of where literature and journalism meet, as well as where they went wrong. The chapter looks at the way *al-qass* was exploited in different eras for different purposes. At one point, it was the equivalent of motivational speech in times of war, when the most talented narrators accompanied warriors to lift their spirits with their stories, sheer entertainment at another, and then a marketing strategy for caliphs, thus becoming an official job title during the Umayyad dynasty. However, the area which suffered the most damage when *al-qass* became plagued with falsehood was the documentation of Islamic history and Hadith collection. Other instances where *al-khabar* 'news story' and *al-qessah* 'story' met were proverbs and mythology. This chapter also introduced an essential tool to the study of Arabic literary journalism: humor. It looked at the different facets of its expression and how that changed from one era to another.

Chapter Three mainly analyzed Al-Jahith's *Book of Misers* along with some sections of his *Book of Animals* using characteristics of Anglo-American literary journalism. The section illustrated how the author was a literary man and a journalist all in one and how critics struggled to define him and his writing solely using communication or literary theories. Furthermore, it revisited *al-qassas* as the source for many of Al-Jahith's anecdotes. The latter is argued amongst the pioneers of Arabic literary journalism for several reasons: while he was not the first to collect and record tales of misers, he was the first to add a literary and equally comical flavor to them. He was diligent in filtering down the narratives he collected, as he was a member of Al-Mu'tazila, a doctrine that emphasizes logic and rationality and views uncertainty

as the first step towards obtaining the truth. Al-Jahith took nothing for granted and that showed first in his accurate reporting, and second in his transparency with the reader. The latter did not only reflect honest reporting, but also formed trust. Lastly, Al-Jahith was a bold reporter who did not shy away from asking the hard questions. He was current in his issues and that made him, not a literary man, nor a journalist, but a literary journalist.

Chapter Four made a substantial jump from the Abbasid Caliphate to 18th–19th century Egypt when the first printing press was introduced to Egyptians by the French campaign, marking the beginning of journalism in its contemporary form. The section discussed travel writing via epistolary journalism, *Maqamah* 'Assemblies', and the sketch as practiced by Rafa'ah Al Tahtawi in *Takhlis Al Ibriz Fi Talkhis Bariz,* Mohammed Al Muwaylihi in *Fatra Min Al Zaman,* Ali Mubarak in *'Alam El-Deen,* Ya'qub Sannu's *Abbu Naddara*, and Abdulla Al-Nadeem's *Al-Tankeet Wa Al-Tabkeet.* Like Chapter Three, this section highlighted a gap in the criticism of works such as *Fatra Min Al Zama* and '*Alam El-Deen*, as both house elements of journalism and literature combined. Thus, some critics consider '*Alam El-Deen* to be the first Arabic novel and not Haykal's *Zainab*, while some advocate for Khalil Khouri's *Wei, Ethan Lastu Be Efrangi/(* بإفرنـ اذن لـ ...وي *' Wow, So I am not European*', while others call it too journalistic. Roger Allen complains that all but *Fatra Min Al Zaman*'s literary merits have been overlooked (1992), which does the work injustice because its journalistic aspects make for a window through which a sliver of Cairene society at the time can be observed. This chapter maintains that literary journalism helps with situating such works, as it allows them to shine in their entirety.

Chapter Five examined the art of essay writing in the 20th century. It surveyed two types as per Chris Anderson's theory on literary essays, story essays and essays espousing elements of a narrative, and how each type carries out its "persuasive" quality through voice, humor, and vernacular. This chapter illustrated that this persuasive quality of Arabic essay writing means there is an emphasis on social utility rather than storytelling, which, unlike Anglo-American literary journalism, allows more room for the inclusion of discursive essays. The section also investigated the shift towards black humor, audience response, and the escalated use of vernacular and what that meant for Arabic essayists of this era.

Chapter Six continued to examine the essay in 21st century Egypt, as well as the role of the Internet in advancing the form. The chapter revolved around one question: Where does literary journalism in this time reside, online or still in printed form?

The section observed that in the case of writing during Mubarak's rule, although it was difficult, yet there was some room for masked criticism. It also explored the identity crisis the common Egyptian man felt at the time and its manifestation in columns through a move towards the familiar/personal essay, code switching, and use of first person narrative in a manner that resembles Gonzo journalism. Furthermore, it was concluded that literary journalism still resides in columns rather than the blogosphere due to issues of veracity and trust. However, both column writing and blogging demonstrated elements of literary journalism prior the 2011 revolution, though afterwards sensational journalism interspersed with occasional muckraking became the norm.

The Arab region is geographically, economically, politically, and culturally unique. The circumstances that surrounded the shaping of it as well as the different

periods of social stress have played a role in distinguishing its literary journalism production. The following section will attempt to paint a clearer picture of what literary journalism in this region looks like, how is it different or similar to the western form, and tie up loose ends in terms of relating the findings of individual chapters to the overall argument.

7.1 Reflections on Truth versus Facts, Inaccuracies and Literary Journalism in Light of Limited Freedom of Expression

Dismissal is testimony to the site of a presence

—John Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, p.40

Ibrahim Abu Sharif and David Abrahamson argued in their article, "Literary Journalism in the Middle East: The Paradox of Arab Exceptionalism," that there is a "relative absence" (2012, p. 1) of literary journalism in the region. Similarly, Lawrence Pintak describes the status quo of journalism in the region:

> There's long-winded journalism but not much literary journalism. There are several reasons for this. One, Arab journalism in general until recently was not very well developed (As cited in Abrahamson & Abusharif, 2012, p. 7).

Celebrated Egyptian author Nawal Al Saᶜdawi points a finger at poverty, saying "much of the Middle East is poor, and poor people tend to want to escape the harsher realities of their life. The result is that poor people live in their imagination" (as cited in Abrahamson & Abusharif, 2012, p. 5).

While Al-Sa'dawi makes a legitimate point, her premise that literary journalism and imagination are mutually exclusive is simply not true. First, this study has surveyed a plethora of "journalistic" pieces that display a great deal of imagination in

terms of stylistic choices from flashbacks to code switching (CS) for comic effect. Second, the very act of reporting, retrieving information, then rearranging them in a manner that is reader friendly is one that requires imagination, not memory. Daniel Lehman observes:

> Any literary text, whether fiction or nonfiction, even one's own memory of events, is arbitrated or "crafted" in important ways, rendering impossible the simple equation of "actuality" with nonfiction (October 2001, p. 335).

Similarly, Jonathan Raban writes:

> The generic line between fact and fiction is fuzzier than most people find it convenient to admit. There is the commonsensical assertion that while the novelist is engaged on a work of the creative imagination, the duty of the journalist is to tell what really happened, as it happened—to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. That distinction is easy to voice but hard to sustain in logic. For imagination and memory are Siamese twins, and you cannot cut them so cleanly apart. Writing from memory, trying to recreate events on the page as you remember them, and building them into the form of a story is an act of imagination (Raban, 1989, p. 165).

If we take this as the truth, then not only is Al Sa'dawi's claim nullified, but also factuality and accuracy as prerequisites to "good" literary journalism. If we believe that at least on paper everything is a construct and that facts stop being so once they are filtered through one's psyche, then is writing behind a mask a projection of the author or a fictional character? Is a scene written from memory with mixed chronology for dramatic effect a product of active fact-retrieving or a composite? If the line between fact and fiction is this fuzzy, wouldn't forsaking the pursuit of "the facts" in favor of insight and truth telling be more fruitful?

Moreover, historically speaking, fiddling with the line between fact and fiction did not deny some practitioners their position as literary journalists today. Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Mark Twain, George Orwell, Truman Capote, and Joseph Mitchell have all played with the boundaries at one point or another. *New Yorker* columnist Mitchell wrote *Old Mr. Flood,* a book depicting the life of eighty-year-old Mr. Flood, and Fulton Fish Market in New York City. In the author's note, Mitchell defends Mr. Flood, his composite, arguing that his fictional character does not detract from the truthfulness of the story, explaining: "Mr. Flood is not one man; combined in him are aspects of several old men who work or hang out in Fulton Fish Market. I wanted these stories to be truthful rather than factual, but they are solidly based on facts" (Mitchell, 2005, p. xi). In the 1990s Mimi Schwartz acknowledged that she used composites in her memoirs to protect the privacy of people who did not wish to be in her books (Clark, 2001, para.39). Daniel Defoe wrote *Journal of the Plague Year* about an event that occurred in 1665, while he was born in 1660. His position in the evolution of literary journalism, albeit as Hartsock states it "ambiguous" (2000, p. 115), is not denied. Bonamy Dobree argues that "he [Defoe] warmed to the subject of recreation: as you read, you felt it becoming ever more a personal

experience. Such *immersion* [42]in the subject fired his actualizing imagination" (1959, p. 427). The fact that *Journal of the Plague Year* is still considered to this day an integral part of the history of the form is evidence that immersion reporting, or as it is termed in this study "writing about what one knows," is a much more a valuable quality to hold on to in judging what constitutes "good" literary journalism, as opposed to veracity.

The article also claimed one of the reasons literary journalism is scarcely detected in the region is limited freedom of expression. It has been demonstrated that this is specifically what fuels the creativity of Arabic journalists to create stories using humor, vernacular, and deeply masked messages. Perhaps the authors failed to recognize this because they were committing the mistake of looking at the form strictly as a western phenomenon and judging other cultures' ways of expressing their own realities without considering that perhaps what might pass in America as "bad" literary journalism could be the crème de la crème of the form in Egypt. Granted, there are no set criteria to judge Arabic literary journalism, so the only way to determine what belongs to the form from what does not is to use western characteristics and definitions. The downfall of this approach is the possible disregard of many works that could otherwise contribute to the study of the form in this region. Hopefully, this thesis has made the right steps through the introduction and analysis of certain texts and why they should be considered part of Arabic literary journalism, to the end of changing the way the form is looked at and perhaps add to the existing canon.

[42] Italics are mine.

This thesis argues for the exact opposite of Mr. Abu Sharif and Mr. Abrahamson's claim because literary journalism, at least in this region, has proven it is better practiced when there is a degree of restriction. The 2011 Egyptian Revolution has taught us just that. One of its core demands was more freedom of expression, and for a little while people had that. In Mursi's Egypt, TV channels and media outlets were roaring with support on one side, opposition on the other. The sample analyzed was characteristically blunt, argumentative, and often fraught with anger, with little to no storytelling. As the need to mask messages vanished, authors were not compelled to resort to allusions and symbolism to express what otherwise could put them in harm's way. In fact, not only there was no need for creative masking, there was no room for such and no time as the country was changing so fast and people suddenly felt emancipated from constraints of the past. Critic James Wood made a similar connection between restriction and literary creativity in his *New Yorker* review of an Iranian novelist:

> Sometimes, the soft literary citizens of liberal democracy long for prohibition. Coming up with anything to write about can be difficult when you are allowed to write about anything...What if writing were made a bit more exigent for us? What if we had less of everything? It might make our literary culture more "serious," certainly more creatively ingenious. Instead of drowning in choice, we would have to be inventive around our thirst. Tyranny is the mother of metaphor... (Wood, 2009, p. 1).

In this sense, Arabic literary journalism emphasizes truth rather than facts and thrives under censorship**.** Perhaps western readers might frown upon Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" should they learn he did not really shoot an elephant. As an

Arab reader, the experience depends too little on the surface story and more on the embedded message. This is not to give permission to fabrication, but rather allow the Arabic manifestation of the form to exist on its own terms. After all, audience *is* key.

In fact, Eric Heyne proposes a similar distinction in his effort to formulate a theory of the form. He argues that there is a difference between what he calls "factual status"—the author's "intention" that a narrative is a transcription of reality—and "factual adequacy"—a question that "readers would have to resolve individually or by debate" (Heyne, 1987, p. 481). Heyne uses *In Cold Blood* as an example. The book has factual status according to the intentions Capote announces in the book's subtitle, *A True Account.* Moreover, that factual status is reflected in the book's prefatory acknowledgements, when the author says all the material is taken from either his own observations, interviews, or transcripts. However, some critics have since offered evidence that Capote invented or fictionalized passages in the book. Such findings would diminish the work's factual adequacy, not its factual status (as cited in Hartsock, 2000). Heyne maintains that authorial intention and audience response are key to situating literary journalism among literary forms. He is also not bothered with untruths if they do not damage meaning. His essay is willing to distinguish between accuracy and value, hence to manipulate information so as to mislead the reader is an inaccuracy that harms, while an aesthetic decision to modify facts can be tolerated.

This further supports what was demonstrated in Chapter Six about how the World Wide Web has harmed the form rather than help it. Despite the advantage of more freedom than the printed press, the Egyptian blogosphere, particularly during the Revolution as well as Mursi's reign, was fraught with inaccuracies. "Inaccuracies" here is used with reservation, because it does not necessarily translate to lies or

fabrication, but rather managing facts in a manner that manipulates the reader and provokes either feelings of hate or sympathy. This was reflected in essay writing of the same period as well.

Let us return to ‘Omar Taher, who published his *Kameen El-qasr El-‘aini ‘Ambush in Al-qasr Al-‘Aini’,* a collection of articles he wrote during the Revolution. As discussed previously, there was little storytelling to account for; what dominated the book was a sensational vibe that mainly targeted the toppled president Mubarak and his supporters (*Al-Fulool/ الفلول*) in articles such as Kameen El-Qasr El-Aini ‘Ambush in Al-Qasr Al-Aini’ and Sadeeq El-Fallah ‘The Farmer’s Friend’, then the Islamic brotherhood in essays like Comic Club El-Ekhwan ‘The Brotherhood’s Comedy Club’. Mohammed Fathi’s collected articles were written in the period following the Revolution. Titled *Mursi Wa Domo’ie Wa Ibtesamati ‘My Tears, Laughs, and Mursi’,* also displayed a general tone of resentment that is demonstrable in the title itself. Fathi states in the preface that the title of the book intentionally mimics that of an Ehsan Abd El-Qudoos novel named *Dammi Wa Domo’ie Wa Ibtesamati ‘My Blood, Tears, and Laughs’.* The decision to replace ‘My Blood’ with ‘Mursi’ the author states, is a reminder of the lives lost in hope of a better future, blood spilt, as the author writes, that the president did not honor (2012, p. 12).

Hartsock says that “narrative” literary journalism aims to narrow the gap between subject and object (2000, p. 59). This means that good literary journalism needs to be written for all time, extracting universal significance from isolated experience. Good Arab essayists, columnists, and fiction writers such as Mohammed Al Muwailihi, Abdulla Al-Nadeem, Ya’qub Sannu’, Ali Mubarak, Ghassan Kanafany, Rashad Abu Shawar, Mustafa Ameen, Zakariya Tamer, and Mohammed Al Maghout did that through immersion reporting/writing about what they know, sometimes uti-

lizing humor as a buffer to cushion the blow in times of stress, to relate to their readers, or for sheer entertainment, establishing voice through use of the vernacular and code switching, understanding that their stories were not really about themselves but about crafting a mirror through which the readers can see themselves and their problems reflected. They were trying to make sense of a chaotic world and stumbled along with the reader in search of answers that may never be found, but, as established about 19th century travel writing, the emphasis is on the journey itself and the lessons learnt then and there, not the result.

Some established fiction writers/ journalists, on the other hand, often failed at narrowing the gulf between their subjectivities and the objectified world, Taha Hussain being one example. Like a true Moralist, perhaps Hussain intentionally widened the gap between the subject and object because he needed to be in a place of teaching, thus placing himself on a pedestal higher than his reader. His elevated prose and complicated structures make Hadeeth Al-Arbe'aa 'Wednesday Talk' a heavier read than, say, Fares Fares (Kanafany's column). Others widened the gap through their "managing" of facts in a way that aims to sway the reader rather than present them with opportunities to interpret and question. True, this study has defended the notion of playing on the fine line between fact and fiction. However, as Heyne maintains, when it is an "aesthetic" choice, or one born out of necessity while keeping audience response in mind, inaccuracies as such are forgiven and even enjoyed. Yet, as with 20th century party politics and the literary wars related to them, columns written during the Egyptian Revolution and after as well as in the digital media, the element of "managing" was more about manipulating the reader at the expense of truth telling, which is bad literary journalism across the board.

7.2 Reflections on Trust and the Reader-Author Relationship

A good illustration of how different the reception of a certain work when trust is at play is the reaction Australian writer Anna Funder received in Germany toward her book *Stasiland.* The book came out in 2002 and depicted the story of ordinary citizens caught up in the web of the East German State Security (Stasi). She wrote it based on a series of interviews and it was immediately picked up for publication in Australia. It was shortlisted for numerous prizes in both Australia and Britain (Josephi & Muller, 2009). However, in Germany it accumulated 23 rejections before it was accepted. When the book was finally published in Hamburg, one review in the *Sächsische Zeitung* in Dresden, "Collapsing houses and confused people—Today Australian author Anna Funder presents her book Stasiland in Dresden," read:

> Why does an Australian have to tell us what it was like? … how does she arrive at her judgement? What interest does an Australian have in the GDR? . . . A picture of the GDR that only shows victims and perpetrators? . . . Does she ever wonder how she herself would have behaved had she lived here? (as cited in Josephi & Müller, 2009, p. 74)

Another reviewer who had grown up in the former GDR wrote in the *Hamburger Abendblatt* that GDR was not entirely:

> A grey Stasi prison, an unloved, and often hated state, which limited and humiliated us, which watched and surveyed us, but [it was also a place] in which we did not feel persecuted 24 hours a day, and from which we managed to wrest a fulfilling life. (as cited in Josephi & Müller, 2009, p. 74)

According to Josephi and Muller, no one accused Funder of falsifying the facts (2009, p. 74). The mixed reactions toward her book were arguably an issue of audience response and trust, not fact versus fiction. Funder depicted what seemed to *her* a factual representation of the truth. She conducted interviews, gathered information and wrote what she perceived as reality, and it was well received by the people whose experiences and opinions of the former regime did not collide with hers; they had no personal experience to refer to, and thus she was the authoritative voice in which they trusted. Yet when it came to the German public, their reaction was different because their view of the truth did not correspond to hers. She portrayed an evil system, but to some of its survivors this was not matter of fact. She did not gain their trust because she did not experience life under GDR first-hand, and consequently her book was hardly reflective of *their* reality. In other words, Funder's book did well in Australia because her readers trusted her judgment, but in Germany they did not, and the book was received poorly.

Evaluating the factuality of a certain anecdote or story does not solely depend on internal factors in the story; indeed, it perhaps does not depend on them at all. Heyne provides an example that illustrates this further. Suppose a friend is telling a story. The proper response is indicated by the type of story we think we are being told, and that in turn is influenced by factors such as our relationship with the storyteller, the social context, and the antecedent conversation in addition to the properties of the story itself (Heyne, 1987). This implies that even if the storyteller claims a story is true, our "believing" depends more on how we relate to them as oppose to hard evidence.

Identifying with the reader as observed in this study is essential to an Arab literary journalist. It is in part the reason behind the move away from Modern Stand-

ard Arabic (MSA) toward the vernacular. Several columnists dedicate their books to the "common man," Ashraf Tawfeq and Yousif Ma'ati to mention a few. Unlike Anglo-American literary journalism, the Arabic form is underdeveloped. There are no defining lines or specific standards to hold practitioners against. In fact, a discussion of Arabic literary journalism as a stand-alone practice with characteristics and defining lines has never been initiated in any shape or form.

Successful Egyptian columnists such as Omar Taher and Yousif Ma'ati resort to scene construction and pretend dialogues, yet continue to be widely read. They are not accused of fabrication or betraying their craft, because they made no promises to be accurate or "factual." If perhaps Ma'ati was a journalist in the traditional sense, he would be expected to uphold a certain level of precision. Many Arabic literary journalists are fiction writers as well. Ma'ati writes movie scripts. Mohammed Hassanien Haykal, Mahmoud Al Sa'dani and Ghassan Kanafany were accomplished fiction writers before turning to journalism, and perhaps that is why they excelled as columnists, not reporters: As columns at their best combine the purpose of journalism with the finesse of literature, readers turn to them aware and willing. In this sense, when it comes to Arabic Literary Journalism, audience response trumps factuality, and that depends on trust rather than mere compilation of facts.

7.3 Reflections on Writing about What One Knows

This study advocates emphasizing immersion reporting rather than accuracy as a prerequisite for producing quality literary journalism. It was demonstrated how factuality is difficult to attain, while immersion reporting is one quality that, if done right, yields compelling narratives that narrow the gulf between subject and object. Egyptian columnists practice immersion reporting through writing about what they know. In a sense, they do as Joan Didion did in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem.* She

is neither a cameraman (uninvolved) nor writes about things that do not interest her. She channels her subjectivity to close the gap between her and the objectified world. Falling upon her subjectivity and what it chooses (Hartsock, 2000, pp. 152-153). In a way, she too is writing about the things she knows, and "knows" here suggests full immersion, getting involved and risking one's emotions to write a "truthful" account. Writing about what one knows could potentially be what separates "good" from "bad" literary journalism. For instance, John Hartsock compares John London's *People of the Abyss* and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* Agee went to live with poor white southern sharecroppers in Alabama and wrote an intimate account in which he "dared to descend emotionally into those lower depths" (p. 151), while London revealed his intention behind writing *People of the Abyss* was first and foremost money (as cited in Hartsock, p. 150).

Hartsock makes a distinction between sensational journalism, muckraking, and narrative literary journalism and maintains that London's subjective outrage in the service of his socialist cause prohibited narrowing the distance between subjectivity and object (p. 149), and this coupled with the author's "flight from the other" (p. 150) resulted in a work that Hartsock files under muckraking and sensationalism, but not narrative literary journalism (p. 149).

Egyptian columnists dabbled with muckraking and sensationalism, particularly in the 20th century when newspapers were engaging in party politics and more recently in the blogosphere. Wael Abbas was occasionally a muckraker as well as a sensationalist, the SandMonkey as well. However, depending on the time frame, skilled columnists, particularly the satirical, were seldom this or that because they wrote about what they know, and that entails immersion, something they do effort-

lessly, and that immersion or saturation in what they write creates a shared community where the author and reader both try to make sense of their fragmented reality.

In a way, what they do is what John Berger describes as "sharing subjectivities between teller, listener (spectator) and protagonist" (1982, p. 286). They do this with the aid of voice created through code choice, humor, and other literary techniques. On the other hand, muckraking, being the half sibling of investigative reporting, can take weeks or even months to research and report (Applegate, 2008, p. xxii), a luxury columnists under strict deadlines do not have. Muckraking also requires a level of freedom that Egyptian columnists in Mubarak's era did not possess, and thus muckraking is more easily located in the blogosphere during the less scrutinized period of the Revolution and Mursi's Egypt.

To sum up, muckraking as well as sensationalism surfaced during periods of chaos when there was reasonable freedom for some columnists and many bloggers to express their distaste of the status quo. Prior to that, criticism as such was practiced in a much more tamed fashion, and it also helped that journalism as we recognize it today started at the hands of fiction writers who transported their literary talents into their journalistic endeavors. True, an essay's first and foremost function is to persuade, which is why essay writing occupies a rather controversial position within western literary journalism. However, if done in a subtle, non-judgmental manner while keeping the audience in the know, narrative essays along with the discursive can have a place in the Arabic form.

7.4 Reflections on Judgment versus No Judgment in Literary Journalism

To be non-judgmental is not the same as being objective. It is rather to engage and immerse one's self in the subject matter in hope of understanding the oth-

er's subjectivities. Immersion reporting entails that a literary journalist must dig deep and risk getting emotionally involved while they get inside the heads of their subjects. This is what aids the production of "good" literary journalism. When John Griffin wanted to write about what it was like to be black living in the South, he did not behave like the gentleman with a seat at the grand stand. In the preface to *Black Like Me*, he writes:

> How else except by becoming a negro could a white man hope to learn the truth? The southern negro will not tell the white man the truth. The only way I could see to bridge the gap between us was to become a negro (2004, p. 11).

Nonetheless, there is a risk that comes with this type of reporting, that of over relating to the subject matter in a way that significantly influences the narrative. Robert Alexander writes about the "uncanny correspondence" or "doubling" (2009, p. 57) in literary journalism. One of the first examples he gives is the parallels between Truman Capote and his protagonist, convicted murderer Perry Smith. Both were raised by alcoholic mothers, both spent time in foster homes, both were victims of childhood abuse, and both turned to art for consolation (as cited in Alexander, 2009, p. 57). Capote was so drawn to him, much more than to Hickock,[43] that it was Smith as opposed to the victims, the investigators, or the lawyers who dominated the book (Tompkins, June, 1966, p. 56). Harper Lee, Capote's childhood friend and co-author, commented, "I think every time Truman looked at Perry he saw his own childhood" (June, 1966, p. 56).

[43] The second killer.

In Cold Blood is often cited in discussions of literary journalism even though some critics have found multiple discrepancies in the narrative. Philip K. Tompkins wrote an article titled "In Cold Fact" where he detailed places where Capote deliberately or accidentally departed from the actual events. Tompkins concludes that the very least he put his own observations into the mouths and minds of other characters, and at the worst he created a confused portrait of the murderer Perry Smith:

> By importing conscience and compassion to Perry, Capote was able to convey qualities of inner sensitivity, poetry and a final posture of contribution in his hero. The killer cries. He asks to have his hand held. He says, "I'm embraced by shame." He apologizes. It is a moving portrait but not, I submit, of the man who actually was Perry Smith – the man who, in real life, told his friend Cullivan he was not sorry … (Tompkins, June, 1966, p. 57)

Henye argues that inaccuracies do not necessary harm the "nonfiction" quality unless they affect meaning. In his article "Toward a Theory of Literary Nonfiction" he concludes:

> Capote did not achieve the "immaculate" correspondence to events that he claimed. However, it is the influence of his inaccuracies upon the meaning of the book that is fatal. Complex truths may be well served by inventions, exaggerations, slanting, and other transformations of fact. But in the case of *In Cold Blood*, the inventions concern the character of Perry Smith, and his precise motivations are at the thematic and aesthetic heart of the book. Capote's meaning is flawed by his inaccuracies (1987, p. 486).

Capote's approach was initially non-judgmental, in that he dared to descend into the darkness and make sense of it rather than to judge or run from it. Where he went wrong was allowing himself to get too involved. Perhaps experiencing what Alexander calls an "uncanny correspondence" with the convicted murderer influenced the way the latter is portrayed in the story; humanizing him, highlighting an element of remorse that Smith did not necessarily possess. This is the culprit of the nonjudgmental approach in literary journalism, particularly when the subject matter is not the easiest to comprehend or relate to. To peel back the outer layer and try to understand the subjectivities of the other as opposed to reflecting judgement takes a great deal of skill, and as demonstrated by Capote and Smith, at times this approach backfires, influencing the narrative in ways that otherwise would not occur if the author had kept a safe distance. Perhaps in trying to make Smith, a cold-blooded murderer, more understandable, Capote unintentionally "projected his own vision of the world onto Smith" (Tompkins, June, 1966, p. 56).

Admittedly, it is hard to find examples of non-judgmental, balanced immersion reporting in Arabic columns, ones that do not overshoot the aim to sensationalism. In fact, it is easier to detect pieces situated on the opposite end of the spectrum. Perhaps book length nonfiction is a better venue for such an approach, as it takes extensive research and investigation to reach that level of intimacy with the subject matter, and there are some compelling examples of this form[44] that due to the scope of this research cannot be explored here. However, a close rendition can be found in Rashad Abou Shawer's collected articles, *Ah Ya Beirut 'Oh Beirut'*, where he writes sketches describing the city and all it encompassed during the 1982 Lebanon War. On the cover, the author writes:

[44] Ghassan Kanafany's *Umm Saa'd* to mention one.

مامأقووهءللقارئ البرعرريثما كا ن: ذانتكلب ب بيوتوت توهو هكتاب االسطيني

-العيهيي باميتييز – وتلك باتتت... كشهادةهمن الميدان يلقاوقك كلا ئنئصنعها

نللس س البسطاء ...

> What I would like to tell the Arab reader – wherever he might be: This is the book of Beirut, a Palestinian Arab book well deserving of the name, and your book too. A testimony from the field conveying facts crafted by ordinary people … (Shawer, 2001).

True to his words, the book is dominated by articles about people: Ordinary, otherwise insignificant faces from around the city. Abou Shawer writes about ones he admires, along with ones he does not care for—both are portrayed in a neutral light. He is a fly on the wall, a detached observer painting a picture for the reader to see. The average length of an essay is three pages, which is not ample space to create a full picture, yet Abou Shawer manages to catch the attention of the reader with his careful details and vivid imagery. He writes about Umm Ahmed the merchant and her many children, Umm Busharah the Palestinian-Lebanese whose smile Abou Shawer writes is "home" for tired souls (2001, p. 77), Umm Nathem and her husband Abou Nathem, Umm Ali, Mohammed, Abou Khalil, and others. Abou Shawer purposefully writes about mothers, fathers, children, and freedom fighters from different ethnicities and faiths, exemplifying a key theme of togetherness in the face of hardship.

Each character is unique in his or her own way. Abou Shawer makes no effort to involve himself beyond being a facilitator, bringing their stories to life. His immersion reporting rests in the fine, ordinary details that he observes and glorifies. He

manages to extract enough meaning that upon finishing, the reader is left feeling like they know the characters; this could not have been achieved without Abou Shawer leaving his seat in the grandstand and asking the hard questions, not just observing but living with those characters (which he actually did) and experiencing what makes them who they are, and engaging his subjectivity so far as to pull the threads of the story together but also keeping it in check as to not make the story about him or his view of the world in which they live.

El-Walad El Kurdi Wa Al-Rajul El-Falastini 'the Kurdish Boy and Palestini-an Man' is one interesting embodiment of the approach in question because the main character is one that Abou Shawer is not fond of; however, beyond stating so in the beginning of the article, the author makes no other attempts to express his dislike. Abou Maher is a security man, a job title that comes with a certain nasty reputation. His physical attributes, the way he walks, and his glares and thick voice are all de-tailed and further add to Abou Shawer's first impression. Yet under the air raids the author saw a different side of him. He observes:

القميص يحنسسسعلى كرر ههخلخخخخالبنطلون ممقق وصقير وينتلل

حء خ ا ا ير ءفا ل ا فاب ا ئالرلل... لمميغادر أب و ا متممعقومتي يم

ال ا ئاطئئؤ هو هلاحيتزحزح تنفججالقذا ئئئودتممالأبنيةوهو هفي موقعه

وعندمامتهدأ يحضرر الشاي وأحييني القهوة، ومامتيسسسسنن طعام..

كلم ا رآذ ينادي ويخخج منلفة قربهمر غيفو يفرنف ف صغيف و

حبة بندورة أو ما يتسسر..سويقول:لي ان تـ كل،فلت تكتب.

وأقول لنفسي:يالي ريحترم ر الكتابة ويفرح بالكل ان،ن ا،ة،،و،انليس

رجل امن.

> The shirt recedes on top of his massive abdominal region, short trousers that are torn, light sports shoes filled with sand, Abou Maher did not leave his spot. Come the aircraft and he does not budge. Shells explode and shatter buildings, he is still there. When things cool down he brings tea, sometimes coffee, and whatever food available. Whenever he sees me, he extracts a loaf or half a loaf of bread and a tomato from a pouch nearby, saying: You write, you must eat. And I say to myself: he who respects and rejoices in the written word is a human being, not a security man (2001, pp.82-83).

One picture painted among the many with which Abou Shawer fills a five-page essay, humanizing Abou Maher who had been but an idea, a job title. The reader comes to such a realization through scene-by-scene construction, not judgment. He is shown, not told.

7.5 Reflections on the Narrative versus Discursive

Addison and Steele's relationship to the western form is somewhat debatable, as argued by Hartsock, who says that not all forms of nonfiction operate in the same mode and divides the modes of narration into four types, including temporal narration and special narration, with the discursive mode including exposition and argument (p. 136). He argues that there are two risks that come with the discursive mode:

> First, it risks critical rebuke from elitist circles for reducing to the lowly level of a journalism what has, or at least once was viewed as having a pedigree and lineage worthy of poetry and drama, and one that was viewed in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries

> as being the "dominating form" above the novel …. Second, and as a corollary to the first, placing literary journalism as the kind examined here next to its better known discursive sibling runs the risk of continuing to marginalize it in the larger shadow of the scholarship of that sibling. (p. 137)

Despite this, he does not dismiss the discursive essay as part of literary journalism, because if he did, the result would be the alienation of the likes of Addison, Steele, and H.L. Mencken.[45] Arguably, much of the problem with discursive essays has to do with the low stature journalism historically holds in Anglo-America. Once it was associated with the semi-literate and Grub Street, those who wrote creatively found getting paid for it unpalatable. Virginia Woolf writes about that in Chapter 19 of *The Common Reader:*

> To write weekly, to write daily, to write shortly, to write for busy people catching trains in the morning or for tired people coming home in the evening, is a heart-breaking task for men who know good writing from bad. They do it, but instinctively draw out of harm's way anything precious that might be damaged by contact with the public, or anything sharp that might irritate its skin. (2016, para. 18)

Woolf not only outlines the difficulty of writing creatively in a limited space, but also suggests that both reader and content could potentially suffer harm. Hers is a condescending and perhaps limited view of essay writing, yet not uncommon. While it might be questionable where the discursive essay fits in the Anglo-American form, there is a place for it in Arabic literary journalism.

[45] An American journalist, literary critic, and satirist.

The history of journalism in the region is unique compared to Anglo-America. Journalism was not viewed as having a lower stature than literature (although the latter is revered), yet because respected literary figures such as Taha Hussain, Mohammed Hasanien Haykal, Abbas El-Aqqad, and others were also writing columns in the 20th century and travel writers were publishing their chronicles in newspapers in the 19th, journalism was not viewed as the uglier sibling of literature but an extension of it—both were branches of the same mother tree, Siamese twins growing in one womb separated at birth around the time of *Al-Nahdah* 'Renaissance'. It was only recently that standard journalism became either state controlled or severely oppositional.

The second point regarding the danger of casting literary journalism in the shadow of journalism studies is perhaps a legitimate fear for the Anglo-American form, a form that recent when it comes to its scholarship, is yet gaining prominence with journals and college degrees dedicated to its study. There is also such a substantial amount of research in this field that one can safely say it is at a stage where distinctions, categorizations, and subcategorizations can be made.

This did not just happen; it took years and the form is still emerging. Arabic literary journalism must journey the same—this study does not suggest opening all doors, but rather allowing the voyage to take place, which cannot begin with exclusions. As argued in Chapter Two, for any conversation about an Arabic form to start, this study must take the path least favored by Anglo-Americans of studying literary journalism from the perspective of its two siblings. This is nothing but a start, and a necessary one at that, because if we want to reach a point in the future when literary journalism is a discipline taking its rightful place next to literature and journalism, this stage in the process is inescapable. It is but a part of the journey, not the destina-

tion. In this sense, the narrative as well as the discursive can be part of Arabic literary journalism. This might change as the form develops. However, for the time being both varieties fit comfortably within the boundaries of this uncertain form.

7.6 Reflections on Storytelling Versus the *Utile et Dolce*

Latin for **"**useful and pleasurable," this term was used by Iona Italia to describe the literary journalism of the 18th century British essay periodical pioneers Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. The same quality applies to the study of literary journalism in the Arab world. Hartsock writes that Anglo-American literary journalism places the emphasis on storytelling (2000, p. 113). Norman Sims uses the term "artistry" (2009, p. 10). Both agree that in America much of the focus is on style: how innovative are the literary techniques, how effective the scene construction is, etc. Such emphasis is apparent in the characteristics American scholars put forward as the criteria for judging "acceptable" literary journalism. Yagoda and Kerrane omitted various samples of good literary journalism from their anthology *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism* because their authors did not display techniques that had not been seen before (1997). Yagoda in *The Sound on The Page* argues that any mundane topic can be enlivened by voice (2004).

While Yagoda puts style first, content second, when it comes to Arabic literary journalism, the opposite is true. Content comes first, style is a close second. The notorious comedian Jon Stewart once said, "topical political satire has the shelf life of an egg salad" (as cited in Yousif, January 2014, p. 86). Political discourse has an ephemeral quality that is hard to overcome using standard journalistic practices. Stylistic choices of Arab columnists, such as experimenting with chronology, dialogue, symbolism, constructing scenes, and composing character types, work in service of

extending the expiry date of such satire. In this sense, Arabic literary journalism emphasizes social utility as opposed to storytelling, content above style.

Furthermore, social utility outplays aesthetics/fine writing because of censorship and the need to mask the bitter pill of criticism in the garb of a story or a funny anecdote. Because of the nature of the Arabic language, when columnists/essayists focus on style as opposed to content, the result is contemptuous and often widens the gulf between their subjectivities and the objectified world. Taha Hussain, while a skilled fiction writer and journalist, often failed at writing good discursive essays that translate into good literary journalism. When it comes to the Arabic form, the embedded message and how the reader can relate to it is what comes first. This is why the discursive route is frowned upon by modern Western literary journalists, while it is welcomed in the Arabic form: When it comes to purpose, Arabic literary journalism still resembles 18th century essay periodical writing, particularly that of Addison and Steele.

7.7 Reflections on Neutralizing Agents and Writing behind a Mask

Laughter is deeply rooted in Arabic/Islamic culture from *Hijja* to the Prophet Mohammed's innocuous humor to Al-Jahith's satire until today. Al-Jahith's intentions for mocking his misers differ from Ghassan Kanafany's linguistic humor. However, there is one thing all types of Arabic humorous literary journalism have in common, in terms of action—it amounts to nothing. The real function of the latter rests in its neutralizing quality. Keeping the status quo with minimum "damage." Allen Klein argues that our suffering is not a result of our difficulties but how we perceive them, and humor allows us to have a more positive outlook towards that (1989). Nicol Force agrees, writing that humor provides distance and a chance to heal (2011). It can be argued that black humor dominated the columns analyzed here,

particularly in the 20th century, as it raised morale and allowed people to live with constant fear, threats, and irritations (Obrdlik, 1942). It treats the morbid but other than letting people deal with their anger, it provides no proposals for improvement (Solomon, 2011). Laughter allows people to make sense of their fragmented realities in a way that permits a certain release before resuming their difficult lives once more.

Black humor coupled with writing behind a mask, as in Kanafany's *Fares Fares*, provides an ideal venue to make sense of a chaotic world devoid of freedom. Columns that utilize both in a way embody the spirit of Bakhtine's *Carnavalisque*, a term coined in his book *Rabelais and His World* (1984). The medieval carnival was not just a physical space where people celebrated, it was a construct where social structures were flipped, taboos erased, and suppressed desires satisfied. Fools and prostitutes were crowned while kings and queens were mocked and dethroned. This lasts for a moment in time before everything returns to the way it was. Thus, when Kanafany bitterly mocks the Egyptian Air Force (1996, p. 143) after the Six Day War, liberated by his *eidolon*,[46] he was able to express himself in a manner that otherwise would have put him in jeopardy. In addition, mockery lowers the status of its subject matter, making the author and by default the reader feel superior, thus raising their morale. Just as in the carnival, the flipping of the power structure only lasts the length of an article, but it provides a vent so that people do not explode, threating the current system. In this sense, humour in Arabic literary journalism is not a form of resistance or a vehicle of change but a stabilizing agent. If anything, banning it threats absolutist regimes more than if ridiculing them were common place. Just as Mustafa Ameen said, he battled the gruesome years in prison with laughter and letter writing. He was hoping to retrieve and publish them once he was set free. Unfortu-

[46] Alter ego.

nately, many were burnt out of fear; he commented that this was to be expected, as letters from political prisoners were more dangerous in the eyes of authorities than a thousand bombs.

7.8 Reflections on Code Switching (CS) and Mirroring Reality

In a world where the written word is censored, few journalistic venues can claim they enjoy an intimate relationship with their target audience. Those that practice some form of Arabic literary journalism arguably do. Persuasion is the basic function of an essay, and as discussed in Chapter Five, this is preconditioned by the establishment of a bond with the reader, one that is either based on superiority (if the author assumes the role of a Moralist) or equality (if the author assumes the role of a Realist). This research discovered that not only does Arabic literary journalism speak to its readers on an intimate level, but also speaks "of them," reflecting their realities in various ways, one of which is through CS.

On the one hand, Sims states that the transformation to vernacular prose accompanied the earliest rise of journalism in England, which is the foundation of literary journalism (2008). Today American columns that relay on vernacular often grow stale (Avlon et al., 2011, p. 15). On the other, Arabic literary journalism of the 19th century celebrated classical Arabic through the imitation of Badi' Al-Zaman Al-Hamathani and Al-Hariri's *Maqamat* 'Assemblies'. However, in the chaotic world of today, reality can only be expressed through dialect or at least frequent code change. In this sense, Arabic literary journalism is a celebration of the street and its tongue.

It can also be argued that not unlike Western literary journalism, Classical Arabic creates a barrier between author and reader, much like Latin and French once did. Historically speaking, they were the languages of church and official docu-

ments—these languages were constantly used to put down thoughts in a clear fashion. Hartsock claims that the vernacular is important to literary journalism because the language of the common people helps create accounts of common life, unmediated by the languages of church and feudal responsibilities (2000, p. 88).

The same can be said about Arabic literary journalism: While Fusha was once a symbol of pride and identity, it is now one of isolation. And because it is no longer spoken on the streets, this makes creating a community on paper where the author and reader share subjectivities very difficult. This is not to advocate forsaking Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Classical Arabic (CA) or their study and use in literature, journalism, and other venues of expression, but rather to argue that literary journalism in this region is better practiced using dialect and/or code switching as opposed to elevated prose. After all, at its core the form is a celebration of the ordinary, creating voice through plain style, feeding off details of mundane life and giving that universality and meaning that stretches beyond individual experience. To achieve such an effect, there is a need for the language of ordinary people to be used.

7.9 Concluding Remarks

One of the theoretical hurdles in the path to a unified theory of literary journalism is where to draw the line between fact and fiction. There is an obvious risk in relinquishing the one criterion that sets fiction and non-fiction apart: factuality. However, there is an argument to be made that the risk is even greater if it continues to be a precondition to good literary journalism. To start with, it hinders exploring the form internationally and pigeonholes it forever as an Anglo-American phenomenon.

True, the Arabic form only loosely resembles the Western one. In many ways, the former still looks like 18th century English essay writing, yet there are some similarities and familiar stages. There is the long history and deeply planted roots on both fronts. Sims and Hartsock agree that the second phase in the history of the form was the printed ballad, travel writing, and essay periodicals, which occurred in conjunction with the introduction of the printing press. This was the second stage in the history of the Arabic form as well, occurring a century or two later.

Perhaps the form is not developing in a similar pattern, and it may never compare to the Western one, in that it may never eschew the use of fiction in nonfiction: Not because genre distinctions are disappearing in the region or that distressed people tend to escape to their imaginations or that Arabic literary journalism simply does not exist, but because there are situations where insight is unattainable through the compilation of verifiable facts. However, this is not an issue specific to the Middle East. Merljak Zdovc has written that in Communist-controlled Slovenia, analytical factographic reporting was not possible, so journalists had to adopt indirect ways of commenting on the current state of affairs, such as disguising them as stories (Bak & Reynolds, 2011, p. 6).

The same can be said about the Arab region, where limited freedom of expression hinders the production of purely factual literary journalism as demanded by Sims, Kramer, Karrane, Yagoda, and others. If veracity and accuracy continue to be adhered to, plenty of works that would possibly add more depth to the form will be dismissed, or alternatively exist under the shadow of other disciplines where they fail to be fully appreciated.

The argument here is not to advocate fabrication, or defend what some did under the banner of nonfiction, like James Frey,[47] Janet Cooke, and others, but to find a middle ground in which license is permitted to literary journalists to capture insights in any form.

While this study focused on the *analysis* of Arabic columns and essays with the aim of exploring their literary journalistic qualities, for their inclusion in discussion of literary journalism scholarship and criticism, a *synthesis* approach must be followed. I advocate for Heyne's framework in conjunction with a cultural approach to be used in evaluating international varieties of literary journalism. Instead of looking at the form in black or white, fact versus fiction, or storytelling versus social utility, this way we allow for a grey area to exist. In that grey area lives authorial intentions and audience response. The former determines whether the author *intends* for a work to be fiction or non-fiction (factual status)—the latter evaluates if it is *good* or *bad* literary journalism (factual adequacy). Heyne says factual adequacy depends on the reader, a decision that can be made individually or collectively as to whether the author has fulfilled the terms he set for himself. This is where the cultural approach comes into play.

Culture matters, not only in terms of the "psyche" through which a story is filtered, but also when it comes to how an audience receives a piece of writing and how tolerant they can be of inaccuracies. Two reporters can witness one event and write about it, yet chances are that their stories will be different. Granted, there are other factors that play into their reporting, including individual talent, but culture cannot be ignored. Allowing for authorial intentions, audience response, and culture

[47] Author of *A Million Little Pieces,* best-selling memoir of which the author fabricated several sections.

to be part of the way a work is evaluated in relation to literary journalism facilitates the exploration of international varieties. It will allow us to explore the reader-author relationship as well as the background of the" psyche" that produced a certain work, along with the text itself, in a manner that will shift our understanding of the form away from Anglo-American constraints to a more inclusive stance.

Hartsock concluded that:

> such a critically fluid and uncertain form may raise the issue as to whether there is indeed a form called literary journalism or literary nonfiction. Moreover, the attempt to situate the scholarship of the form is problematic, if for no other reason than that its nomenclature is by no means established. Also, because there are only a few book length examinations of literary journalism and the scholarship is generally meager, the forms study lacks a critical and scholarly mass" (p. 259).

Despite the gloominess, he still maintains that the form, under whichever name it may be, is still alive and well. Such a conclusion only means that there is still a long way ahead of us, and the road is only beginning for the Arabic form. If there is trouble defining the boundaries of the Anglo-American form, then there is no wonder it was deemed scarce in the Arab region. Such should invite more effort in trying to explore what Arabic literary journalism means for Arabs as well as Anglo-Americans, my hope is that this study fulfilled the purpose it was meant to; starting a conversation on that and paving the way for future research.

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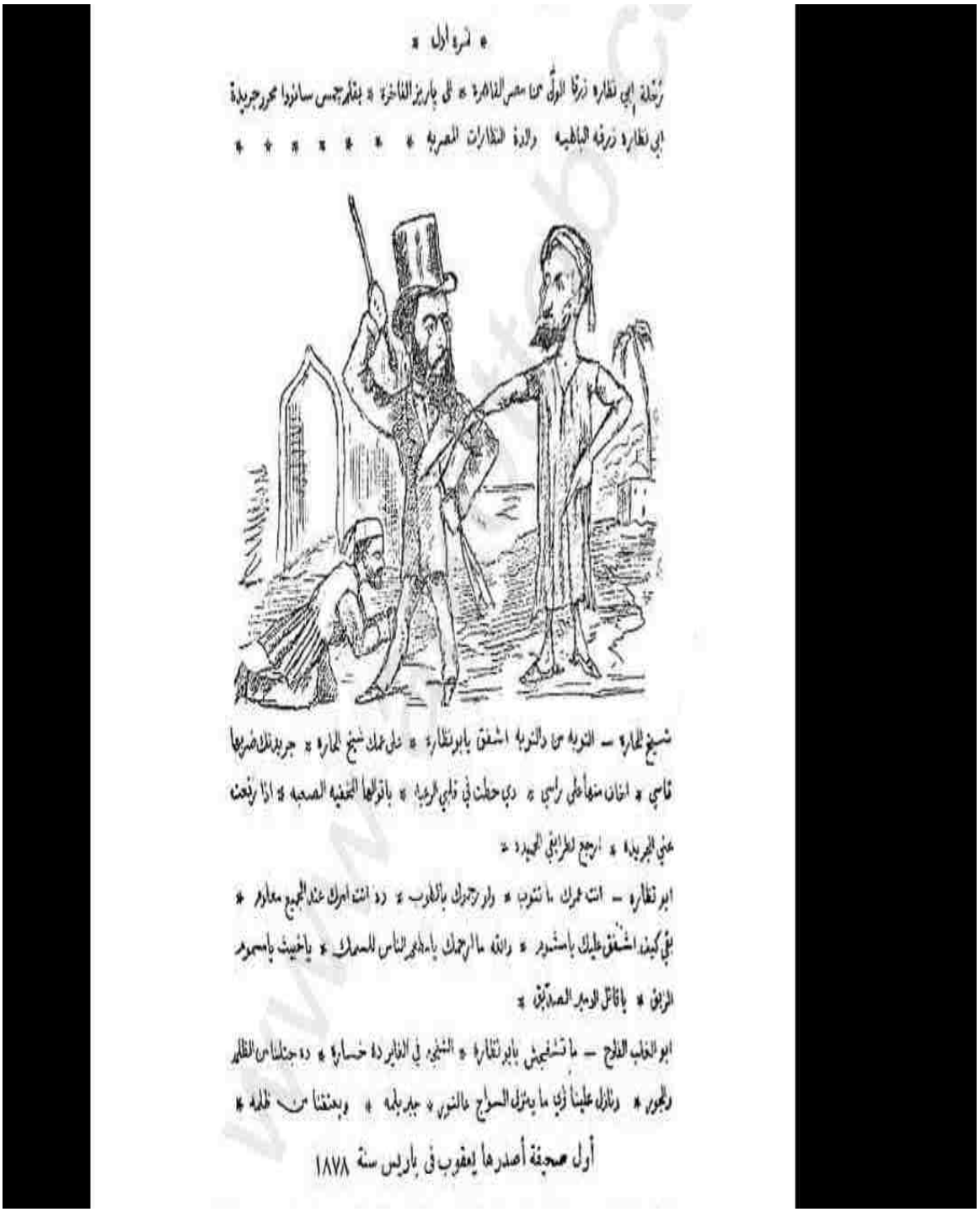
Appendix

Figure 1: Caricature featured in Ya'qub Sannu's paper *Abbu Naddarah Zarqa*, Published in Paris, 1878



نمرة اول

رحلة ابي نظارة زرقا الوفي من مصر القاهرة الى باريز الفاخرة بقلم جيس سانوا محرر جريدة ابي نظارة زرقه الباطبه ووالدة النظارات المصريه

شيخ الحاره — التربه من دالتربه اشفق يابونظاره على عمك شيخ الحاره جريدتك ضربها قاسي اخان منها على راسي دي حطت في ذيلي الريال باقولها التحفيه الصحبه اذا رفعت عني الجريده ارجع لطرابقي الجيده

ابو نظاره — انت عمرك ما تتوب ولو رجعوك بالطوب ده انت امرك عند الجميع معلوم بقي كيف اشفق عليك يامشهور والله ما ارحمك يا اشهر الناس للعمك يا خبيث يامسموم الزنق يا قاتل الوعد الصدوق

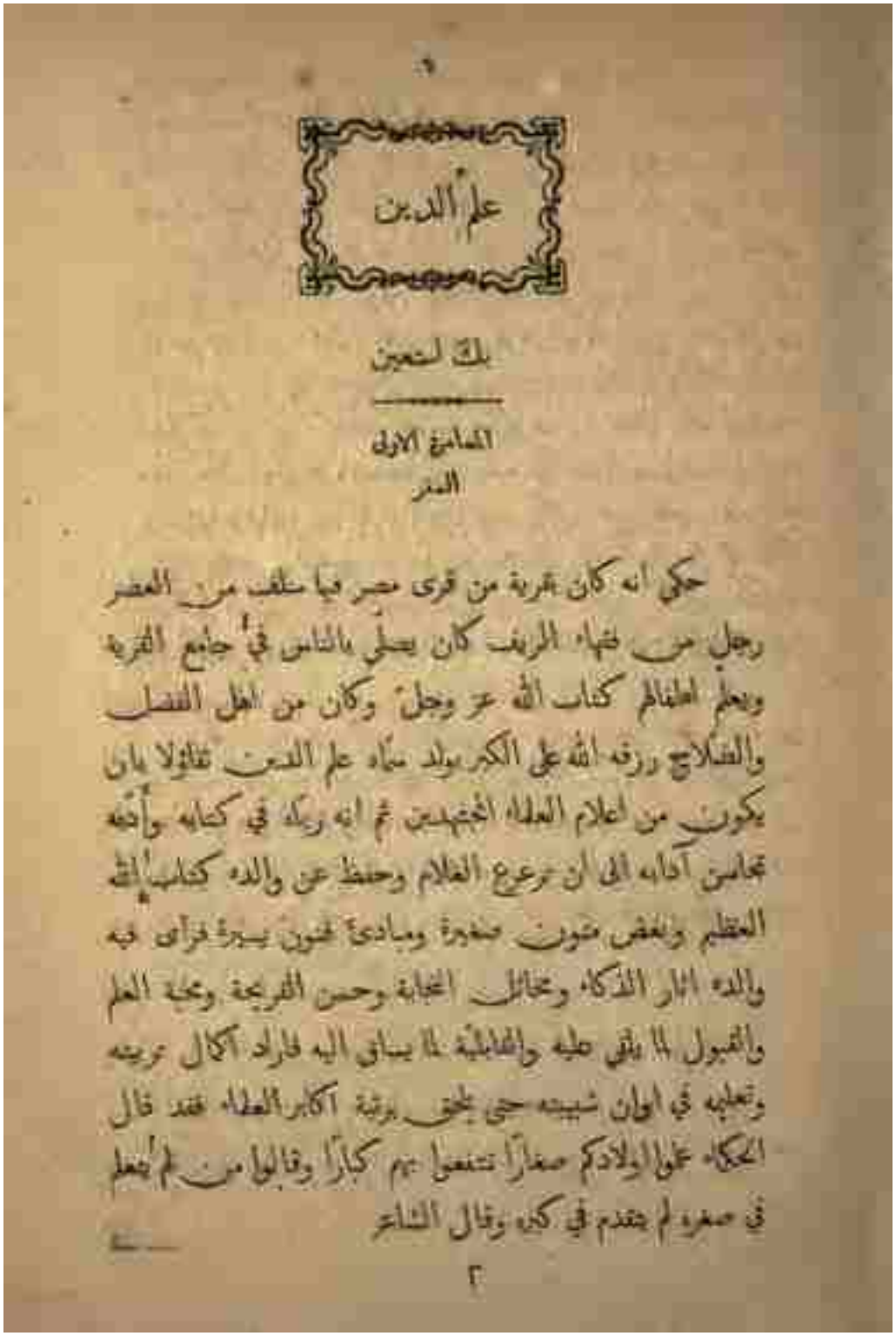
ابو الغلب الفلوح — ما تشكيش يابونظاره الشكوى في الغاير دا خساره ده جبنا من الظلم والجور ونازل علينا زي ما ينزل السواج عالتوم جيد بلده وبعتقنا من ظلمه

أول صحيفة أصدرها يعقوب في باريس سنة ١٨٧٨

Figure 2: Hand written, first page of *Abbu Naddarah Zarqa,* issue one published in Egypt prior to Sannu's exile to Paris

الصفحة الأولى من أول عدد أصدره يعقوب من (أبو نظارة زرقاء) فى مصر وهى من خطه

Figure 3: The first *musamarah* featured in Ali mubarak's 'Alam El-Deen



علم الدين

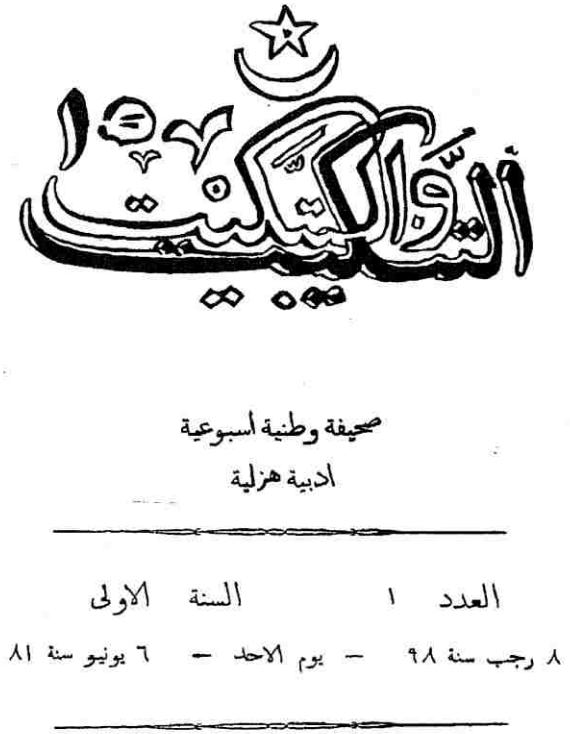
بك لتعين

المسامرة الاولى

السمر

حكي انه كان بقرية من قرى مصر فيما سلف من العصر رجل من فقهاء الريف كان يصلي بالناس في جامع القرية ويعلم الاطفال كتاب الله عز وجل وكان من اهل الفضل والصلاح رزقه الله على الكبر ولدا سماه علم الدين تفاؤلا بان يكون من اعلام العلماء المجتهدين ثم انه ربّاه في كتابه وأدّبه بمحاسن آدابه الى ان ترعرع الغلام وحفظ عن والده كتاب الله العظيم وبعض متون صغيرة ومبادئ فنون يسيرة فرآى فيه والده آثار الذكاء ومخايل النجابة وحسن القريحة ومحبة العلم والقبول لما يلقى عليه والقابلية لما يساق اليه فاراد اكمال تربيته وتعليمه في اوان شبيبته حتى يلحق بورثة اكابر العلماء فقد قال الحكماء علموا اولادكم صغارا تنتفعوا بهم كبارا وقالوا من لم يتعلم في صغره لم يتقدم في كبره وقال الشاعر

Figure 4: Cover page of the first issue of Abdullah Al-Nadeem's paper *Al-Tankeet Wa Al-Tabkeet*


التنكيت والتبكيت

صحيفة وطنية اسبوعية
ادبية هزلية

العدد ١ السنة الاولى

٨ رجب سنة ٩٨ — يوم الاحد — ٦ يونيو سنة ٨١

Figure 5: Article featured in first issue of *Al-Tankeet Wa Al-Tabkeet:* ‘Araby Tafarnaj ‘An Arab Turned European’

المسمى (ازريس) وزوجته القمر المسماة ازيس واخاها عطارد المسمى (هرمس) آلهة اخترعوا اصول الشرائع والفنون والعلوم وهذا من زعمهم الوهيه كل من اخترع امرًا غريبًا كارباب التصانيف العجيبة وهو اكبر سبب دعاهم لعبادة الاوثان وهي صور المخترعين

(التبكيت) لا ننكر على المتقدمين ما كانوا يزعمون فقد كان الوجود فارغًا من العلوم خلوًا من المعارف وكان الناس في همجية متمكنة وفطرة ساذجة لا يهتدون بها الا الى الماكل والمشارب وضروريات الانسان اما وقد صرنا في زمن اتصلت فيه الممالك وكثر اختلاط الامم ببعضها وانتشرت فيه المعارف فانا نعجب من بقاء الخرافات والاعتقادات الفاسدة بعد وضوح الحق ووجود السنة الشرائع تتلو علينا من حكمها ما تتنور به الالباب غير اننا نوجه الآمال الى حسن المستقبل وسعادة الامة بالاجتهاد في تعميم التعليم حتى تذهب الخرافات ذهاب امس

واول ملوك مصر (ظنًا لا تحقيقًا) منيس المسمى مصرايم وكان حكمه في اعلى مراتب الاحكام فخرًا وكان وجوده في تخت مصر قبل مولد عيسى عليه الصلاة والسلام بالفين وثلثمائة وثمان واربعين سنة تقريبًا وبعد مضي مدته تغلب على مصر ملوك من رعاة العرب بعد حروب كثيرة واستمروا بها عدة قرون مجهولة واخيرًا ظهر على كرسي المملكة الملك سيزستريس الشهير بالفتوحات واختراع القوانين حتى قيل ان ملكه امتد الى الهند والى تراس وبلاد الرومليّ وتاريخ مصر بالتحقيق لم يعلم الا قبل ميلاد المسيح عليه السلام بستمائة وسبعين سنة عند ما فتح ملكها ابزمبتكوس ابوابها للغرباء واختلط المصريون باليونانيين

عربيٌّ تفرنج

وُلد لاحد الفلاحين ولدٌ فسماه زعيط وتركه يلعب في التراب وينام في الوحل حتى صار يقدر على تسريح الجاموسة فسرّحه مع البهائم الى الغيط يسوق الساقية ويحوّل الماء وكان يعطيه كل يوم اربع حندويلات واربعة سخاخ بصل وفي العيد كان يقدّم له الملحى ليمتعه بأكل اللحم بالبصل وبينما هو يسوق الساقية وابوه جالس عنده مرّ بهما احد التجار فقال لأبيه لو أرسلتَ ابنك الى المدرسة لتعلّم وصار انسانًا فاخذه وسلّمه الى المدرسة فلما اتمّ العلوم الابتدائية ارسلته الحكومة الى اوروبا لتعلم فنّ هندسته له فبعد أربع سنين ركب الوابور وجاء عائدًا الى بلاده فمن فرح ابيه حضر الى اسكندرية ووقف برصيف الجمرك ينتظره فلما خرج من الفلوكة قرب ابوه ليحتضنه ويقبله شأن الوالد المحب لولده فدقعه في صدره وجرت بينهما هذه العبارة

زعيط . سبحان الله عندكم يا مسلمين مسألة الحضن ديّ قبيحة جدًّا

معيط : امال يا بني نسلّم على بعض ازّاي

زعيط . قول بونجور يغني وحط ايدك في

Figure 6: Second Page of ‘Araby Tafarnaj ‘An Arab Turned European’; a dialogue between zu’eet, his parents Mu’eet and Mu’eekah

ابدي مرة واحده وخلاص

معيط لهوّ يا ابني انا باقول منبش ريفي

زعيط موش ريفي يا شيخ انتم يا ابنـاء العرب زي البهايم

معيط الله يسترك يا زعيط والله جا خبرك يا ابني فوت روح فوت فلما توصل به الكفر قامت امه وعملت له طاجنا في الفرن مملوّا لحمًا ببصل فلما رآه قال لها ليه كترتي من الـ

معيكه من ال ايه يا زعيط

زعيط من البتاع اللي اسمه ايه

معيكه اسمه ايه يا ابني الفلفل

زعيط توتو ال دي ال البتاع اللي بنزرع

معيكه الغله يا ابني

زعيط نونو دي اللي يبقى لو راس في الارض

معيكه والله يا ابني ما فيه ريحة الثوم

زعيط البتاع اللي يدمع العينين اسمو أُونيون

معيكه والله يا ابني ما فيه اونيون ولا دا لحم ببصل

زعيط سي سا بصل بصل

معيكه ويا رعيط يا ابتي نسيت البصل وانت كان آكلك كله منه

معيط شكاه لاحد النبهاء وقال ولدي توجه اوروبا وحضر يذم بلاده واهله ونسي لغته فقال له النبيه ولدك لم يتهذب صغيرًا ولا تعلم حقوق وطنه ولا عرف حق لغته ولا قدر شرف الامة ولا ثمرة الحرص على عوائد الاهل ولا مزية الوطنية فهو وان كان تعلم علومًا الا انها لا تفيد وطنه شيئًا فانهُ لا يميل الى اخوانه ولا يستحسن الا من يعرف لغتهم على انه اصبح كالمجل لما اراد ان يقلد الغراب في مشيته وعجز عن التقليد واستحال عليه عوده لطبيعته الاولى فاصبح يقفز قفزًا وقد خرج عن حد الجنسية وطباع النوعية ولا يفعل فعل ولدك الا لئيم جاهل بوطنه فكم من شبان تعلمت في اوروبا وعادت محافظة على مذهبها وعوائدها ولغتها وصرفت علومها في تقدم بلادها وابنائها ولم ينطبق عليهم عنوان عربي تفرنج

سهرة الانطاع

دخل احد المهذبين بيتًا من بيوت رجال الملاهي فوجد عشرة من الرجال جالسين على الاسرة باهتين ساكتين لا يتكلمون ولا يتحركون ولا يرفعون ابصارهم هذا واضع عنقه على كتفه وذا مكفى على المخدة وذاك بمايل كالنائم واخر واضع يده على خديه فظن المهذب ان رب الدار اصيب بمصيبة وهولاء متكدرون مما اصابه مشفقون عليه فجلس في ناحية من المجلس وسال رب الدار قائلاً لعلكم بخير هل من امر نزل بالسيد حفظه الله قال لا ولكن عادتنا ان نجتمع كل ليلة للانس والمفاكهة

المهذب اظنكم لتذاكرون في تقدم صانع اوروبا وانتشار تجارتها في سائر الاقطار حتى عظمت ثروتها وتقوت شوكتها

Figure 7: Cover page of an issue of *Al-Kashkoul 'The NoteBook',* July 27, 1930

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