

Issued By: Chair of the Center of Languages and Translation, Cairo University

## This is an occasional Cairo University Refereed Publication

Under the Supervision of:
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دار الكتب والوثائق القومية دار الكتب المصرية رقم الإيداع: ٧١٩٩/ ٢٠١٧

ISBN: 9781-122-807-977-

The last story my father told me:

«Thank God they allow the girls to sing.

Do you know what they are singing?

The full moon has risen!»

September 2015



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# Foreword Abdel-Tawab Youssef: Praying with the Rhythm of the Universe

## Loubna A. Youssef

Like his father Sheikh Youssef, who started his day before "sunrise", Abdel-Tawab Youssef started his sacred mission before the crack of dawn every day. Although I was only eight when my young brother Essam was born, I remember vividly how tragic it was when Essam woke up at dawn because this disrupted the rhythm of our father's morning. It is at this early hour that he produced his creative pieces. While drinking his tea with milk, followed by a cup of coffee, and listening to classical music emanating from his small transistor radio, he poured on paper the stories that he weaved in his subconscious mind all night. True, he pampered Essam to the limit, but at eight o'clock he had to deliver his stories for children, aired on Cairo Radio by "Amo (Uncle) Hassan or Abla (Auntie) Fadila.

Waking up every morning to the tunes of Radio Cairo's Musical Program, I grew up to cherish the sound of music at home. My father listened to classical music without identifying what was playing. My mother, Notaila Rashed, better known as Mama Loubna (the editor in chief of *Samir* magazine for children for forty five years), however, taught us to appreciate specific pieces. Her "pickup", "turntable" or gramophone, the electrical device that is not known to the generation that uses computers, iPod's and iPhones, with its fragile needle and the brittle black discs (known as records) that are music storage media, were museum pieces that we could not touch as children. This is the device that introduced us to Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker and Swan Lake, Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Strauss, Brahms, Wagner and others. In my mind's eye, I can visualize the dinners we had at home when I was a child with the friends of the family who did not only discuss politics and world events, but listened to these pieces in a

mood of elation. We also grew up to appreciate Om Kalthoum, Abdel-Wahab, Abdel-Halem Hafez and Fairouz.

With so much music at home and with the music and singing classes we had at school as we were growing up, it has always shocked me to hear some argue that singing and music are prohibited by Islam. Because I do not take such debates lightly, and because of my interest in poetry, I started to explore this issue. With rhyme and rhythm in the Qur'an and so much music in the singing of the birds, the breeze blowing in the trees and the rhythm of the universe, I came to believe that music and singing cannot possibly be haram (forbidden). The more definitive answer to this question came to me when I was reading and translating my father's biography of his father My Father: An Egyptian Teacher (2014). Born and bred in rural Egypt, my grandfather, Sheikh Youssef memorized the Qur'an at the age of twelve and studied in the Bani Sweif Teacher's College that is affiliated with Al-Azhar University in Cairo. With this kind of education, had music and singing been haram, Sheikh Youssef, a teacher with integrity, would have not encouraged his students to sing in class in 1921 when the national leader Saad Zaghloul was arrested. Sheikh Youssef would not have reestablished the music band in the Orphanage he was in charge of in the 1940s. My experience in translating and writing about this biography<sup>1</sup> made me aware that the love of music and singing is in my genes.

After delivering his morning stories, my father would start communicating with the world by phone. He would then get ready to go to his office: he had one at the Ministry of Education in the 1960s and another in the Arab Socialist Union in Egypt in the 1970s when he was in charge of the Cultural Unit during the presidency of Anwar Elsadat. This is a position he held when he nominated himself and won the elections in his village, Shenra, and then in the governorate of Bani Sweif. I vividly remember an evening when he and my mother came to pick me up from Noha Elsadat's birthday party before the 6th of October war in 1973. As we were saying goodbye, President Elsadat offered him the position of the Minister of Education, but he refused explaining that in order to do a good job he had to get rid of

many unqualified personnel which he will not be allowed to do. So President Elsadat offered him the position of the Minister of Culture, which he turned down as well. In a serious tone that I did not fully comprehend then, he told President Sadat, "I am happy with what I am doing, and my only request is the following: I will never be accused of theft or corruption; my only problem will be if my political views do not conform. If this happens, you do know I have children to take care of, so fire me but do not put me in prison." About three years after this conversation, I was sitting next to my father on the couch at 9:00 o'clock in the morning when the phone rang. Answering a phone call that lasted seconds, my father said: "Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President." When I asked him what this short call was about, he simply said: "I will not go to the office again." Following this phone call, my father went back to the Ministry of Education and his request for early retirement was accepted.

From then onwards, Abdel-Tawab Youssef devoted his life to writing for children. He structured his own day following the rhythm of the universe: fajr (dawn), zuhr (noon), 'asr (afternoon), maghrib (sunset) and ishā' (night). He systematically woke up at dawn to start writing. This was his sacred time of concentration. By 9:00 am he would read the papers, make phone calls and then get ready for various activities like meetings with publishers and/or officials to discuss programs, books, conferences and issues that were related to children's culture and/or literature, or deliver lectures whenever needed. At around noon, like the Egyptian farmer, he would have lunch and rest for a while. Because he had no office where he could meet journalists, illustrators of his books, radio and TV announcers, students and scholars, visitors from the Arab world or the west, he invited them all at home. They would generally come in the afternoon or after sunset. He would end his day right after ishā' by reading, writing letters or watching TV.

When I look back, it is now clear to me that the activities he performed in each segment of the day did not change. Abdel-Tawab Youssef was a reader, a writer and a communicator. With no office to go to, he created a study at home. The largest room in our apartment housed

his famous library, that many well-known writers for children asserted was the largest privately owned collection in the world. This library was the focus of several editions of the well-known radio program on the Cairo Public Radio Channel by Nadia Saleh "A Visit to Someone's Library "زيارة لمكتبة فلان When Charles Butterworth, my professor at the University of Maryland, visited us at home with his family in the 1980s, my father took his daughter Gabriella to browse through the books. Gabriella, who was twelve, was thrilled to find many Judy Blume books on the shelves. Because Blume is known to deal with taboo issues, Gabriella's father quickly said, "Gaby, you cannot read Judy Blume." She politely replied, "But I read them all already".

Abdel-Tawab Youssef did not restrict himself to reading and writing in the library, but everywhere in the house. His library was, however, his favorite room, and everyone who visited us marveled at the amount of books my father collected and the diversity as well. When my brother Hesham served as a diplomat in Ottawa, Canada and in Genève, Switzerland, my father spent the summers there and visited every bookstore and library for children in those cities. Although there were thousands of books in my father's library, whenever anyone asked him for a specific book, he would manage to locate it immediately. This is why when we, the members of his family entered this library, he made sure we did not move the books around. From 1985-1988, this library witnessed the production of my Ph.D. thesis. My mentor Mohamed Enani gave me a deadline, and to meet it, I was advised to find a place at home that I would go to everyday in the morning as if I were going to my office, detach myself from the outside world in order to write the chapters of my dissertation. These were memorable days, which also witnessed my brother Essam's undergraduate years of study in the Department of English.

At the end of the 1990s, when Essam established the Egyptian International Company for Environmental Protection (EICEP) and Montana Studios less than a decade later, Abdel-Tawab Youssef held his meetings in a beautifully furnished office that Essam provided. This office gave my father access to a secretary, a computer and space to display the books he has written over the years. Ceza, who typed

the stories my father produced on the computer, became an important member of the family. She, therefore, was the first to read his stories, and she received a phone call from him every morning. She was efficient in reporting to him about the emails he received from around the world and who called to ask to meet him, etc. Like her, Melok, Essam's driver, was another important member of our family. When my father stopped driving, Melok took him wherever he wanted to go and attended all the lectures my father delivered. Being from the Sudan, Melok found a foster father in Egypt who supported him to pursue higher education until he graduated with a BA in commerce from Helwan University.

Recently, I discovered my love for telling stories. While teaching, I catch myself using anecdotes to provide engaging evidence and support about a point being discussed, to change the mood in class, and to introduce my personal experience in conducting research and acquiring knowledge. In time, I inferred that it must be in my genes. On a daily basis, my brothers and I witnessed our father skillfully transforming a scene in our life into a story with a message. One of the most interesting stories was about his uncle Amm Abdel-Azim, a farmer living in a village in Bani Sweif, who lost his leg in the 1956 war on Egypt. As children we enjoyed having him and were intrigued by how he handled his prosthetic leg, how he survived the war, and how he practiced farming. During dinner in one of his visits to our home in Cairo in the 1960s, Amm Abdel-Azim told us he could only stay for two days because when he stayed away for longer he had a problem with his water pump that produced fresh water that his neighbors relish. Although he asked his wife and children to welcome all those who came to use it, they did not. When he returned from one of his journeys the water pump was out of order. Angry, but determined to fix it, Amm Abdel-Azim told us that he eventually managed. He explained that before he left he warned his wife not to make the same mistake, but he had fears that the problem would recur. The following morning, while we were having breakfast with Amm Abdel-Azim, my father had the radio on. This was not unusual because he always had the music channel on at dawn during his sacred time for writing. But

the channel he had on was different, and why during breakfast time when we had a guest?

From the radio, we all heard the signature tune of the most popular daily program for children and the voice of a child announcer was then heard saying in Arabic: «Good morning, today I will tell you the story of Amm Abdel-Azim and the water pump.» My grandmother, my mother, my brothers and I were all thrilled, but Amm Abdel-Azim was in awe. Towards the end of the story the narrator described a process: Amm Abdel-Azim cleaned the heart of the water pump until all the parts glittered like gold, re-installed all the parts, and granted a little boy his request to start pumping. The narrator concludes,

The little boy held the hand of the water pump, gazed apprehensively then shouted,

• In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Sweet, pure and clean water poured out of the water pump.

God is Great.

Amm Abdel-Azim walked away, saying,

• The heart must be clean.

Was he referring to the heart of the water pump? Or to the heart of his wife and children?

We all clapped at the breakfast table as soon as we heard the signature tune. But Amm Abdel-Azim started asking my father endless questions: «how and when did you write this story? How did it reach them at Cairo Radio? Will you get money for doing this? How much?» For me, this is a scene and a story from my childhood that I never forget. The skill with which my father transformed the few sentences that Amm Abdel-Azim told us into a work of art with a message was fascinating, and I lived to witness my father do this all the time.

What is also quite significant about this story for me is that at a young age it directly and indirectly introduced me to the Quranic *aya* (literally a sign or a miracle, but also a verse, which is an inaccurate translation because verse in English refers to poetry and the Qur'an

explicitly states that the Qur'an ought not be compared to poetry which is the product of the imagination) in *Surat Alshu'araa* (The Poets) that highlights the necessity of having a sound heart. In conveying the story of Abraham with his father and people, the Qur'an states that Abraham tells his people that by worshiping idols they are his "enemy" (26: 77). He proceeds to declare that he prays to God "who created me and He guides me, feeds me, gives me what I drink, cures me when I am sick, makes me die and gives me life, and I desire ambitiously that he forgives my offense on the day of judgment,... the day on which neither riches nor off springs can be of help, only those who come to God with a sound heard [are saved]". (26: 78-89) This idea of having a sound heart has been a lifelong endeavour for me, and it all started with this story.

Now the story of this book.

In 2011 when I returned from a secondment from the Rhetoric and Composition Department at the American University in Cairo, I was asked to edit an edition of Al-Rowad (The Pioneers) Series published by the Center of Languages and Translation, Cairo University in honor of my mentor Mohamed Enani who had just won the International Translation Award of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Happy to work on this volume, I delivered a publication (2012) that includes testimonies, chapters about Enani's work and chapters about translation studies. When my father passed away, Amani Badawi, the Director of the Center requested that I work on an edition on my father and I immediately complied. The CFP was launched in 2016 and the result is this volume in Arabic and English (like the previous one). Actually, by working on this book, I am fulfilling one of my father's wishes. While I was translating his book on his father, کان أبى معلمًا (1976) My Father: An Egyptian Teacher (2014), he said "Maybe one day you will produce a book on your own father."

In the long process of working on this volume, my delightful and dynamic team of young ladies<sup>2</sup> who helped me unpack the boxes of books and organize the bookshelves of what will eventually become Abdel-Tawab Youssef Research Center for Children's Culture also assisted my in compiling the bibliography of Abdel-Tawab Youssef.

To them I am deeply grateful. Compiling this bibliography was far from easy, but was delightful and enlightening. In July 2016 Mona Abdelrahman started an excel sheet with the help of Hend Elhady who assisted me in revising the final draft. Although I did know that he produced more than a thousand books, I was not familiar with all of them. For me, first some titles have been delightful, and second, other titles reminded me of his lifelong friends who were literally members of our family. Titles like أحب الفلوس (I do not like money), أنا لا أحب الفلوس (I am Against the Government) أنا ضد الحكومة (Daddy Say Yes) نعم Down with Blind) تسقط الطاعة العمياء (I Object) and اني اعترض Obedience) do not only allow the child to learn to be critical and independent, but involve humour. As for the members of our extended family, he literally regarded the prominent professor of Arabic Sahair من حكايات Elgalamawy as his grandmother when in 1983 he wrote (Among the Stories of My Grandmother: Sahair جدتی: سهیر القلماوی Elgalamawy). During the event organized by Fatma Elmaadoul, the coordinator of the Unit of Children's Culture at the Supreme Council of Culture to celebrate the achievements of his life (30 January 2016), Elmaadoul explained how Elgalamawy's support helped Youssef, that she regarded as "her non-biological son" (according to Elmaadoul), to create the Unit of Children's Culture. Abdel-Ghaffar Mekawy, Ramzy Khalil, Abdelbadie Elkamhawy and Ibrahim Sha'rawy, his four lifelong friends, enriched our lives as he enriched theirs. As for the titles of his books, they provide evidence that he has covered such a broad spectrum of topics that can contribute to the curriculum of school children and libraries everywhere in the world, I dare say.

The introduction to the Arabic section of this volume by Gaber Nassar, the President of Cairo University, sets the tone of a book that is truly "For the Love of Abdel-Tawab Youssef". Motaz Sayed Abdallah, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University wrote an introductory note, and Hoda Ayad translated Mohamed Enani's "Personal Note" into Arabic. These are followed by five sections: the first includes Youssef's acceptance speech and an interview with the well-known Farouq Shousha after winning the King Faisal International Award for Literature from Saudi Arabia in 1991. I am grateful to my friend and colleague Hoda Hamdi

for providing me with a CD of this TV program. The second section is on his Arabic biography of his father mainly by professors from the Arabic Department, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, and Karma Sami of Al-Alsun, Ain Shams University; the third is on selections of some of his other creative works; the fourth includes different testimonies and a report on an event that celebrates his life. This event, held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2016, and organized by Fatma Almaadoul, the coordinator of the Committee of Children's Culture that he established in the Egyptian Supreme Council of Culture, is one to remember. The fifth and final section is devoted to a chapter on talented children and another on computer games and their role in children's culture

As for the English section, it starts with the Mohamed Enani's translation of the acceptance speech given by Youssef in Saudi Arabia when he won the King Faisal Award. This is followed by a "Personal Note" by Enani and his translation of one of Youssef's masterpieces for children, namely "A Life of the Prophet Muhammad". Omaya Khalifa's chapter compares this translation with another by Tony Calderbank. Hend ElHady's chapter focuses on Youssef's "I am a Burāq", a short story from this biography of Prophet Muhammad. These are followed by chapters by Karma Sami, Nadia Elkholy Rehab Moubarak and Aziza Sami on selected works by Youssef. The article that follows is an interview conducted by Youssef Rakha published as an obituary. The next article constitutes the reflections of the Rainbow Team who have been working on what will soon become the Abdel-Tawab Youssef's Center for Children's Culture. The final chapter is by Eman El-Nouhy on *The Iron Woman*, the novella for children by Ted Hughes. The books by Ted Hughes are from youssef's library.

My father has been alive in so many ways after he passed away. His last story to me has been haunting me. He said it during the Bairam feast, a day or two before he passed away. I was sitting on a chair next to his bed, working on my laptop. He opened his eyes and looked at me and said:

"Thank God they allow the girls to sing.

Do you know what they are singing?

The full moon has risen!"

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "Sheikh Youssef's Biography as Epic: Writing, Teaching, and Singing Resistance" in *Recontextualizing Resistance*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.
- <sup>2</sup> The Rainbow Team: Engy Mito, Hend Elhady, Iman Hassan, Mona Abdelrahman, Najwa Ibrahim and Yassmine Abdel-Moniem.

#### Brief C.V. Abdel-Tawab Youssef 1928-2015

Full Name: Abdel-Tawab Youssef Ahmed Youssef (Abdel-Tawab is often spelled differently: Abd-el-Tawab, Abdul-Tawab and Abd-elTawab)

Born: October 1, 1928, in Bani Sweif, Egypt.

Website: ayoussef.org

#### **Career Synopsis:**

- Writer, translator, and editor of the publications produced in school and at university as an undergraduate.
- B.A. in Political Science, Cairo University, 1949.
- Supervisor of School Broadcasting Programs The Egyptian Ministry of Education, from 1950-60.
- Chair of the Media Unit, The Egyptian Ministry of Education, 1960-1975.
- Founded The Children's Cultural Association and established the Children's Culture Committee of the Egyptian Higher Council for Culture in 1968.
- Annually elected since 1968 for eight years in a row as a member of the Administrative Board of Egyptian Writers.
- Took part in initiating the Egyptian Broadcasting Service in the 1960s.
- Chaired the First International Conference on Children's Culture in Egypt in March 1970.
- Invited to England in 1970 as a member of a delegation that visited libraries, schools and bookstores to study Children's Culture in UK.

- Started focusing on publishing books and writing stories for children for Cairo Radio and Television and for all the broadcasting services in the Arab world in 1975.
- UNESCO Consultant in the Arab Region from 1975-2015.
- UNESCO expert on Children's Television and Theater in Qatar from 1980-83.
- UNESCO expert on Educational Technology in Qatar in 1985.
- Consultant of the State Publishing House, the General Egyptian Book Organization for thirty years.
- Consultant for the Arab Bureau for Education in the Gulf Region, the King Faisal Research Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the Children's Culture House in Baghdad, Iraq, and the Heritage Center of the Arab Gulf States in Doha, Qatar.

Elected as a Member of the اللجنة المركزية العليا of the Egyptian Socialist Union to represent Bani Sweif (his hometown) in 1975.

- Launched The Forum of Children's Culture in Egypt.
- Lectured at the University of Ohio on importance and role of Arab Literature in writing for children in 1985.
- Board Member of the Egyptian Writers' Union for more than thirty years (1995-2015).
- Member of IBBY.
- Launched the Children's Literature Unit at the Supreme Council of Culture in Egypt.
- Elected "expert" of children's literature and culture in the International Literature Festival in Berlin, Germany in 2001 and was one of the fourteen best international writers to narrate stories to German children.

#### **Activities**

- Written more than one thousand books for children and young adults and more than fifty books for adults about literature, culture, and raising children.
- Authored books, articles, research papers radio and TV programs and translated works on and for children in Egypt and the Arab world.
- Attended book fairs for children in Germany, Italy, England, France, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia in Europe, to the Philippines and China in Asia, and to the US and Canada.
- Organized and participated in over one hundred symposiums, conferences and seminars in the field of culture and literature for children and young adults in Egypt, the Arab World, Switzerland, Germany, England, China, Philippines, USA and Canada.
- Member of many councils, organizations and institutions working in the field of literature for children and young adults.

#### Awards

- Bahrain International Kano Award for Literature in 2013
- An Honorary Ph.D. in February 2010 from the King of Saudi Arabia
- Nominated by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina to the Astrid Lindgren Award in Children's Literature in 2007, 2008 and 2009.
- The Award of the Union of Arab Writers and Men of Letters in Syria and Lebanon in 2004.
- The Award of Regional Jordanian Office for the Islamic Literature Association on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2002.
- Certificate of Appreciation from The Union for Supporting those with Special Needs and the Handicapped in October 2002.

- The Award of Lesan El-Arab (Arab Tongue) from the Arab League in 2002.
- The International Council Award for children's books in Basel for his series of books on the Egyptian Toshka Project in 2001.
- The New Horizons Award at Bologna International Children Book Fair in Italy in 2000 for his book A Life of Prophet Mohammad in Twenty Tales.
- The Suzan Mubarak Certificate of Merit for his works for children in 1999.
- The Best Writer for Children Award by the Egyptian Higher Council of Culture in 1998.
- The US Award of International Educators Hall of Fame in 1997.
- The Award of the Association of Islam and Arab Culture in the New World in 1995.
- The King Faisal International Award for Literature from Saudi Arabia in 1991.
- The Medal of The Egyptian Zoological Gardens in 1991.
- The Award of the Arabic Culture Organization in Tunisia in 1990.
- The International Babylonian Festival Award in 1987.
- The Cairo Radio and Television Appreciation Award in 1985 for his contributions to the Egyptian Broadcasting Service.
- The Award of the Mayor of New Briton, Connecticut, USA in 1984.
- The State Award for Children's Culture in 1981 together with the Medal of the Republic of Egypt.
- The Christmas Tree Ornament from the Mayor of Williamsburg in 1981.
- The Golden Medal of Productivity from the Egyptian Ministry of Education in 1980.

- The Medal of Science and Art from President Anwar El-Sadat in 1979.
- The Golden Medal of the Union of Arab Broadcasting Services in 1979.
- The *Rayid Journal* Award in Kuwait for the best research on Kindergarten stories in 1978.
- A Ten Year Grant from Egyptian Government (1976-1985) to fully devote his time to writing for children.
- The UNESCO International Award for Eradication of Illiteracy in 1975.
- The State Incentive Award in 1975 together with the Sciences and Arts Medal of the First Degree.
- The Kuwait Kindergarten Department's Award for his book People of the Elephant in 1974.
- The Dimtrov Award in Bulgaria in 1972.
- Received Awards of Merit from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia

#### **Books:**

A prolific writer, Abdel-Tawab Youssef's short stories, plays, novels, research, radio and television programs, articles, and lectures are in circulation in Egypt and the Arab world and have affected generations of children and writers and illustrators of works for children.

- Some of his books have been translated into the English, French, German, Persian, Indonesian, Chinese, and Malaysian.
- His literary works have been studied at academic levels (MA and PhD). Some of these theses are in print, and some have won the State Award in Children's Culture.

- The Scarecrow (1968), which is the first Arabic novel for children and one of his masterpieces that deals with the life of a village boy, was assigned to be read by the sixth grade pupils of the Egyptian national schools from 1970-74 (3 million copies).
- A Biography of the Prophet Muhammad is his second masterpiece in Arabic that was reprinted at least 20 times. Mohamed Enani's English translation is published in this volume.
- The Prophet Muhammad's Childhood: A Story for Children is translated by Omaya Khalifa but has not been published.
- The biography of his father was published in Arabic in 1976 and translated into English as My Father: An Egyptian Teacher was translated by Loubna A. Youssef and edited by Mohamed Enani in 2014.

#### Classification of the Works of Abdel-Tawab Youssef

#### I. Books that won Awards:

Abdel-Tawab Youssef won the King Faisal International Award in 1991 for all his books that were published before this date.

#### **Egyptian State Award:**

- Arab Pioneers and Western Scientists in a Strange Encounter by Abd-Eltawab Youssef. Trans. By Khadiga Safwat; revised by Morsi Saad El-Din; illustrated by Farida Eweis. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1984.
- The Series of Unusual Encounters Between Arab and Western Scientists (10 Stories)
- The Stories of Toshka (5 Stories)

#### II. Short Stories for Children:

- The Arab Folk Tales Series (10 Stories)
- The Arab Story Series (6 Stories)

- The Businessman Series (10 Stories)
- The Clever Devils Series (10 Stories)
- The Environment Series (5 Volumes)
- European Capitals (8 Books): Paris, London, Rome, Berlin, Madrid, Genève, Sofia, and Stockholm.
- The Family Stories Series (10 Stories)
- Folktales from Tunisia (3 Stories)
- Grandpa and the Computer Series (7 Books)
- The Green Library Series for Children (53 Stories)
- The Humrous School Story Series (12
- The "It is said..." Series (4 Stories)
- The Jack in the Box Series (13 Stories)
- My Library Series (7 Stories)
- The Magic and Science Series (3 Stories)
- Medals: A book about different awards and the question: would you rather receive an award or give an award to someone who deserves it?
- More Stories from Ancient Egypt
- Pre-School Children Stories Series (10 Stories published in Tehran)
- Science Fiction Plays (two) set on Other Planets for School Children
- The Short Story Series (11 Stories)
- The Song and Story Series (10 Stories)
- Stories from Ancient Egypt: Two Stories about how Ameni was a Writer and a Priest who became King
- Stories of Nations (20 Stories)

- The Time is Money Series
- The Tree of International Children Literature Series (3) Volumes) (reprinted)
- Stories about the Environment (5 Stories)
- The Stories in Poems Series (5 Stories)
- Stories in the Poems of Ahmed Shawki (5 Stories)
- The War Raids of the Twenty First Century (5 Stories)
- The "What If You Were" Series (6 Stories)
- (Stories)
- The "Who Would You Like To Be?" Series (19 Stories)

#### III. Novellas for Children

- Doll.com a novella about the life of a Doll
- *Khonfes:* the Hippie (1969)
- The Family Library: Literary Classics (15 Stories)
- Khayal Al-Hakl The Scarecrow (1973)
- *My Father: An Egyptian Teacher* (1976)
- My Friend on the Tree (1994)
- Semeramis (1995)
- The Our Children Series (9 Books)

#### IV. Books about The Arabic Language and School

- Our Beautiful Language Series:
- The Laughing Letters of the Alphabet (8 Stories)
- Grammar Stories (8 Stories)
- Our Beautiful Language and Punctuation Marks (8 Stories)
- Our Beautiful Language Series: Language Stories (8 Stories)

#### V. Books on Skills Development

- The Let's Read Series (19 Books)
- Development of Intellectual and Creative Skills Series
- 1. How to Use Your Head?
- 2. How to Take a Decision?
- 3. How to Express Yourself?
- 4. How to be Inventive?
- 5. How to Reconstruct?
- 6. How to Develop?
- 7. How to Evaluate?
- 8. How to Manage?
- The Let's Excel Series (10 Stories)
- Pre-School Children and Children with Special Needs
- The Sports Series (5 Stories)
- A Concise Encyclopedia for Educators (7 Volumes)
  - 1. The Human Being
  - 2. Sports and Games
  - 3. Animals
  - 4. Space and the Universe
  - 5. Clothes
  - 6. Transportation
  - 7. Plants
- The How to Draw Series
- Beautiful Stories About Cheerful Colours (3 Stories)
- The Magic or Science Series (3 Stories)

#### VI. Books About Prophets

- The Courageous Children Series (10 Stories)
- The Stories of Prophets Series (27 Stories)
- The Prophet Muhammad Series (15 Stories)
- The Prophet Abraham Series (11 Stories)
- Muslim Knights Series (15 Stories)
- The Justice of Muslims Series
- The Quranic Library for Children
- The Quranic Stories on Birds and Animals
- Tolerance in Islam

#### VII. Pan-Arab and Nationalist Books

- **Spy Stories**
- **Egyptian Stories Series**

#### VIII. Plays for Children

#### IX. Books for Adults

- An Anthology of the Poetry of Poet Laureate Ahmed Shawqi.
- The Culture of the Special Needs Child.
- Pre-School Children
- Studies on the Child and Reading.
- My Heart, My Mind and My Pen: An Autobiography (1990)
- The Child and the Folk Heritage. (1979)
- The Guide for Intelligent Parents to Have Pious Children
- Studies in Children's Literature.
- My Experience in Writing
- My Experience in Writing for Children
- Poetry for Children: A Study in Literature for Children

#### X. Books in Translation

وداعا مستر تشببس Goodbye Mr. Chips. تأليف جيمس هايلتون. ترجمة عبد التواب يوسف. القاهرة: الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، ١٩٨٨. (الرواية العالمية).

هيليين كلير: الصماء البكاء العمياء. Hellen Keller بقلم عبد التواب يوسف. رسم فريدة عويس. القاهرة: الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، ١٩٩٠. (سلسلة كتب الأطفال: زدنى علما).

Muhammad's Birthday by Hans Christian Anderson: A Translation

الحذاء الأحمر: مسرحية من ثلاثة فصول. تأليف هانز كريستان أندرسون. أعدها للمسرح هانز جوزيف شنيث. ترجمة عبد التواب يوسف. مراجعة محمد سليمان شعلان. القاهرة: دار النهضة العربية بالتعاون مع مؤسسة فرانكلين للطباعة والنشر، ١٩٦٢.

صديقي فوق الشجرة: هيوحيد تدمود. عبد التواب يوسف. القاهرة: دار المعارف، ١٩٩٤. (أولادنا)

خبز الجنيات وقصائد أخرى للأطفال. روبرت لويس سيتفنسون. ترجمة محمد رجب. تقديم عبد التواب يوسف. رسم وإخراج فني وماكيت سها سليمان على، ٢٠٠١.

الأبعاد الدولية للتربية. تأليف ليوناردس كنويجذي. ترجمة عبد التواب يوسف. مراجعة محمد سليمان شعلان. القاهرة: دار نهضة مصر للطباعة والنشر بالتعاون مع مؤسسة فرانكلن، ١٩٧٣.

#### XI. Books Translated into English

#### **Books Translated into English**

A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales. Translated Mohamed Enani. ayoussef.org in 2003 and published in this volume.

Arab Pioneers and Western Scientists in a Strange Encounter by Abd-Eltawab Youssef. Translated by Khadiga Safwat; revised by Morsi Saad El-Din; illustrated by Farida Eweis. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1984. The Bird: Al-Zourzour. Translated by Loubna Youssef. Cairo: Dar El-Shaab, 2001.

The Dancing Skeleton. Translated by Hoda Elsadda. 1997.

The Life of Muhammad May the Blessing and Peace of God be Upon Him in Twenty Stories. Translated by Tony Calderbank. Cairo, Egypt: Dar El Shorouk, 2004.

The Magic Flute. Translated by Loubna Youssef. Cairo: GEBO, 1995.

My Father: An Egyptian Teacher. Translated by Loubna A. Youssef. Cairo, 2014.

Room for Tolerance. Translated by Loubna A. Youssef. Cairo, 2000.

#### XI. Works that Promote Reading

Efforts in promoting reading:

- 1. From 1982 until 2010, Abdel-Tawab Youssef wrote a daily Cairo Radio Program entitled: Competitions and Prizes. During the summer months of July and August (the vacation for children in Egypt), each edition of this program introduced a book and the young listeners were required to identify the title of the book and the name of the author. Thousands of children took part in this program from all the different governorates of Egypt. At the end of every summer, the Ministry of Youth had a ceremony in which 50 winners each received 50 books.
- 2. Another competition that Abdel-Tawab Youssef organized with the Children's Department in the Ministry of Youth was focused on a booklet about reading. To take part in this competition, the children answered the following questions: What/Why/How/When/Who do we read? This Booklet is widely distributed and children write about what they have read during the summer vacation. There is a classification of the age groups according to their schooling: Primary/

Preparatory/High School. The Ministry of Youth receives hundreds of copybooks in which the children write about what they have read and their analysis of the different stories. Awards were given to 50 children from each stage, that is, 150 winners receive 20 books each.

3. Every November since 1980, Radio Cairo celebrates Children's Day by introducing a work of art by one of the best known international writer. Abdel-Tawab Youssef has been in charge of writing the script about the different authors and their books. Most of the material used in this yearly program has been developed into publications (samples included in the selection). Among the figure he dealt with are Hans Anderson, and many of those who won the Hans Anderson Award, Selma Lagerlof, Virginia Hamilton, and Astrid Lindgren herself.

#### 4. Series

- The Let's Read Series سلسة هيا نقرأ (15 Books)
- Arabic Classics Retold for Children (4 Books)
- Stories in Poems Series سلسلة قصص في قصائد (5 Stories)
- Stories in the Poems of Ahmed Shawki سلسلة قصص (4 Stories)
- The Tree of International Children Literature Series مسلسلة شجرة أدب الأطفال العالى (3 Stories)

#### XII. Most Recent Publications (2009-2010):

A Series of Seven Books: Grandpa and the Computer

Muhammad's Birthday by Hans Christian Anderson: A Translation

Three Folk tales from Tunisia

A Series of Ten Stories for Pre-School Children published in Tehran Ten Stories for ten year old children: How to be Cultured? Ten Stories focusing on Cultural Issues.

Two Science Fiction Plays set on Other Planets for School Children

An Invitation to Think: Three Short Stories

Doll.com is a novella about the life of a Doll

Eight books on different European Capitals: Paris, London, Rome, Berlin, Madrid, Genève, Sofia, and Stockholm.

Medals: A Book about different awards and the question: would you rather receive an award or give an award to someone who deserves it?

Stories from Ancient Egypt: Two Story about how Ameni of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was a Writer and a Priest who became King

More Stories from Ancient Egypt

Twenty Stories on Jesus Christ (not in print)

## IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST MERCIFUL, THE MOST COMPASSIONATE

#### Address by

#### ABDEL-TAWAB YOUSSEF AHMAD YOUSSEF

#### Winner of the King Faisal International Award For Arabic Literature (Jointly), 1991 (Corresponding to H. 1411)

### Translated by Mohamed Enani

Your Royal Highness, Prince Sultan bin Abdel Aziz,

Deputizing for the King-Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, in honouring this gathering with your presence,

Your Eminence, distinguished scholars, intellectuals, and men of letters,

God's Peace be Unto You,

My address consists of ten points, ten drops of morning dew, from the sacrosanct "dawn and the ten nights" of the Qur'an. My sleepless nights have been long and many, during which I suffered the pain of handling Arabic characters, for my mission has been hard. It would have been easier to grasp the fragrance of flowers, the beams of the sun, or hold burning embers, than to produce a little 'sweet'. This is how a little boy, expresses gratitude to a father who has filled the little boy's life with his sweets.

Now to my first dew drop, the first point: the Award. God says "Verily We shall recompense those that are steadfast, a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do". I have been steadfast for half a century, since I left my early childhood, incessantly working hard, frequenting the springs of knowledge, and finally producing something to make me worthy of my place among you. I am therefore thankful and grateful to those who judged my work to be equal to the Award. I thank the referees and the Award Secretariat.

My second point is that the Award came to me from the land lit by the glory of its creator, the land of Prophet Muhammad bin Abdullah, Peace be Upon Him, the land of Omar, of Amr, of Khalid, Sa'd, Abu Bakr, Abu Dharr, Bilal, Osama, Amina, Omm Ayman, Khadija, Aisha, Zeinab and Fatima—all of whom appear in my books which have won the Award. Seven years ago, I dedicated my children's book "The Childhood of Prophet Muhammad" to Mecca and Medina as an expression of gratitude for their favour—a forlorn hope! They were there with Riyadh, saving this moment for me. It is *they* then who have won the Award! God says, "Lo! I have rewarded them this day forasmuch as they were steadfast in that they, even they, are the triumphant."

The writer of children's literature is a great dreamer. He lives with kings, princes, queens and princesses who are all figments of his imagination; but his dream cannot carry him as far as to meet a real king. Today he is in the presence of royalty, represented by the King's brother, and feels it is almost beyond imagination that a children's wins an Award patronized by King Fahd, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. It is unprecedented in human history that a King can boast being the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, as it is wonderful that this Award bears the name of a monarch, King Faisal, God's mercy be upon him.

History will never forget King Faisal's noble stand during the Ramadan/October war against those who violate all laws and usurp our holy places. We shall never forget how eager King Faisal was to pray at Al-Agsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third Muslim Haram, but never did. However, his grandchildren will, God willing, realize his wish: they will re-enact Saladin's feat, as you now honour the pens of their writers.

The fifth dew drop, the fifth point, concerns having an international status. Twenty years ago I was on a cultural tour of Britain and delivered s lecture at their Writers' Union on my work. After the lecture, the Chairman of the Children's Books Union spoke to me in private, and said, "your ideas and literary style belong, without flattery, to 'world classics'; you're not read as such because you write in Arabic for a limited audience. Write in English and you'll be read the world over."

Back home I wondered why I wrote for children? Had I a personal ambition? Was my task to educate English-reading children? "Certainly not" was the answer. The children of my nation are my responsibility; it is for them that I hold my fervent pen. On the day I heard I had won the King Faisal Award. I sent a telegram to the Chairman English Children's Books Union in the U.K. saying that "I had reached a world class status by my Islam and Arab character." A world Award for children's literature is a sign of civilization, expressed in the contemporary language of progress. It reveals a highly developed human 'sense', only to be expected from the makers of the ancient civilization in Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and the Levant. It is surely to be proved by the makers of the Islamic civilization which flourished in Medina, Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo. It speaks too of humanity's hope in a real civilization which should beat their ephemeral, material civilization. Their world 'award' was never ahead of us. Let us remind them of our wonderful tales in the Arabian Nights, in Kalila wa Damina, the Lion and the Diver, Sinuhe, and Gilgamesh. We are centuries ahead of them, yet their children are still fascinated by Sindbad, Aladdin, and Ali Baba.

The seventh dew drop: we here represent dozens. Personally I have lived with Kamel Kailani, author of books for children, more than with my neighbours—and more than he had lived with his own children. With other authors, Al-Harawai, Al-'Iryan, al-Jehiman, Al-Ghoul, Al-Rusafi, I lived as though they were family members. We have to remember, with love, all those who have enriched children's literature in our greater Arab homeland. However, two such names I especially embrace: my teacher and motherly Dr. Saheer Al-Qalamawi, and my mentor and spiritual father "Baba Sharu" [Muhammad Mahmud Sha'ban]. Furthermore, this Award permits me to join the list of great men with whom I vainly try to be on a par with, with Yehia Haqqi—an unsurpassable honour. Let me say to those who thought well of me and congratulated me and said, well then, to the Nobel of Mahfouz or the Hans Christian Anderson Award. To them I say "All I want is to make some children happy—on the summit of mount Ta'iz" in Yemen, in the rural areas of Egypt, in the Levantine desert, in Saudi Arabia desert, in the woodlands of Sudan, or others in Djibouti, Somalia, and Mauritania

I have often been asked, "were you pleased to win this Award?" My answer has been "there is a big difference between pleasure and happiness." At certain moments I felt so proud that I wished to get the glass of Alice in Wonderland, inscribed with words like "Drink me up!" Her magic potion gives one back one's real size. I remembered Gulliver's travels in the lands of Lilliput and Brobdingnag. I remembered the twenty thousand volumes of worldwide children's literature in my home library. Such pinnacles of art and literature make me feel humble.

Dew drop ten: the sum total of all other drops, being drunk by a little bird. He feels to have quenched his thirst, from the spring of Zamzam, to have soared overhead with the doves in the Haram, to have landed with them to peck at grains and love. He had dreamt that the award would crown his life's work; and there it is, though won jointly with another. The Award tells me: no production is worthy of a crown unless continued, sustained by perpetual contributions. The Faisal Award, is however, an Award that draws a line between past and future. It is a beacon guiding one in the right direction. It shows me the minarets from which my voice is heard, as I say: Hail to all children! It is a pulpit from which I cry to all men: You hold the reigns today, but tomorrow they will be in charge; so treat them well. It is a column in a mosque, where a teacher's chair is traditionally placed: I therein sit and tell my listeners, "Do not think you are a pot of tea, and the children cups to be filled with it. Rather let them be their own pots of tea." Finally, I have a little whisper, taken from my book "Amr in Egypt". It paraphrases a Prophetic tradition which says: "Be good to the Egyptians: I am married to one of them."

Thanking and expressing genuine gratitude to you for such sweet smiles and kind touches, I pray to God to guard our nation, unify her ranks, help her along, and illumine her way ahead.

God's Peace and Blessing be Unto You!

http://kfip.org/mr-abd-al-tawwab-yousef/

# Abdel-Tawab Youssef – A Personal Note Mohamed Enani Cairo University

Faced with the task of writing about such a major literary figure as Abdel-Tawab Youssef--the master of children's literature in Arabic par excellence--one inevitably pauses "to take thought," in the words of the classicist F. L. Lucas. Writing about a well-known genius may risk producing trite encomiums—and if the genius happens to be multifarious. the task may run the risk of choosing the wrong angle, Lucas explains. Should one re-introduce an author to English-speaking audiences who have had a chance of reading his work in translation? Lucas was thinking of Herman Hesse, the German revolutionary novelist, but the case is hardly different (Lucas. Style. 1955: 67). Is one to assume that foreign audiences need to know more about children's literature in Arabic by learning more about the writer of those works they have read, or vice versa? In other words, should one learn about the field in order to find out more about the man? Or should one confine oneself to facts about this unique writer, hoping they may whet the appetite of the more serious of the reading public and perhaps urge them to acquire more knowledge of the qualities of his writing that account for his vast popularity? If the main distinctive quality was style, pure and simple, as it was in Hesse's case, the problem would easily be contained; but with Youssef, each choice brings too many difficulties. The safest way is, I have decided, to focus on the salient facts of his life and work as they appear to me – not only as a translator of one of his works, A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales (in this volume), and an editor of another, My Father: An Egyptian Teacher into English, but also as a reader of literally scores of his varied works in Arabic. This article should, therefore, be closer to a personal note than to a scholarly study.

Let me begin by explaining the sense in which I have used the term 'major figure' above. My definition is that used by David Daiches, who regards a major literary figure in terms of *influence*, that is, the writer's ability to establish a tradition, or at least to modify an existing

literary tendency by contributing works capable of changing his or her society's outlook on life. A minor artist is, on the other hand, a writer whose influence is *limited*: although he or she may be a good craftsman, a poet or novelist whose work represents the ideal rules of writing as established by both tradition and convention, and so is regarded as equally great by the critics. But then shouldn't one ask about the conditions which make such an influence possible? How can a writer exert such an influence while equally skilled writers cannot? The answer may be found in Matthew Arnold's view of the power of the man and the power of the moment. And I mean to deal with both in my analysis.

Having spent the last few months reading or re-reading intensively some of Youssef's work, I came to the conclusion that the quintessence of Youssef's genius is his use of the imagination at a watershed in the life of Egypt that, I believe, required it. By itself, the imagination is what art is all about – in fiction or in poetry – but it is the use of the imagination as a specific creative power that distinguishes one artist from another. Bowra calls it *The Romantic Imagination* (1953), Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1968) calls it the "burning light within", (i.e. the "lamp") that distinguishes the Romantic from the classicist approach which he compares to "a mirror." However, Youssef believes imagination is the vital energy of the Arab mind, the innate power behind the Arabs' great achievements in art and science. It is hardly an exaggeration to claim that it was his discovery of this power that accounts for his charming short stories, making them so brimming with vitality that we hear language "speaking us" (rather than "to us") as Heidegger would put it (Being and Time, 1927 (translation 1962) 36). Somehow, Youssef has managed to recover for us the quality that is fundamentally our own, as testified, for instance by the Arabian Nights. Our history scales the greatest heights when the Arab imagination fuses fact and fiction. As in the folklore of other nations, the flights of imagination help to represent what the people had dreamed of, what they achieved or aspired to achieve. In *Kalilah* wa Dimnah (the names of two jackals), Ibn al-Muqaffa' sums up a variety of values intended to guide those in power, in the form of incidents involving speaking animals and birds. This literary fashion influenced all poets, from *Les Fables* by La Fontaine to Ahmad Shawqi's verses for children. The author, a Persian by birth, claims to have translated the stories from old Persian, which itself was adapted from an Indian language (unnamed); but scholars doubt his veracity. Some moderns claim that the whole thing was originally written by him, and foreworded by a kind of 'Augustine-type' 'confession' – reporting, again via imaginary characters, on his return journey to religious faith.

The trick of having animals and objects speak is as old as the ancient literature of Egypt and China: humanity had discovered the value in linking the human with the natural worlds early enough in those civilizations. If Kalila wa Dimna does owe anything to India, it is this quality, although the author/translator insists his stories are mere parables. Written in the tenth century A.D., the book inspired a good deal of the allegorical literature in Europe during the 'Mature Middle Ages' (the twelfth and thirteenth centuries)<sup>1</sup>. Like the mystery plays, such allegories were intended for adult audiences, though some were adapted for the tender ears of children. It was Youssef's achievement to use the same trick in stories addressed to the middle and later stages of childhood, but without doubt fit to be read (and were actually read) by most children of all ages. His purpose may have been primarily pedagogical, as both Dewey and Piaget (each in his own way) would claim<sup>2</sup>, but the main thrust of his technique has been to nurture the imaginative power of the young. Some of his contemporaries did in fact imitate him, either by echoing the European fairy tales (such as those of the Grimm brothers) or the simplified morality narratives of, say, Andersen, but Youssef uses the speaking universe to establish the great human values (some also humanistic) in enjoyable anecdotes from our tradition. Perhaps, without being conscious of it, he was accepting Gadamer's view of tradition as a treasure to be discovered and rediscovered.3

To handle Arab tradition in this way has meant that Youssef had a different vision of time. In one anecdote after another, we watch the Arab scientists of the golden age of the Arab East (the 9<sup>th</sup> to

the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) walk about in today's world, and hear them propounding their scientific theories. Far from being the product of a waggish fancy – or simply an imagination run wild – such anecdotes are based on a firm belief that the Arab mind has a scientific bent, side by side with its literary 'constitution'.

Part of Youssef's inveterate belief in the capacity of Arabic as a living language is actualized in his style. In dealing with the scientific achievements of the Arabs, Youssef manages to teach his readers (who may or may not be children) that Arabic can be used to convey precise messages, clearly and directly. His sparse rhetorical devices are used for a purpose, and it is instructive to examine such uses and their contexts. It is easy to conclude that he is a gifted writer, tout court; but to his gift he adds the experience of reading all sorts of Arabic, old and new, originally written or in translation. This requires a word or two about the making of the professional writer in him, and the hard work that went into the creation of his inimitable style.

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Abdel-Tawab Youssef was born in a village in Upper Egypt in 1928, the year that saw the publication of Tewfig al-Hakim's *Return* of the Spirit, and Ahmad Shawqi's writing of his verse plays which were, in spite of Shawqi's French education, largely Shakespearean imitations. The contrast between the language of al-Hakim's novel and Shawqi's verse emblematizes the conflict at the time between tradition Arabic, whose models were more than a thousand years old, and the new Arabic style used by the brilliant novelist to depict the real life of ordinary Egyptians, now they felt 'born again', in terms of the Ancient Egyptian belief in the immortality of the spirit, and how it should return in the form of a bird to resurrect the dead on the Day of Judgment. While Shawqi's language was classical, full of conventional figures and sententiae, al-Hakim's style was bare, as close to the Egyptian spoken language as classical Arabic can ever be. Learning to read and write in the Quranic Teaching School (al-*Kuttab*), Youssef became aware at a very early age of the two Arabic styles available to the novice.

The 1930's in Egypt were characterized by a different kind of duality as well: as the Egyptians were united in their opposition to foreign occupation and fought to kick out the British, the European-educated elite looked up to the European ideals which were, by and large, secular, while the traditionally educated intelligentsia favoured religious education. Ambivalent attitudes proliferated among both camps, with the European-educated writing about modern life in classical Arabic, and their opponents often using easy-to-understand Arabic in addressing the populace.

It was in this crucible that Youssef's style and ideology were forged. Up until 1940, his mind absorbed both indigenous Egyptian folklore and the translations of the Romantic European tradition – in novels and in poetry – that were abundantly produced. Now in the metropolis, i.e. in Beni Sweif itself, he could feed his imagination on both Arab and European traditions. As a sensitive pupil, perhaps too sensitive, he was often perplexed by the dichotomy he felt between the poor people who suffered greatly in the war years, during his secondary school education, and the high-minded ideas traded by the politicians, sometimes in conjunction with the King and the leading British 'masters' in the Ministry of Education. He was helped to overcome this dichotomy by immersing himself in the Arab tradition, now rediscovered during and after World War Two by talented educationists.

This was, I believe the main factor that shaped Youssef's future thinking and style. Like most writers of his generation in the postwar years, he was a socialist at heart, though he never used the word itself. As he had studied political science at Cairo University, he was only too aware of the dangers of dabbling in politics in public like but, impelled by a profound love of freedom, began to work for the press (even before graduation). He worked at a newspaper edited by the writer-translator Ibrahim Abdul-Qadir al-Mazini, who was for a while his mentor. Al-Mazini's style was a paragon of lucidity and his translations were welcomed as new creations in Arabic, which impressed the young aspirant who followed in his footsteps. Al-Mazini advised him to read the works of the new stylists, led by al-Hakim,

who had devised a level of Arabic capable of reaching the growing intelligentsia. In his early writings and translations, one could see that he was highly impressed by Ahmad Amin, the thinker who produced an account of the development of Arabic intellectual life, quite accessible to the reading public. From there, it was a very short step to writing for children, and Youssef found himself attracted to writing radio material much needed by the now mature Cairo Broadcasting Station. He was already well-versed at writing in a variety of literary genres, but preferred the short story because it was, he has said, easier to handle in Modern Standard Arabic, which was a superb compromise between classical Arabic and the so-called Egyptian Arabic, that is, the language actually spoken by Egyptians.

This variety of Arabic was destined to play a major role in the evolution of modern literary genres, especially the short story. It was mainly popularized by the press in the early decades of the twentieth century and, starting in the mid-1930's, with the establishment of the official State Radio, it became the language used in *learning*, via translating and publishing scientific as well as literary books. In fact, a major role was played by translators who managed to find near equivalents for most words used in the emerging branches of learning as well as the new literary genres in prose. Youssef himself was an adept translator, having assimilated the new language used by the early translators. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of such an effort, as translation meant not only the introduction of new vocabulary but also different sentence structures whose use became most apparent in the language of conversation in classical Arabic – and hence in dramatic dialogue.

This was the 'royal way' for aspirants who wanted to write 'respectable' drama, not in verse as Shawqi and Aziz Abaza did, but in prose. Here again Tawfiq al-Hakim showed the way, as his pen was more prolific: the National Theatre Company which, under Lebanese-Egyptian poet Khalil Mutran, had introduced Shakespeare in classical Arabic prose, now began to produce plays by al-Hakim originally written in Modern Standard Arabic. Private sector theatrical companies which had thrived since the 1920's now gave up competition

with the National Theatre, with some of them presenting plays in Egyptian Arabic. The Radio was, on the other hand, a bastion for the conservatives, with only classical Arabic, in its modern standard version, used by newscasters and continuity announcers. Youssef seized the chance and began writing radio plays, in both Modern Standard Arabic and occasionally in Egyptian Arabic.

Youssef's plays were addressed to adult audiences, but his real urge drove him to write for the children's radio programmes. His output in the late 1940's and early 1950's was varied, but showed a distinct ability to address young minds. The spoken word now proved more effective as it encouraged young listeners to use their imagination and, soon enough, the name of Abdel-Tawab Youssef had invaded all homes – all homes, that is, which had a radio set. Egyptian Arabic flourished in the process and by the time I came to write my own radio plays in the early 1960's, it had become the main language of dramatic works, on the radio and on the stage.

Youssef tells us that Anis Mansour, a prominent columnist, advised him to publish his programmes for the children. A printed literary work can be read and re-read, while broadcast material may not outlive the moment of listening. Youssef 'listened', and began having his work printed and seemed to enjoy the physical presence of the printed work; but his passion for radio never died. He continued to publish and write for the radio. Having obtained his M.A. in Political Science in 1953, under Professor Botros Ghali, who later rose to world fame when elected UN Secretary-General (1992-1996), Youssef focused his attention on what he regarded as his vocation as a writer. In the 1950's and 1960's, Egyptians were experiencing the "pains of a new-born nation," as one astute historian described what was happening in the Middle East. It was more like a nation 'in search of identity (the title of Sadat's biography which I translated into English in the late 1970's) than a nation being 'delivered' or 'in labour.' The main pain was best, and fully, described by Nasser himself in his little book, *Philosophy* of the Revolution. It was the pain of fusing our triple belonging into one: that is, we were, Nasser said, in the middle of three concentric circles – the first was the Arab one, where we seemed to represent the heart, the second the Islamic world, extending far into Africa and Asia, the third the developing and non-aligned countries who belonged to neither side of the Iron Curtain (Churchill's diagnosis of the post-war split of Europe into East and West).

Youssef more than knew what was at stake: he felt that the circles were threatening to be mutually exclusive. He simply looked for the roots; he eventually found that, however secular the state can be in trying to create social justice, religion should never go by the board. His thought now tried to wed the so-called circles, with both religion and Pan-Arabism occupying the centre. As an educationist, he would have the rising generation always remember the ideals of both kinds of belonging: and gradually, the high ideals of both guided his writing. Arabic would be defended at all costs, not only as a vehicle of expression but as a means of connecting the rising generations with their past: *Enter Tradition*.

It may seem amazing that a "man of letters, rather than a writer", as Suhair al-Oalamawi described him, should be so devoted to those causes associated with his writing for children: religion, patriotism, science, Arabic – all summed up in a clear vision of tradition. Reading through his work, one is often struck by the way this passionate lover of our land can find adequate justifications for it in our rich legacy – an inheritance so rich that we have hardly begun to appreciate it. The past is never past to him: it is always present and always alive. An example of his brief stories, designed to inform the rising generation of the scientific aspect of our tradition (wrongly thought to consist solely of the verses being taught at school as representing the life and thought of all Arabs) is the one I have chosen to translate for this essay. It occurs in a volume of children's literature entitled (appropriately, I may say) The Environment Encyclopedia, for Children. The story is No. 13 in the book, and entitled *Doctor al-Raazi*. Each story in the volume is prefaced with the message of the author, which says:

These stories do not require an introduction. They can very simply introduce themselves. The information they contain looks easy to

grasp, because it is; we want it to be so, as our purpose is to draw your attention to the value of science and technology. We have therefore made use of biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics in their simplest forms. We would like to draw the attention of the young to a number of facts. Above all we want them to think, as in this way they can find practical solutions for the problems presented in these stories. They should get the keys to human treasures of great value. We are only giving hints pointing to knowledge, no more, no less. It will be up to you to continue our effort. You will have to study and look for what you want yourselves. We cannot give you everything.

We offer you the key; so use it. Consult the dictionary; read the maps; make use of encyclopedias.

It is no longer possible to use a magic formula, as Ali Baba said, by saying "Open Sesame!" We must use science and technology: reading is essential, and knowledge indispensable. These stories are gentle knocks on the gates of science and knowledge. We know that opening the gates will give you pleasure. You will remember many of them and perhaps re-read them when you grow up.

This introduction, repeated before each story, is written in Modern Standard Arabic, and, as the translation shows, the sentences are short and the structure is generally paratactic. The only metaphor used is simple enough, namely that of a "key" to a "treasure", with an allusion to the traditional tale, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*. The story itself does not differ in style, but it includes a dialogue in the new language referred to above as Modern Standard Arabic:

#### **Doctor Al-Raazi**

Sharif Musharrafa woke up on his day off feeling tired, rather unwell. Samia, his sister, came into his room and asked him, "What is wrong? Shall I call for a doctor?"

"Wait until my parents are back," he said.

"Oh no! You are part of my responsibility now!" said Samia. "What is the name of the doctor you'd like me to call? Be civilized; a doctor must see you."

Sharif Musharrafa smiled and said, "Doctor Abu-Bakr al-Raazi."

Samia went out of the room and came back in a little while holding the Telephone Book. "I haven't found his telephone number," she said, "in fact, I found no doctor of that name at all."

Sharif Musharrafa burst out laughing. Samia was surprised as, giggling, he said calmly and firmly, "This particular doctor never had a telephone, nor did he ever use one! However, he has written a book entitled The Comprehensive Guide to the Science of Healing, in thirty volumes. It is the greatest book in the history of medicine, the world over. It contains the entire medical knowledge available to man from the days of Hippocrates and Galinus [Galen] to his own times."

Samia listened, in amazement, to what her brother said but could not interrupt him as he continued, "This encyclopedia remained the only medical reference in Europe for many years. In fact it was the only medical book at the Paris Faculty of Medicine. And it was in Arabic "

"What good could a medical book in Arabic be," Samia asked, "to the French?"

"France and all Europe studied medicine in Arabic," said Sharif.

"But we teach medicine now in foreign languages," Samia remarked.

Sharif gave a loud groan and his sister rushed to help, but his groan was caused not by pain but by her statement. He reassured her that he was all right, adding, "It was all thanks to this great Arab physician that medicine made its great advances at the time, for his book took him fifteen years to write."

"Did he write only that book?" Samia asked.

"In fact, he wrote about two hundred and fifty books."

"What!"

"He wrote a book about measles and smallpox which ran into forty editions in Europe," he said.

"It seems you are running a fever, and hallucinating..." In obvious alarm, Samia felt her brother's forehead, but his temperature was normal, and he could not be hallucinating. Still, Samia said, "It's all right for you to show such enthusiasm for your physician, who is certainly worthy of admiration. So why not call him to examine you?"

At that moment, both parents returned. Samia said, "Thank God, you've come at the right time! My brother is ill and wants to be treated by Dr. Abu-Bakr al-Raazi, but he wouldn't let me call him!"

Samia was surprised to see her parents laughing. She knew that she was missing something. "My brother," she said, "speaks very highly of him, but I couldn't find his number in the book!" There was more laughter, and she was annoyed. "What is it you find so funny?" she yelled.

Sharif Musharrafa said, "I forgot to mention that al-Raazi's book continued to be the only source of medical knowledge for European medical students for four centuries."

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"Yes."

"Incredible!"

"His book ran into forty editions between the years 1648 and 1866."

"What? When did that physician live?"
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"Four centuries?" she said, "four hundred years?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;A thousand years ago."

<sup>&</sup>quot;And you want him to treat you?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes."

"How?"

"Our great Arab physician Abu-Bakr al-Raazi," said Sharif Musharrafa, "believed in the most up-to-date means of medical treatment for him, nutrition and music came before drugs and medicine. I don't think I need more than a lemonade and a good record with some music – then I shall jump out of bed, healthy as a horse!"

Indeed, Sharif Musharrafa soon recovered, having been treated by Dr. al-Raazi.

All I need add is that the quality of Youssef's writing is not excelled by the amount of work he produced over the years in print, which comes to nearly a thousand stories and plays. Some clever scholars have added up his translations and adaptations (including articles and radio programmes) which come to a staggering twelve thousand. It is no surprise that no writer for children in Arabic has managed to escape his influence. And this is why I insisted on explaining the meaning of my reference to him in my opening paragraph as a major writer.

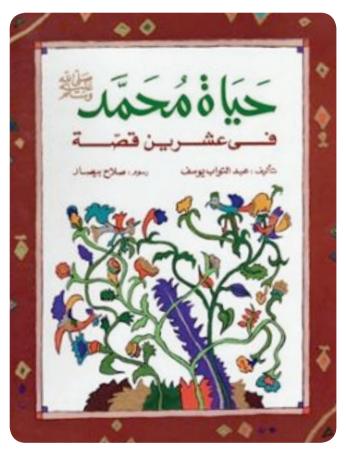
### NOTES

- 1. So called by Maurice Beuchot in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, 2015, Chapter 2.
- 2. Cf. Hermeneutics and Education in The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics, 2015.
- 3. Gadamer is credited in *Truth and Method* with rehabilitating tradition as both epistemological and ontological resource (published in German 1960, translation 1993).

# A Life of the Prophet Muhammad In Twenty Tales

By Abdel-Tawab Youssef

## English Translation by Mohamed Enani Cairo 2003



**CONTENTS:** Blurb; I am a Book; I am an Elephant; Tale of a She-Ass; I am a Stone; I am a Night; I am a Bunch of Grapes; I am a Camel; I am a Burāq; I am a Snake; I am a Dove; I am a Horse; I am a Goat; I am a She-Camel; I am a Well; I am a Mountain; I am a Rock; I am an Ewe; I am the Stump of a Palm-Tree; I am a Tree; I am a Dinar; I am a Banner.

#### BLURB

A bibliography of Prophet Muhammad, told by various unusual speakers—animals, plants, rocks etc. and the book is addressed primarily to young Muslim readers. However, the literary quality and the novel presentation of the biography, as well as meticulous commitment to historical fact, recommended to older audiences, regardless of religious creed.

A bestseller, repeatedly printed and admired by readers of all types throughout the Arab world, the book is a contribution to the new wave of children's literature designed to stimulate the imagination of the young and encourage them to respond positively to fresh reinterpretations of history.

## I AM A BOOK

- which makes me very happy.

I feel that I am the most precious object on earth, that my paper is more precious than securities and banknotes! The reason is simple:

- When God wanted to guide people to the right path, He sent them a book! A sacred book! All revelations are books-the *Torah*, the *Gospel*, the *Qur'an*.
- I am a book about Mohammad, the last of God's prophets and messengers, sent to all people, advocating Right, Goodness, Love and Peace to everybody everywhere.
- I am a book addressed to the young, who are innocent and pure of heart, beloved by God and Mohammad, God's noble Messenger.

Being so pleased with my name, my title and my readers, I had

to say these words by way of introducing myself, as well as the tales printed on my pages. They are all real and true ones; they have all taken place, and all are truthful, though told by animals and inanimate things. I am sure, dear readers, that you like to hear these tales as told by them!

All that the tales include is reported by the *Holy Qur'an*, the Prophet's Tradition and his biography. These tales are many and varied, and you shall read them all when you grow up and become righteous believers. Author Abdel-Tawab Youssef has read them and now presents the Prophet in this novel way.

I am sure you will read them all with great interest and pleasure; that you will enjoy the lovely incidents recorded, and the lofty ideals dealt with; and that you will read them over again and again. You will, I am sure, always, remember those incidents and ideals, that you will love the noble Prophet with all your hearts, and that you will always try to follow such a great example of morality.

By now, you must be eager to learn about these 'incidents'! Well, turn over the pages, and read on.

## I AM AN ELEPHANT

I have a big long trunk. But I do not live in a jungle or in the zoo. In fact, I lived in times long gone. I enjoyed a vast reputation, and had a strange tale which I would like you to hear.

The tale begins in Abyssinia, which is modern Ethiopia. I had been a wild elephant until captured by the hunters there. Being huge and strong, I was enlisted to serve in the army. And with the army, I left for Yemen.

People feared me, and trembled to hear of my advance. The fact is I spelt destruction wherever I went. If I stepped on anything, I simply crushed it! Thus I helped my people, the Abyssinians, in their conquest of Yemen.

Leader Abraha bestowed on me the honour of making me his private elephant. He refused to let me share in transporting stories and timber to the new temple being built. You see, he had ordered that a huge temple be built so as to surpass the old temple in Mecca, visited by all people from the four corners of the earth. Inside the new temple, a shrine of gold was built to which people, he hoped, would make pilgrimage rather than to the shrine in Mecca—the *Ka'ba*. However, people never came to Abraha's shrine, but continued to visit Mecca.

Abraha was livid with rage. He decided to pull down the Mecca shrine, so that only one would be available—the shrine he built of gold.

Abraha mustered a huge army for his campaign against Mecca and the Meccans. Naturally, I marched at the forefront of that army, carrying the army commander, Abraha. He wanted me to take him to the *Ka'ba*, in Mecca, to lean against it with my huge body until flattened out. Indeed, I had done that many times with the houses of Abraha's enemies

Though hardly happy with the task, I had no choice and still marched along. About me members of the army spoke of Mecca and the Meccans, of the *Ka'ba* and its history. I listened intently and learned that it was built by Prophet Abraham, that his son Ismail took part in the work, that Abraham was well known for a few miracles, as his people had thrown him into a pit of fire but he emerged perfectly unscathed.

I also learnt that at the *Ka'ba* was a noble shrine, located in God's Holy Mosque, called the 'Inviolate House of God.' It is indeed inviolable, where everybody is safe inside. I heard of the shrine's doves, which are equally inviolate. It is a quiet, safe, and sacred place—beloved by all, where people pray and take refuge.

From the soldiers I learnt that the Meccans were afraid to hear of my advance on them, having heard of my strength, and my ability to crush anything standing in my way.

Mecca was barely one-night's journey away. There was no army to stop our march or delay our advance! The road lay ahead quite open, and Mecca stood no chance and the *Ka'ba* was as good as smashed to smithereens! Everybody in the army looked admiringly at me; some

cried: "March on, Abraha's elephant! There's no elephant like you, ever!"

Intent on getting to Mecca as soon as possible, we received a report of an incident involving Abdul-Muttalib, Mecca's potentate, whose implications made us all pause and ponder; indeed, we were quite shaken to hear it. It said that, learning of the advance by Abraha's army on the *Ka'ba*, he was not in the least afraid, but simply said:

"The House has a Lord, who protects it."

The weighty words of Abdul-Muttalib made me afraid—me, the awesome elephant who strikes fear in everybody's heart! I could raze to the ground the houses of any city I pass through, but was now afraid. I suddenly felt weary, too weary to march on. Nor was I alone in this—all felt it, all the elephants, horses, camels and even soldiers. The march ground to a halt!

I stood stock still, inexplicably. I could not move at all, as simple as that! It was as though I had my feet glued to the ground, unable to take a single step on the road to Mecca!

Abraha was, understandably, alarmed; and so were the soldiers. Turned backward, I was able to move; to the right, to the left—all was easy! But returned to the direction of Mecca, I was yet again frozen! They hit me, pulled me, pushed me, scalded me with a firebrand—I still stood as though benumbed, feeling no pain! I won't go to Mecca! I won't demolish the *Ka'ba*, no matter what you do to me! They obviously wouldn't allow me to turn back until I have rid them of the burden of Mecca, the *Ka'ba*, and, perhaps, the Meccans too!

Suddenly, a miraculous thing took place. I looked up at the sky to find birds gathering in such numbers as to occlude the light of day! It was soon quite dark, and I was left in amazement: was I asleep, having a bad dream, or fully awake, witnessing a day-time occurrence?

I heard the soldiers cry out: "look at the huge flights of birds, dropping stones of baked clay!"

The stones were mere pebbles, perhaps no larger than beans or grains of wheat or corn, but if one fell on the biggest elephant in our

army, the animal simply fell senseless to the ground! If one hit the biggest camel, the animal feel too on the sand; if on the sturdiest man, his death was certain! For an eminent elephant like me, who has been through a great deal, the scene was astounding—exceedingly terrifying! I trembled in trepidation, as I have never seen anything like it before, and, almost involuntarily, fell down on my knees in awe as a strange beam of celestial light shone brilliantly, extending from the heavens to the earth, but centering around Mecca. In the distance I saw Abdul-Muttalib, chief of the Quraysh tribe, rejoicing in the joy of Meccans who flocked to congratulate him, now that Abraha's army was decimated, and was unable to conquer Mecca or abolish the Ka'ha!

Abdul-Mutalib was at the time recounting a vision he had in his sleep the previous night. He had seen something that looked like a chain of silver come out of his loins, with one end in the earth, the other in the sky! The silver chain soon turned into a tree, with one leaf radiating a light to which all people clung!

Expert dream-interpreters said that Abdul-Muttalib's son, Abdullah, would have a son to whom all people, east and west, would cling! The listener rejoiced, congratulated him and said: "What would you like to call him?"

"I shall call him," he said, "Muhammad! It means 'the praised one', and, perhaps, he will be praised by all those on earth and in the heaven!"

With the glad tidings of Muhammad's birth came my end; the end of the far-famed elephant, and the end of Abraha and his huge army. Mecca, of course, has survived; and so has the Ka'ba, for ever and ever. It will remain, immortal and immune. It is the direction of the Ka'ba that Muslims turn their faces five times a day in prayer. They all worship God who has sent the Prophet of Guidance, may God's Peace and Blessings be upon him:

Seest thou not

How thy Lord dealt

With the Companions

Of the elephant?

Did he not make

Their treacherous plan

Go astray?

And He sent against them

Flights of Birds,

Striking them with stones

Of baked clay.

Then did He make them

Like an empty field

Of stalks and straws

(Of which the corn)

Has been eaten up.

Holy Qur'an

#### TALE OF A SHE-ASS

Hundreds of years ago I lived in the household of a woman called Halima Al-Sa'diya. She was a wet-nurse, that is, she suckled babies (instead of their mothers). You see, in those days, the modern artificial powdered or liquid milk was yet unknown. Arab mothers gave their babies to wet-nurses who raised the babies in the desert.

Halima was poor, even destitute. She lived with her husband, Al-Harith, in a tent, in a region where rain was scare, with scant verdure and meager resources. As for me, the she-ass, I was lean and emaciated.

One day Halima prepared me for a journey. I was happy as I thought I was going to the pasture with the sheep, where all graze on green grass. But Halima rode me with her little baby that cried and cried. Her husband rode an old she-camel, and we all set off for the desert.

It was hot, and I moved with difficulty. I was in fact tired and almost unable to go on. The baby still cried, and Halima wanted to suckle him but could not manage to produce any milk from her breasts. Her husband asked her:

"How could you get another baby to suckle when you have no milk for your own baby?"

Quickly she said:

"With another baby to suckle, I shall be paid some money, with which to buy food! When I have been adequately nourished I shall have enough milk for both. Surely you know that! The main thing is to find a baby from a rich family who can pay me handsomely!"

I wanted to know our destination and asked the she-camel who knew all about the desert. She said "we are going to Mecca!" The mention of Mecca filled me with joy, and I soon felt energetic enough to run, even race along, to Mecca! What the reason was I could not tell!

We raced. I said, and went ahead of all other travelers, even those who had a good head start! Halima patted and thanked me for giving her the chance to beat all others and so enable her to choose a rich baby to suckle!

However, once in Mecca, all came to grief. Halima had been away for a while looking here and there but came back in dismay and apparently tired. I heard her say to her husband:

"It appears we shall go back empty handed: rather with more hunger and more fatigue!"

I felt sorry for her, for no one would hire her because she looked poor and in poor health. After a little rest, she went away again and was away for a while; then, suddenly, we saw her come back running in great happiness. She called on her husband joyfully: "Thanks be to God!"

We were all equally joyful and happy that she has found a baby to suckle

When she came to me I smelt a fragrance which, musk-like, was very sweet and pleasant. It was that of the baby she has been hired to suckle. She carefully carried him in her arms: he was a sweet, quiet and beautiful baby!

Approaching, her husband, Al-Harith looked at his face and appeared very please. "Whose son is it?" he asked, "What's his name?" "His name," she said, "is Muhammad. Muhammad Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdul-Muttalib. His grandfather is Abdul Muttalib himself, the chief of Quraysh and eminent potentate! His father, Abdullah, died before Muhammad's birth. His mother is Aamina Bint Wahab, a lady of noble birth"

Al-Harith's face lit with happiness as he helped her mount my back, carrying both Muhammad and her own baby who looked happy enough and laughed. Al-Harith mounted his she-camel and we all set off.

I found I was going at a great speed, so that I caught all those that had set off earlier, and overtaking everybody. I felt I was strong and had a full stomach, as though I had been all the time in the pasture, eating and drinking. The she-camel raced by my side, galloping like a horse!

Back in the tent, the situation completely changed, with miraculous and unprecedented abundance! For long months, not a drop of rain had come down; the clouds now gathered, the rain began to fall and the land turned green with abundant verdure! An ideal grazing ground appeared for us all—the sheep, the she-camel and myself: there was enough grass to forage, enough water to drink. Everything now changed: the land, the sky, the weather, people, the sheep, even the tent itself! Everything had become better and more beautiful since baby Muhammad arrived!

Halima was, naturally, very happy. While she hardly had enough milk for her own baby, now she had more than enough for both; and the change to better times pleased both husband and wife.

Halima often rode me, carrying baby Muhammad. It made me

exceptionally happy to help her return to run her errands with the baby Muhammad in her arms' for I then went into the desert without being affected by the scorching heat of the sun! It was as though there was always a cloud above shading us, wherever we went!

When Muhammad was two years old, he was weaned and Halima had to take him back to his mother. I took them along to Mecca, and Halima was exceptionally silent that day, absorbed in deep thought.

In Mecca, I heard Halima begging Muhammad's mother to allow her to keep the toddler for a while with her. I could hear the conversation within the house, as Halima earnestly entreated Aamina to agree. At length the latter said 'yes' and Muhammad was back with us!

We went back, with both of us leaping for joy! I simply ran and galloped! It was hard to believe I was really Halima's she-ass!

When Al-Harith saw us, he wouldn't believe his eyes for joy! But then it was true: Muhammad was again with us! With Muhammad among us, abundance continued, even affluence! Time raced and, a few months later, Halima's son came running and screaming. "Two men," he said, "in snow-white robes passed by and took away brother Muhammad!"

"Took him away?" Al-Harith cried, "He is our charge! We are responsible for him! For his safety!"

The little boy said: "I couldn't see in the distance what they did! One of them appeared to rip open Muhammad's chest, and the other seemed to look for something inside and, having found it, removed it. Then both of them went away!" Whereupon Halima and her husband rushed to look for Muhammad. I was filled with curiosity and quickly followed. Amazingly, Muhammad was not far off, standing quietly, with a sweet smile on his beaming, lovely face.

The incident was, however, disturbing for both Halima and Al-Harith. Though the little boy was safe and sound, the couple decided to take him back to his family.

Muhammad left us. But he left the abundance behind. He left us the rain and the verdure, and the fat living. More importantly, he left us joy and happiness. And our joy redoubled when we came, later on, to learn the story of the two strange men. They were two angels who undertook to cleanse and purify Muhammad's heart, in preparation for the great mission, namely the transmission of the mission of Islam. May God's Peace and Blessings be upon him!

#### I AM A STONE

I *am* a stone, no doubt; but not like those used in building your houses, schools and factories!

I am an expensive stone, more expensive than all precious stones—pearls, rubies and corals. I am unique—one of a kind, unparalleled!

I am an old, sacred stone, placed in the noble *Ka'ba* built by patriarch Abraham and his son Ismail. I am the Black Stone!

When the Meccans re-built the *Ka'ba*, they all took part in the actual construction work. With the building complete, and the time came for me to be replaced where I had always been, the Meccans quarreled!

The dispute among the tribes of Mecca was amazing, for the tribes competed for the honour of actually replacing me! Indeed, they were willing to go to war in pursuit of such an honour.

The dispute deepened, tempers ran high and voices rose to high heaven! Each tribe in fact got their weapons ready: none could accept the 'disgrace' of missing the honour of carrying me to the designated spot! Attempts at reconciliation failed, and the situation nearly got out of control. I could see the danger growing and the war about to break out; and felt responsible for it all, being the cause of the dispute. I prayed to God, hoping they will agree, if only because we are at the *Ka'ba*, in the holy mosque, the house of God, a place of peace and security. "Whoever enters it is safe."

Suddenly, a rational voice rose, and said,

"Listen to me! What can this dispute lead to? Is it permissible to start a fight at the inviolate shrine? Let your reason prevail and banish the devil forthwith!"

Asked whether he had a 'solution' acceptable to all, he said:

"I suggest we accept the judgment of the first man to come this wayand to be all bound by that judgment!"

They all concurred it was a good idea, and waited in silence for the first man to appear. Hopefully they thought he would be wise and fair, capable of satisfying the aspirations of all the tribes. They anxiously waited, and I too waited!

A short time later, though it felt like ages, someone cried: "I could see a young man coming from that direction!"

They turned to the direction indicated, and I turned too. The young man had come closer and was well known to them. Some cried in relief and unconcealed pleasure:

"It's Muhammad Ibn Abdullah!"

The man with the 'rational voice' (who had suggested the idea in the first place) asked:

"And will you accept his judgment?"

They all said, "Absolutely-isn't his nickname the 'honest'?"

When Muhammad came, the man said:

"Muhammad! We have, as you know, rebuilt the *Ka'ba*. All the tribes took part in collecting the stones and in the actual construction work. It only remains for us to re-place the Black Stone. Here we disagreed. Every tribe would like to have the honour of carrying and replacing it. The dispute came to a head, with positions hardening, and fighting about to break out! We have decided to accept your judgment. Could you, perhaps, find a way out?"

Muhammad looked at me, the Black Stone, then to the chiefs of the tribes gathered around him, thought for a minute, then, without uttering a word, took off his cloak, spread it on the ground and lifted me with both hands and put me right in the middle. He then looked at the chiefs and said:

"Come along, all of you! Let each one hold part of the cloak, and lift it

all together, so that all may share in the honour of replacing the Black Stone!"

They were stunned, one and all! The idea was so simple, yet so brilliant! They wondered, and I wondered too, why it never occurred to anyone, even though they were the chiefs, leaders and elders of the tribes! Gratified with the simple, intelligent and wonderful idea, they gave it their blessings.

All the tribal chiefs carried me to my position, relieved and satisfied, even pleased and delighted. In place of the dispute, there was now a common bond of fraternity: no tribe was deprived of the sought-after honour, and no discrimination was practiced against any of them, as all tribes had taken part in carrying and replacing me on equal footing.

I have been in my assigned place in the *Ka'ba* since that day. When seen by the Meccans and the pilgrims, I remind them of that incident which testifies to the wisdom, genius and greatness of Muhammad, even in his early youth.

#### **IAM A NIGHT**

The sun had set, and it was getting increasingly dark. The stars began to appear, but there was no moon to be seen, as I am one of the last nights of the lunar month of Ramadan.

Like any night in Mecca, or in the Arabian Peninsula, I had a mixed reception. Some stayed up, spending some time in entertainment and games, and others went to bed early.

The fact is that the world had been waiting for me since it was created, being a night of great esteem, fame and influence! Also because I am a night of light—not the light of the sun, the moon or electricity but the light of God which lights up both earth and sky.

It was thanks to that light that I came to be better than a thousand months—thirty thousand days, or eighty three years!

I am the Night of Power.

I occurred in Ramadan, in the year 610 A.D., that is, thirteen years before the *Hijra*, from which the Hijra Calendar is reckoned.

There was a cave, just outside Mecca, called the cave of Hera'. Muhammad Ibn Abdullah often worshipped God in that cave, for long hours, alone, while other Meccans worshipped their idols.

When I arrived, Muhammad was already forty years of age, and he was in the cave absorbed in prayer and meditation, addressing his God with the deepest passion imaginable, with words like:

"O Lord of all Being! Creator of these heavens! Creator of the sun, the moon and the stars! Creator of this earth and these mountains! O my Lord and my Creator! O Creator of all things! I seek thy face! I seek thy face!"

Repeating this prayer, or words to the same effect, he felt that a holy light filled every particle of the universe, both on the earth and in the sky. An angel had descended from high heaven, by the name of Gabriel, to utter the best, greatest and most beautiful words the world ever heard. He said to Muhammad:

"Igra'!" (Read)

Muhammad said. "I cannot!" for he could neither read nor write. Advancing, Gabriel hugged him and repeated the command, and had the same answer, three times. Then Gabriel read to Muhammad the following verses, which Muhammad duly repeated after him:

Read! In the name

Of thy Lord and Cherisher,

The creator.

Who created man out of a

Clot of congealed blood!

Read! And thy Lord is

Most Bountiful,

He, who hath taught,

With the pen,

Taught man that which

He knew not

Gabriel then went away and Muhammad was left alone in trepidation. He rushed back home, seeking solace from his wife Khadija. As he trembled and perspired profusely, she took him straight to his bed and covered him with a warm blanket.

When he felt warm enough and finally calmed down, he reported the incident to his wife: how he was engulfed by light in the dark cave of Hera', how Gabriel appeared and asked him to read and how his disclaimer was rejected, and finally, how he repeated after Gabriel the words revealed. He then recited the fine verses to his wife.

Reassuringly, Khadija said:

"God is on your side! You're a good and noble man. You love your family, never lie to anybody, help all people, and deny nobody's right. You're exceptionally decent, truthful and honest."

Seeking further reassurance, Khadija took him along to her cousin Waraqa Ibn Nawfal. This was on old, erudite sage, who has read many books and been in the company of both Jews and Christians. Having learnt much about religion, he came to dislike all the idols and stopped worshipping them.

As soon as Waraqa Ibn Nawfal heard from Muhammad the story of the cave of Hera', he hugged him and said:

"This is a divine revelation to you. You are a Prophet—the Prophet of the Arabs, and the Prophet of the entire world. Like Jesus and Moses, you have been chosen by God to guide people to goodness, love and mercy. You will not be believed initially, and will be driven away from your home town, but in the end you will triumph, after fighting the disbelievers. How I wish I could live long to defend you and advocate your message!"

Muhammad found comfort in the words of Waraqa Ibn Nawfal, and regained his composure. Still, he wished to have more nights like me, so as to hear the voice of divine revelation. He therefore went out, often enough, to the mountains and to his cave, and eagerly waited.

But it was neither to the mountains nor to the cave that revelation came: it came at home! The surprise was too much: he felt a sudden tremor come over him, and all quivering, inexplicably, he called his wife, and repeatedly said, "O wrap me! Cover me!" She quickly wrapped him tight, but, in a voice inaudible to all except him, he heard Gabriel say:

"O wrapped one!

Arise and deliver thy warning!

Extol thy Lord,

Keep your garments clean,

And all abomination shun.

Nor expect in giving

Any increase for thyself in return,

And persist in serving

Thy Lord!"

Many verses were later on revealed to the Prophet, until all the verses of the *Our 'an* were revealed, the last words being:

This day have I perfected

Your religion for you, completed

My favour to you,

And have chosen Islam

As your religion.

Still I shall always be proud that the first verses of the *Qur'an* were revealed in the Night of Power—that is, me! Indeed, I have been honoured by God, mentioned and exalted by Him in the Qur'an, and am made a blessed night.

That is why Muslims wait for me in the last days of Ramadan, knowing that the gates of heaven lie open when I arrive, and that God then answers all prayers.

We revealed it in a blessed night

We revealed this

In the Night of Power;

But dost thou know

What the Night of Power is?

The Night of Power

Is better than a thousand months.

Therein came down

The angels and the Spirit

By God's permission

On every errand:

Peace! This is

Until the rise of dawn!

Holy Qur'an

## I AM A BUNCH OF GRAPES

With other bunches I hung down from my vine-tree in the city of Al-Ta'if. The vine-tree stood in an orchard owned by a man called 'Utba Ibn Rabi'a, and his brother Shayba. From my branch I saw Muhammad, God' Messenger. He had come to the city to guide members of the tribe of Banu Thaqif to Islam, hoping that they would be less bigoted and more rational than the members of Quraysh, his own tribe.

From the day I came to life as a little cluster, with the unripe grapes still taking shape, I have been hearing about Muhammad from the men who came from Mecca and sought shade under my tree. I heard that the first woman to adopt his faith was his wife Khadija, the first man Abu Bakr, the first child Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

I also learnt, however, that believers in his faith were quite few, that most members of Quraysh did not believe, but rather ridiculed him, and, indeed, resisted him in every possible way. They tried to tempt him with money, and with power, to abandon his vocation, and to stop discrediting the idols which Quraysh worshipped.

I heard someone sitting under the vine-tree one day say that they sent him a message, with his uncle Abu Talib, which said:

"Quraysh is offering to give you any amount of money you may require, on condition that you abandon this religion you're preaching."

The Prophet answered:

"By God, my uncle! If they could put the sun in my right hand, and the moon in my left, so that I abandon this cause, I would not do it until God allows it to prevail, even if I lost my life in the process!"

Sometime later I heard from 'Utba, the orchard owner, that Quraysh had sent him too to Quraysh with the following message:

"Quraysh is willing to give you enough money, if you so wish, to make you the richest man in the tribe; but if you're after honour, they would make you their sage and elder, nor would take a decision before consulting you; still, if you want to be King, they would gladly make you a monarch and enthrone you! However, if your divine revelation was an illness, the best physicians would be hired to cure you!"

All Muhammad did in response to the message carried by 'Utba was recite the following verse from the *Qur'an*:

"Say: I am a man like you to whom is revealed that your God is One." Whereupon 'Utba went back to Quraysh and said:

"I've heard words which do not qualify as verse, or as magic, or indeed as those of fortune-tellers"

He then asked Quraysh to leave Muhammad alone, saying:

"As a young man in your midst Muhammad has always been the most decent, the most truthful, and the most honest. How could you, now he's grown up and come up with his new message, accuse him of being a liar and a magician?"

When all attempts by Quraysh to tempt Muhammad with money

and power failed to make him stop calling on people to believe in the faith of the ONE God, Quraysh resorted to violence, physically abusing him and his followers. Furthermore, it called for boycotting, isolating and besieging him and all Muslims. A parchment was put up on the *Ka'ba*, calling on people to do this, enjoining them to observe the following:

- No greetings or any kind of dialogue with Muslims;
- No commercial transactions of any kind with them;
- No marital bonds of any kind with them; and
- No dealings of any kind.

The new attempt at ostracism equally failed. Only three years later, five eminent leaders of Quraysh declared they did not recognize the practice, and actually tore up the parchment, ordering that it be null and void

The end of ostracism did not mean that the pagan members of Quraysh would stop their persecution of Muhammad and his followers; in fact, they intensified their campaign of torture and abuse, especially after the death of Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib, and his wife, Khadija. Once they put, laughing, the entrails of a slaughtered ewe on God's Messenger while he prostrated at prayer; another pagan man surprised the Prophet by wrapping his robe around his neck which nearly choked him.

These and similar reports I could hear from those returning from Mecca who sought a little rest in the shade of my vine-tree. I found them painful, naturally, and wished that my short life should give me the chance to see Muhammad. On the other hand, I didn't want to stay too long on the vine-tree, for fear of being taken by the pagans and made into wine which, by intoxicating them, should spell more distress to the Muslims! That is why I had thought there was a slim chance indeed for me to see Muhammad; but lo and behold! Here he is in person for me to see and hear!

However, as much as I was happy to see him, I simply felt sorry for what took place. I almost cried and actual tears when I saw what happened to him. He sat down with the nobility of the tribe of Thaqif, preaching, advocating belief in God and his Messenger, and God's Book, but their response was rude and their words irreverent.

On his way back to Mecca, he was followed by little, accompanied by a few stupid and insolent persons, who surrounded the Prophet and hit him hard. They threw stones at him, insulted and ridiculed him, and holding him whenever he tried to run away from them.

At length he managed to dodge his pursuers, taking refuge in my shady vine-tree, and so rest his weary limbs a while. I heard him say:

"O God! To you alone I bemoan my failing strength, limited resources, and irreverence in people's eyes, O most merciful of all." "O God! If thou be not wrathful, there should be nothing for me to worry about!"

'Utba and brother Shayba stood nearby and heard his words; whereupon 'Utba asked his servant, 'Addas, to pick me, put me on a plate, and present me to Muhammad. I felt I was quivering with joy, even on my very branch. I was overwhelmed with happiness as I left my place and was put by 'Addas on the plate before Muhammad who, extending his hand to me, said "In the name of God!"

Puzzled by the words he had never heard before, 'Addas said:

"These are unfamiliar words in this country!"

"And where do you come from?" God's Messenger asked.

"From Nineveh," 'Addas replied.

"Oh, from the town of the good man Jonas Ibn Matta?"

"How did you know who Jonas was?"

"Well, he was a Prophet, and I am a Prophet!"

Whereupon 'Addas bent down to kiss Muhammad's head and hand, saying "Indeed you must be a Prophet! No one could bear what you have born unless it was for the Truth and the religion of the Truth!"

My grapes were loosened by the fingers of God's Messenger, as I felt I was the happiest bunch of grapes that ever existed: here had I become food for the Prophet who had suffered for so long; and here

had I witness the conversion of 'Addas to Islam with its great revealed message.

## I AM A CAMEL

I say I'm a camel, though not a real camel, but a mere phantom of a camel, for I briefly appeared and vanished! This is an interesting story which I would like to tell; for real camels have too often reported their own stories about Muhammad!

These camels had known Muhammad in his early days, a young man tending his flocks of sheep and camel. They say he was always generous, gentle and kind to them, that he never left them, like his companions, to spend his time playing but stayed with them, took care of them and fending off the ravages of the desert!

Some of these camels also knew him as a good rider; for they have taken him to Yemen in the south, and to the Levant in the north, on his trading journeys. Some also saw him in the markets of Mecca, Al-Madina, San'a and Damascus doing business; and they all confirm that they never saw a man with greater honesty and honour. They never heard him swear by the idols of Quraysh, as the Arabs used to do.

But my own story is entirely different—interesting and exciting!

One day a stranger to Mecca arrived with camels he wanted to sell. He was a merchant and finally sold them to Abul-Hakam Ibn Hisham, who was later called Abu Jahl (the Ignorant) by the Muslims. As was the custom of most unbelievers in pre-Islamic times, Abu Jahl wanted to default on payment and so kept evading the man. He wanted to have the camels for nothing and was determined not to pay anything to the merchant.

The stranger was at a loss. He needed somebody who could persuade Abu Jahl—an intermediary who could persuade Abu Jahl to pay for the camels. He went about the city asking about a man who commands enough respect and authority to help him get his money.

During his search he met two men from the tribe of Quraysh, who were unbelievers and opposed to Muhammad, and recounted his story with Abu Jahl. He wondered if they knew anybody who could

really help him. By a strange coincidence, Muhammad was observed walking in the distance. It occurred to one of the men, as part of the unbelievers' campaign of abuse and ridicule, to exploit the incident in causing harm to Muhammad. He thought it would be fun, too, to cause Muhammad to confront Abu Jahl, his worst enemy, who would definitely be offensive and utterly obnoxious!

"See that man walking there?" The man said, "His name is Muhammad. Ask him to take you to Abul-Hakam, and he will surely get you your money!"

The other man realized his companion's intention and soon said, "Indeed! For Abul-Hakam loves that man very much, listens to him, and would do it as a favour to him! Now, hurry and approach Muhammad, and he will soon get you your money!"

The stranger rushed and caught up with Muhammad. Breathlessly, he said:

"I am a stranger in these parts. I have sold some camels to Abul-Hakam Ibn Hisham. He hasn't paid me for them, nor does he want to pay. I have asked about someone who would support my case and recover my rightful money, and have been guided to you! Could you please do that? I beg you, I implore you!"

Muhammad led the man by the arm in the direction of Abu Jahl's house, with the two men looking in amazement, snickering and giggling. They followed Muhammad and the merchant at a distance, then stopped. They expected to witness an interesting, dramatic scene, wondering what Abu Jahl would do to the prophet now that the latter had come personally to him, dared to ask him to do something Abu Jahl was determined never to do! Muhammad had fallen, they thought, in the trap they had set for him! Quraysh will feast their eyes on a new battle, where Abu Jahl will 'eat up' Muhammad and make him the laughing stock of the entire tribe!

The two men's laughter grew louder, with each congratulating the other on the success of their idea, and waited to see such 'dire consequences' for Muhammad!

Having knocked on the door, Muhammad called on Abu Jahl.

"Who is it", a voice from within inquired. The Prophet said, "It's me, Muhammad! Will you come out, please?" Abu Jahl opened the door, intending a diabolic vengeance, to hear Muhammad say, in the calmest tones imaginable: "Give this man his due!"

A miraculous change suddenly occurred. Abu Jahl as though he had seen a frightful thing, he trembled in terror and turned white! He mumbled a few words, bending his head in obedience, went back into his house!

The stranger was astonished; more astonished were the two men watching from a distance. They had expected Abu Jahl to fly in a temper and fiercely attack Muhammad, causing him untold injuries! Possibly he went in to get a 'torture tool'—a big stick, a whip, a rock, or a red-hot iron bar! Indeed, the last is the most fitting implement of punishing the audacity of Muhammad! They in fact expected Abu Jahl to come back with the red-hot iron bar, but they didn't wait too long. Soon enough Abu Jahl was back, carrying something completely different—a bag of money! It was precisely what he owed the merchant!

The two men looked open mouthed as the stranger, still rubbing his eyes in disbelief, was handed his money—so easily, and so quickly!

"Is this your due?" Muhammad asked the merchant.

"Every penny of it!" The man said.

Without waiting for a word of thanks or appreciation from the stranger, Muhammad went away. The two men rushed to him to make sure what they had seen did happen, and almost in a state of shock. The man counted the money in front of them and said:

"I am thankful to that great man, Muhammad. I never imagined he'd be able to get me my due, in full, so easily and so quickly!"

The two men hurried back to tell Quraysh all about it, an incident they witnessed with their own eyes which spoke of Abu Jahl's cowardice and flinching before Muhammad! Quraysh were stunned; eminent members of the tribe rushed to Abu Jahl, and repeatedly knocked on his door to find out the truth. How could he obey and indeed surrender in fear to Muhammad, and so pay the merchant's money on the spot, when he had been insisting not to pay?

But Abu Jahl wouldn't answer the door—a surprise that compounded the mystery—for he was now afraid! Having made sure they were who they said they were, he opened his door. In response to their many questions he said:

"I opened the door, intending to teach Muhammad a lesson for daring to accompany that merchant and come to my doorstep to claim his money, but—all at once, I saw as though a gigantic camel has appeared above the head of Muhammad! Its mouth was wide open, showing huge, sharp teeth, and wanting to pounce on me if I argued or objected! I had to leave before the fearful camel had a chance to bite me; even inside my house I felt as though it was still after me; and I had, to avert its fury, to take the money quickly and pay the merchant his due. I did so, bolted my door and stayed at home."

One man commented, sarcastically, "of course—so that the camel wouldn't come after you, yet again!"

Another man said, "Perhaps you didn't answer our call, lest it should be Muhammad once again!"

A third man added, "Indeed! With the gigantic camel towering above his head, wanting to pounce on you!"

More sarcastic remarks followed fast and laughter rang out loud.

The two men who had witnessed the 'incident' said in emphatic tones, "we were there and saw what happened; there was no camel (or anything else) with or above the head of Muhammad!"

Someone confronted Abu Jahl: "Admit it! You were terrified by the character and the courage of Muhammad! His audacity and firm stand in support of what is right struck fear in your heart! It was your panic that created the apparition of that camel—a figment of your imagination! You're apparently still afraid of a phantom that could come back, aren't you?!"

Members of Quraysh laughed a great deal at Abu Jahl, rather than at

Muhammad; they scoffed at their terrified, trembling potentate, while the two disbelievers had wanted Quraysh to scoff at Muhammad!

# I AM A BURĀQ

More than fourteen hundred years, before the invention of rockets and satellites, was I, *Al-Burāq*!

Reports vary in describing me, and even in specifying my shape and kind, but the important thing is that I was made by God, Creator of the earth and the sky, may His name be exalted, the All-Capable.

I had been ridden by God's Prophets, but with Prophet Muhammad I had a unique miracle, a story that is *real* in every respect, though stranger than the flights of fantasy.

Twelve years had elapsed since Revelation first came to Muhammad, during which time he had suffered a great deal of hardships. His uncle and his wife died; his companions emigrated; and his journey to alTaif came to nought, but his faith never faltered, and he continued to ask God to grant him more support and fortitude.

After these eventful years, my miracle with the Prophet took place—the *Israa* and the *Mi'raj* (the night journey to Jerusalem and the heavens). The night was that of the 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab, the lunar month. Gabriel first went to the house of the Prophet, and accompanied him to the Inviolate House, the *Ka'ba*, where I had been waiting. Having washed the Prophet's heart with Zamzam water, Gabriel filled it with wisdom and faith. Then the Prophet rode me and set off, in Gabriel's company, to *Beit Al-Magdis*, Jerusalem, with the utmost speed.

Just outside Mecca, we passed by a caravan belonging to Quraysh. A she-camel had strayed from the caravan, and the Prophet told them where it was. We passed by another caravan whose camels had dispersed, and one of which had a broken leg. We passed by a third caravan, at the forefront of which was a camel carrying two black bags.

On the way Muhammad saw a great deal. He had many questions to ask, and Gabriel gave the answers. He saw a beautiful girl wearing magnificent clothes; she called out his name, but he never looked.

Gabriel said: "that was this world, looking splendid for you!" The Prophet said: "I have no need of her."

When we arrived at Yathrib, Gabriel said: "This is Yathrib; you will migrate to it; it will be called Al-Madina Al-Munawara; and therein you will die.

We passed by some people who had planted a crop and every time the harvest was over, the crop was renewed and they had to harvest it again. The Prophet asked about them. Gabriel said: "There are people who have fought for God; the reward of their good deeds is multiplied seven hundred times. We also witnessed the punishment of those who would not pray or pay their zaka (2.5 % of uninvested capital annually). We felt on the way a breeze wafting a fragrance sweet as perfume, with the echo of an indistinct voice. "What is this, Gabriel?" Muhammad asked. "This is," Gabriel replied, "the voice of the Garden saying: O God! Get me that which you've promised; I am full of sumptuous chambers and silken material, gold and silver, cups and jugs, honey, milk and water; get me, O God, that which you've promised me."

Passing by another valley, we smelt a nasty scent, and heard a jarring voice. "What is this, Gabriel?" the Prophet asked. "This is the voice of Gehennam calling," Gabriel answered, "God! Get me that which you've promised; I am so full of chains and shackles, and my heat is scorching; so get me that which you've promised me."

We arrived in Al-Ouds (Jerusalem) in no time at all. Muhammad took me, Al-Burāq, and bound my halter to a ring in a high rock, which still stands, where later Muslims built a beautiful, towering dome. He left me there and went into Al-Agsa (the farthest) Mosque where all the Prophets and Messengers of God were waiting. They stood in their ranks as he led them in prayer.

After the prayer Gabriel provided the Prophet with a Mi'raj (ladder) which reaches into the heavens, and the Prophet climbed it, making another journey simply called *Al-Mi'raj*. The Prophet ascended to the first heaven, where our father Adam welcomed him. In the second he met Prophets Issa Ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary),

Yehya and Zakaria; in the third, he met Youssef Ibn Ya'coub (Joseph son of Jacob); in the fourth, Idris; in the fifth, Haroun Ibn 'Imran; in the sixth, Moussa Ibn 'Imran (Moses son of 'Imran); in the seventh, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Abraham). Each welcomed the Prophet saying: "Welcome! Good Prophet and good brother!"

Then God raised His chosen Prophet to the "Lote-tree of the Ultimate", to the High Divine Presence. The Prophet fell prostrate in a prayer of thanks to the One God, for allowing him to be where no one else had ever been before. It was here that God decreed that Muslims should pray five times a day, directing their faces towards the *Ka'ba* in prayer.

Then the Prophet went down to the noble rock, having bade farewell to all the Prophets and God's Messengers. He then rode me, *Al-Burāq*, on the journey of *Israa* and *Mi'raj* which came to an end. I said goodbye and he went home. On the next day he went to the *Ka'ba* and told this story to the people, but the pagan members of Quraysh did not believe him, with Abu Jahl the most persistent in disbelief. One of them said:

"It takes us a whole month to go to Jerusalem, a whole month to come back; now how can Muhammad go and return in one night?"

At this moment Abu Bakr arrived at the *Ka'ba* and sat near the Prophet. He heard from the pagans what the Prophet had to say about his journey, and how they wouldn't believe any part of it.

The argument raged unabated. Finally they challenged the Prophet to describe the *Aqsa* Mosque, secure in the knowledge that he'd never visited it. But Muhammad began a detailed description, as though he was looking at something in front of him. He spoke of every part of it, with a degree of precision that stunned everybody. Abu Bakr said: "You're truthful, O Messenger of God!"

Nor did the Prophet confine himself to the detailed description of the mosque; he had further proofs of the truth of his story. He spoke of the caravans he had seen on the outskirts of Mecca which, later on, arrived back in Mecca. With them were the she-camel that had gone astray, the camel with the broken leg, and the one carrying two black bags—precisely as reported by the Prophet.

The disbelievers were bewildered, and speechless. Abu Bakr said, yet again, "You're truthful, O Messenger of God! I believe everything you've said." The noble Prophet said, "You are the siddeeg (true believer) O Abu Bakr!" the word used by the Prophet that day became the title of Abu Bakr, who is always referred to as Abu Bakr Al-Siddeea.

Thus I, Al-Burāq, conclude my story with the Messenger of God in the Night of Israa and Mi'raj: It is a true and real story, which occurred fourteen centuries before the age of rockets and satellites.

Glory to God

Who did take His servant

For a journey by night

From the Inviolate Mosque

To the Farthest Mosque

Whose precincts We did

Bless,--in order that We

Might show him some

Of Our signs: for He

Is the One Who heareth

And seeth (all things).

Holy Our'an

#### I AM A SNAKE

Snake, indeed, I am, though the mere name may put you off! But rest assured, I am too far away to do any harm, having lived in the very distant past! My home was a crack in the wall of a house in Mecca called "The Assembly House" where people met and discussed a variety of topics. One day I went out of my crevice but found a man all in black whom I knew very well. "You're Satan, the arch devil, aren't you?" I cried. "Keep quiet," the man whispered, "I don't want anyone to hear you!" "But what are you doing here?" I asked. Coming closer, he again whispered: "I'm after Muhammad! I want to get rid of him! This man is about to change the face of the earth! His heart radiates a bright light which is blinding to all the eyes of us—devils! I say, could you by any chance help me, clever snake?"

I looked intently at him for a while but said nothing. I had indeed helped him before to carry out some of his crimes. For ages and ages people have hated me, and even shunned me, remembering old sins, and I now wished I could mend my ways. In fact I wanted Satan to stay away from Muhammad, and wished I could do something about it. Hearing the voices of a number of people approaching, I had to withdraw quickly to my crevice. They came in and sat down, their conversation becoming quite audible: they were discussing how to get rid of Muhammad

One of them said: "I think we could try confining him to some place!" Satan, in his human disguise, said: "Oh, no! He'll find a way out of it!" Another man said, "Let us drive him out of Mecca altogether!" "He'll come back, no doubt!" Satan retorted. Suggestions were made and rejected, one after another, until Satan came up with the following 'Satanic' idea:

"The best way is to choose a number of men, representing a tribe each, who should lie in wait for him outside his home and, when he emerges, attack him all *as one man* and get rid of him. In this way, responsibility for the act will be shared, diffused, and so lost! It could not be pinned down, and his tribe would not be able to avenge his death or fight all the tribes!"

The assembly approved Satan's idea and went to carry it out.

I went out too, at night, and crept until I reached Muhammad's house, and saw the men around the house, lying in wait. Every now and again, one of them peeped through the key hole to find him still in bed, covered with a blanket.

Now a strange thing ensued: everybody's lids grew heavy, including mine, and we all fell asleep. We all slept soundly indeed until it was daybreak. Alarmed and surprised, the men looked again but only found 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, Muhammad's cousin, in the Prophet's bed! 'Ali was still young, but he was bold enough to replace the Prophet in his bed, and cover himself with the same blanket. When he came out they apprehended him and in vain rained their questions:

"Who are you? Why are you in Muhammad's bed?"

"Where did Muhammad spend the night?"

"Where is Muhammad now?"

To all such questions 'Ali simply said: "I don't know!"

At that time Muhammad and Abu Bakr, his dear friend, had left Mecca—the scene of their intense suffering! When Satan learnt they had fled, he went about, in his human form, shouting at people: "How could they get away? Follow them everywhere!"

Though by everybody else unseen, I was spotted by Satan who asked me: "why don't you interrupt their flight?" "Oh, I'm sorry! I said, "They've had such a big head start!" But he quickly said, "Well then you must tell other serpents and asps to bite them." I had no choice but to acquiesce. Then to the horse of Suraga Ibn Malik he said: "You must hurry, run as fast as you can in search of Muhammad! You and your master will be rewarded!"

The scene was set. When Muhammad arrived at the cave where he and his companion, Abu Bakr Al-Siddeeq, hid from their potential pursuers, the serpents in the crevices were waiting, prepared to carry out Satan's and my orders. Sensing the concealed danger, Abu Bakr tore his cloak into small shreds with which to stop up all gaps in the rocks, so that, as reported to me later by the community of snakes there, they were confined to their homes. The cloak-shreds weren't enough, however, and one crack was left unstopped. Abu Bakr simply sat on the rock and put his heel on the crack.

A serpent realized what had happened and managed to bite the heel of the Prophet's friend and companion. The Prophet was having a nap, resting on the knee of his friend. The bite was so painful and Abu Bakr silently let down a few tears. Some tears dropped on the cheek of the Prophet and woke him up. Learning what had happened he passed his hand on the place of the bite; miraculously the pain was gone, and Abu Bakr was again able to stand on his own feet, as though never bitten. The two friends were once again capable of resuming their long journey to Al-Madina Al-Munawara.

It was amazing, wasn't it, that neither I, the snake, even in conjunction with my fellow snakes, nor Satan could stop him or catch him! It was God who saved him from Satan, the arch devil, and from my colleagues and me!

Remember how the unbelievers

Plotted against thee

To restrict thy vocation,

Or slay thee, or drive thee

Out (of thy home)!

They plot and plan,

And God too plans,

But the best of planners

Is God.

Holy Qur'an

#### I AM A DOVE

I am a white dove, meek and sweet. I like the open space around the Ka'ba most, for there I may fly low enough flapping my wings, fearing no one, feared by none, and often come down to pick whatever grains I may find.

That fine morning, however, I was flying low over a beautiful cave on the Mecca-Madina highway, looking for a safe place where I could lay my two eggs, so that two little white doves may hopefully come out when the eggs hatch, after the usual brooding period. But I was put

off by the many snakes I saw in the cave; they were all agog as though anticipating something. I couldn't come too close, for I knew I could be instantly swallowed up!

I met a gentle spider and enquired of him about the reason for the 'mobilization' of all the snakes. He said, "They have received orders from the chief snake in Mecca to waylay two men." I asked him who they were but he said, "I don't know; but you, dove, can fly far and wide, and could easily find out, couldn't you?"

I did fly high and covered a great distance before I spotted God's Messenger with Abu Bakr. Naturally I flew a little lower and heard their conversation. They were talking about a possible safe place where they could rest and hide from the unbelievers who must be in hot pursuit by now. They talked of the cave, so I flew ahead to lead them to it, and tried to clean it when I felt they were a little late. The spider and I were worried lest the Meccans might catch up with them, but in fact they safely arrived and went into the cave.

I saw Abu Bakr stopping up the crevice which I, the dove, wished I could stop up with my body. The spider thought he could do it with his cobweb, but sat on the rock and stopped up the crevice with his foot.

I still flew here and there, anxiously and in fear. The spider asked me:

"Why don't you calm down? Shouldn't you be looking for a place to lay your eggs?"

"I am afraid of the Meccans," I said, "I am watching the road lest they should get to the cave."

I flew a great distance in the direction of Mecca, then came back, having seen nothing. I did it again, but this time I came back in panic, trembling. To the spider I rushed and said, "Would you imagine! The evil ones are coming! If they find Muhammad and his friend, they'll never spare them their evil! What are we going to do?"

The spider was quiet for a while, thinking. He then said: "I shall weave my cobweb at the entrance to block it!"

I nearly laughed at the thought that a cobweb could block the entrance, then I realized his clever plan. As he quickly went to work, I rushed to transfer my nest and my eggs to the entrance, and there I lay on the eggs, apparently unperturbed. So, when at length the unbelievers arrived, they stopped at the entrance and looked.

I never moved and heard their voices:

"Have Muhammad and his companion entered the cave?"

"Perhaps they have!"

"They must have!"

"Oh, I don't think so! The place is full of snakes."

Questions and answers were bandied up and down, focusing on the question 'To enter or not to enter'!

Finally a voice rose to save the situation; it wondered:

"Why should we enter a cave which nobody has entered for a long time?"

"But how could you tell?" The people around him asked.

His answer was precisely what the spider and I had hoped for; he said: "Look! A spider has woven its cobweb at the entrance; if anybody had entered, the web would have been torn apart! And a dove is lying on her eggs in her nest; if anybody had passed through, she would have flown and the eggs smashed! Conclusion: No one has gone into the cave for a long time indeed!"

Everybody concurred: They couldn't be inside the cave!

The sound of their footsteps grew fainter and fainter as they went away, and the spider and I felt relieved at the receding sound. When the vanished I flapped my wings for joy, and the spider made a little dance of his own in his cobweb! When the Prophet woke up to heal the snakebite in the foot of Abu Bakr, our joy doubled—the spider and I!

Having rested in the cave, the Prophet and Abu Bakr went out to resume their journey, with me, the dove, flying overhead for a long distance, wishing them from my heart a safe journey.

If ye help not (your leader)

(It is no matter); for God

Did indeed help him

When the unbelievers drove out:

He had no more than one companion:

They two were in the cave

And he said to his companion,

"Be not sad, for God

Is with us." Then God

Sent down His peace upon him'

And strengthened him with forces

Which ye saw not, and humbled

To the depths the word of the unbelievers,

But the word of God is exalted to the heights;

For God is exalted in His might and wise.

Holv Our'an

### I AM A HORSE

We set off, my master, Suraga Ibn Malik, and I, his horse, from Mecca, hoping to catch up with Muhammad and his companion on their way to Al-Madina.

Many others had been looking for them, like me, so as to win the prize promised by the tribe of Quraysh to whoever catches Muhammad and brings him back, dead or alive. Satan had yelled at me to run as fast as I could if my master was to get a reward of a hundred camels and a new saddle. I didn't really care much for Satan's reward, but my master held the reins and hit me hard; he was armed with a spear and a crossbow (and a quiver full of arrows): he was resolved to use all these weapons in capturing the Prophet and his companion or in fighting and killing them.

Suraqa was one of the best Arab horsemen that ever lived, and I his favourite steed. The Meccan had pinned great hopes on us both, and expected us to come back triumphant to claim our prizes.

We did in fact catch up with Muhammad and Abu Bakr, who had a guide leading the way. Looking back, Abu Bakr saw me in the distance and felt a little afraid, but then he remembered what Muhammad has said in the cave: "Be not sad: God is with us."

All of a sudden I found I was, quite unaccountably stumbling, though soberly trotting along. I realized I had thrown off my rider who never before fell off the back of any steed!

Remounting, he was livid with rage! He advanced until he was close enough to the Prophet and his friend, all the while shouting "Stop! Or I will kill you!" He drew still nearer—and nearer. Muhammad and his friend stopped. When barely a stone's throw away, Muhammad turned his face to the sky and in deep tones said "O God!"

Suddenly I found my fore-legs sink so deep in the ground that my master's feet were also sunk. It was a pit where an old well had been dug and abandoned, but then concealed from view by the sand. Still, I or my master should have recognized the place but were so possessed with the joy of being about to catch the fugitives that we didn't. We both tried in vain to get our feet out of the ground, whereupon I started to neigh and heard my master scream "Save us, Muhammad, and we will go back!"

Muhammad and Abu Bakr had been preparing to leave us behind, with our legs deep in the sand, when the guide unexpectedly approached us. We were afraid lest he should kill us in our helpless condition but, to our amazement, he began to pull at Suraqa's right leg until it was out, did the same thing with my right leg, then with both our left legs, working hard and patiently, until we were saved.

Once saved, I felt I wanted nothing more than to go back to Mecca, but Suraqa still craved the reward. He walked on towards the Prophet's camel though, inexplicably and barely a few steps away, he stopped short, apparently in great pain, having realized that he had

been wounded and was bleeding. He now stretched himself in agony on the sand and, once again, we cried loud, beseeching the Prophet to forgive us. Too noble to let us die in this way, the Prophet responded, especially that Suraga now swore by all that he held sacred that he'd go back to Mecca and abandon the chase.

When the Prophet had finally saved us, Suraga said: "God has protected you from me, Muhammad! I had hoped to win a hundred camels but—well, I still wish you'd do me a favour!"

Abu Bakr asked Suraga what it was and Suraga said "that he write me a covenant—a letter! So that he'd recognize me in the future and, if I ever ask for something, he'd grant me my wish!"

The Prophet said: "Write it down, Abu Bakr!"

Abu Bakr wrote a 'covenant' on a bone and threw it to Suraga. Suraga put it in his pocket, mounted me and we set off again towards Mecca. I could hardly believe I had been saved.

My master told everybody that he couldn't find Muhammad and his companion; and I said the same thing to all other horses, as well as to donkeys and camels, so that none would try again to seek Muhammad and his companion on their way to Al-Madina.

O Apostle! Proclaim the message

Which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord;

If thou didst not, thou wouldst not

Have fulfilled your mission;

And God will defend thee

From (the mischief) of all men.

Holy Our'an

#### I AM A GOAT

You may have seen goats like me, but you couldn't have me, because I belong to the distant past—the time of the flight of God's

Messenger, Muhammad (God's Peace and Blessings be upon him) from Mecca to A-Madina. I lived in neither city, in fact, but with my owner Um Ma'bad, on the highway between the two cities.

Um Ma'bad is a kind and honest woman—exceptionally sweet and decent. On that day, her husband had gone out herding the other goats in search of fodder, but I felt too weak to go and so stayed behind in the tent, with Um Ma'bad, and saw Muhammad and Abu Bakr approaching. Dismounting, Muhammad asked the woman if she had any food to offer him and his companion—milk, dates or meat—or anything else they could buy. Obviously both were hungry, and their journey a long one.

Um Ma'bad said, "I'm sorry; if we had any food, I would've offered it to you; but we are, sadly poor and have nothing at all."

As though to remind them I was there, I kept bleating "Baa-Baa!" and Muhammad heard my cries and looked in my direction first, then asked Um-Ma'bad about me. "Oh, this goat is poorly and could not go out with the flock," she said. "Hasn't she any milk?" they enquired. "Milk?" she exclaimed, "how could she have milk when she's so lean and hungry?" I once again cried "Baa-Baa!"

I felt happy when the Prophet asked her to allow him to milk me. She agreed, though she was certain there wasn't a single drop of milk in my udders. His hand touched my teats, as he repeated "May God bless this goat for the good woman!" And, lo and behold! My milk flowed, rich and abundant. I couldn't believe myself, but he filled a whole jug and gave to Um Ma'bad to drink!

Open-eyed, Um Ma'bad looked at the full jug, then rubbed her eyes wondering how I could produce all that milk. She only drank part of it for fear it might be the last I had, but the Prophet asked her to drink it up, showing her the other jug he filled for himself and Abu Bakr. Reassured, Um Ma'bad emptied the entire jugful into her stomach, then Abu Bakr drank, and Muhammad drank last. Then he milked me once again until Um Ma'bad's big pot was full, left it to her and bade her farewell, thanking her for her hospitality and warm welcome.

The great man resumed his flight, with his friend Abu Bakr. When Abu Ma'bad, the husband of my owner, returned with the flock of lean goats after foraging in a near-by pasture, he was astonished to find milk in the tent. "Where did you get this milk when this goat is poorly and unmilkable?" She said that a man with 'blessed' hands had passed by, and told him the story in full. Having listened to her tale, the man said: "Well, it appears that this man is Muhammad, the man wanted by Quraysh. Could you describe him to me?"

Um Ma'bad said:

"He's a man with a radiant, cheerful face. His voice is tuneful, his words sweet. He's neither too tall nor too short, pleasant to look at, commanding great respect from everybody with him. He's decent and exceptionally modest. When he had milked the goat, he was the last to drink "

Abu Ma'bad began to drink the goat milk I had produced. It appeared to be a tribute to the great, blessed visitor to the tent of Um Ma'bad. He then said:

"That man is God's Messenger of whom I had heard. How I wish I had seen him and spoken to him! How I wish I had gone along with him, and proclaimed that I believed what he says!"

Um Ma'bad said, "You still have the chance to find him and stand by him."

At that moment I bleated "Baa-Baa", not knowing why! Abu Ma'bad instantly responded. He came over to me, patted me on the back, saying:

"Thanks! Thank you, our goat! You're a noble goat, and people will never forget you! Indeed, they will never forget what happened today!"

I wanted to tell him that I did nothing, that I was myself amazed by what had happened: it was all due to the blessed hand that touched me, to the great man whose prayer to God to fill my udder with milk was granted.

I have always been happy to have given the Prophet a drink of my

milk, while he was on his great journey, that memorable fight from Mecca to Al-Madina. It was thanks to that journey that the members of Muslims multiplied—so much so that I could not count them when I saw them, later on, returning to Mecca as triumphant conquerors, raising high the banner of God's true religion.

# I AM A SHE-CAMEL

Like the camel, my husband, I am called the ship of the desert. I could there cover long distances, without feeling weary or thirsty. At the time Muhammad began to call our people to adopt Islam and worship the One God only, I lived in Mecca and was owned by Abu Bakr, the Prophet's friend.

When Muhammad and Abu Bakr decided to leave for al-Madina, as the unbelievers were determined to kill the Prophet, the desert guide led me to the cave entrance, together with one of my sisters, stronger and faster. The Prophet rode me, Abu Bakr my sister. We proceeded to Yathrib, Al-Madina, without feeling in the least tired or bothered by the heat all the way to our destination: in fact I felt light and happy as I carried the greatest traveler, on the greatest flight.

I witnessed many of the Prophet's miracles on this blessed trip: I saw the dove and spider at the entrance, creating the impression that nobody had gone in for some time, I was aware of Suraqa Ibn Malik catching up with us on his steed, and witnessed the unique and unprecedented incident of Muhammad's signaling for the horse and his rider to sink into the sand, three times in succession, and also saw the goat of Um Ma'bad—how the lean and skinny animal, touched by the Prophet's hand, produced rich and more than adequate milk.

Throughout the journey, everything spoke of the greatness of Muhammad, testifying to the fact that God was with him, and that the unbelievers would never be able to get the better of him. I could tell you more about the journey on that long road. Usually it took me eleven days to get there, now it took me eight, although we always traveled at night. We had to hide by day for fear of being discovered: indeed, many people had been after us, and I wished to God that our journey be safely concluded.

As we drew closer to Yathrib, and I could glance the palms and other trees in the distance, I felt delighted, even thrilled, as surely the Prophet now was safe! I wondered, however, about the people of Yathrib; what sort of reception would they give him, for they must have heard of their flight to their city. The sun was right in the middle of the sky when I heard a voice ringing loud from the top of a hill:

"There he is! The man you're waiting for!"

Voices rose everywhere, as people cheered and joyfully shouted:

"God is Great! God is Great!"

I felt as though the very ground was shaken by the hailing voices, and as though the whole world repeated the shouts after them!"

Muhammad dismounted and sat with Abu Bakr in the shade of a palm tree, while people flowed out of Yathrib to where the Prophet was, many of whom had believed in him and loved him, even before ever meeting him or getting to know him.

A woman asked one of her neighbours, "which of them is Muhammad?" As the shade had moved away from where the Prophet sat, Abu Bakr rose and made a sunshade of his cloak. The woman then realized that Muhammad was the man resting. People flocked to him, greeting and asking him to guide them to Righteousness. He simply asked them to establish peace, feed the hungry, befriend and love one another, and pray to God, may His Name be exalted.

The Prophet then rose and rode me, I was astonished that he didn't direct me anywhere but left my reins free. With the people of Al-Madina surrounding us, the procession advanced. I heard the sweetest son ever sang reverberate in the air! It was sung by the children of Yathrib, so beloved by God; it ran something like this:

Such a full moon is rising

On the *Wada* mountain sand;

We should be thanking and praising

God, for his man's guiding hand!

O you whose mission's enticing:

Your word is our command!

The city's honoured and rejoicing,

O best caller in the land!

The procession advanced, with me moving slowly among the crowd. All eyes shone with love, and all faces wore charming smiles. As soon as we were in the city, a dispute arose: every family wanted the Prophet to be their guest!

Snippets of conversations reached my ear: "Stay with us, O, Messenger of God!" "Oh, no! The Prophet will be staying with us!" But when someone said, "We shall lead the she-camel to one house," the Prophet objected. He asked everybody to leave me alone, and to make way for me, so that I could choose my own place of rest, wherever God guided me.

Then, unaccountably, at a certain spot, I felt I could not control my steps: I felt an invisible power leading me to whatever it wanted me to go! Suddenly I felt I had to rest somewhere, and there and then I stopped. I didn't know the place but simply knelt down and sat on the ground. The Prophet dismounted and asked: "who owns this plot of land?" He was told it belonged to two orphans "who would like to give it as a present!" But the Prophet bought it from them, and had a mosque built there, and a home for himself.

I saw for myself how dearly the people of Al-Madina loved their guests from Mecca. The Prophet called the former *Al-Ansar* (patrons/partisans) and the latter *Al-Muhajireen* (the migrants). I was also highly honored because I carried the Prophet during that journey; *and* because I am a blessed she-camel directed by God to go where He wanted, and to sit where He had decreed.

# I AM A WELL

My name is Badr. I am located somewhere between Mecca and Al-Madina. Being a rich well, travelers and shepherds often visit me for my sweet water. One fine morning I woke to hear the entire Arabian Peninsula talking about me at the battle fought around me, hence called the battle of Badr, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, of the second year after the Prophet's flight, the *Hijra*. The tribe of Quraysh was angered by that flight; all the more so because the *Muhajireen* from Mecca and the *Ansar* from Al-Madina now lived as one big, loving and happy family.

But the *Muhajireen* were now somewhat uneasy about having to accept the hospitality of the *Ansar* in Al-Madina for so long, and, naturally, for having left their property and their goods in the hands of Quraysh in Mecca. Surely they could carry out a surprise attack on Quraysh! The chance came when one day they learnt that a caravan belonging to Quraysh, led by Abu Sufyan, would soon be returning from Damascus, in the Levant, to Mecca. Now if they interrupt its journey back and manage to lay their hands on some of it would be carrying, that should make up for the great deal they have lost!

The plan was reported to the Meccans, and Quraysh were furious, especially after the initial skirmish between the Muslims and Qurayshi unbelievers: it transpired that the Prophet had sent a Muslim expedition to a certain place located between Mecca and Al-Ta'if to gather intelligence on Quraysh, and there they were fought by some unbelievers, but the Muslims killed two men and captured a third. Quraysh was further incensed and decided to launch a campaign, for which they mobilized a thousand foot soldiers, a hundred horsemen, apart from the camels. News of the campaign, tantamount to war, reached the Muslims. They decided not to wait, but to march on the invading army before it reached Al-Madina. Their number was no more than a third of the attacking force, and they had no more than two horsemen.

Before the Muslims reached my location—me, the well called Badr—the Prophet thought he'd strike camp with his small force somewhere away from me, but one of his companions suggested they'd do it near me, the well, so that my sweet water would be easily accessible to them, but not to Quraysh. The Prophet agreed, whereupon the Muslims troops camped around me, and quickly built a basin around me to hold the required drinking water for themselves and their camels

Armed to the teeth, and spearheaded by cavalry, the troops of Quraysh were now in sight. They soon realized that the Muslims intended to deny them any water from me, the well. One unbeliever advanced to me, swearing to have a drink of water or pull down the basin. Hamza, the Prophet's uncle fought him and had the upper hand.

As it was the custom in war in olden times to start with an individual duel before the two armies engage in battle, 'Utba, the owner of the vine tree in Al-Taif, and his brother Shayba, with his son Al-Waleed, advanced to the Muslim ranks asking for will individual fighters. Some men from Al-Madina accepted the challenge and advanced to fight them, but the unbelievers wanted duels with members of Meccan *Muhajireen*.

Following Hamza, two others advanced—Ali Ibn Abu Talib and 'Ubayda Ibn Al-Harith, and, like Hamza, they had the better of their challenges; whereupon Abu Jahl flew in a rage, shouting: "Charge! O people of Mecca, charge!"

As ordered by the Prophet, the Muslims would not attack first but waited for the enemy to attack. They patiently waited until the first rank was an arrow's throw away then, with a loud cry of "God is Great! God is Great!" they broke through the ranks of the unbelievers.

Only then did Abu Bakr realize the sheer numerical superiority of the enemy and the weapons. He was naturally alarmed and asked the Prophet to call on God for help. The Prophet's prayer rose from his heart "O Living, Self-Subsisting and Eternal!" as the fighting continued. A little while later, however, he said to Abu Bakr and other Muslims: "Glad tidings! Victory is ours!"

No sooner had he said that than Muslims rushed, with deafening shouts, into the foray, deeper and deeper into enemy ranks. Their zeal redoubled and strength multiplied, with Muhammad leading the onslaught, inspiring his companions with greater courage, reminding them of God's promise "Victory for the survivors, and paradise for martyrs." A Muslim fighter, hearing these words, threw away a few dates he had held in his hand and said, "Nothing separates me from Paradise except not being killed by those!"

He fiercely attacked the enemy, showing exceptional courage and, eventually, receiving a mortal wound. He felt his heart was gratified, and his faith surmounting as he thus gave up his mundane life in the cause of God. It was an unequal battle between a thousand, heavily armed unbelievers, including a hundred horsemen, and a third of that number, using inferior weapons and with less fighting expertise.

On one side were untruth, falsehood and weapons;

On the other were the Truth, faith and courage.

Which would then triumph?

If a detached observer had witnessed the battle as I, the Well of Badr, had, he would have been astonished, even stunned! The leaders, potentates and bravest men of Quraysh now began to retreat, having lost many dead, including Abu Jahl. The unbelievers were forced to withdraw from the battlefield, quite close to me, leaving behind seventy men killed. Back to Mecca they went, carrying their wounded soldiers, and all vanquished by Muhammad and his companions.

The Muslims went back to Al-Madina in victory, carrying their spoils, having lost at my site fourteen martyrs who "live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of the Lord." They also captured seventy men. That victory was a miracle performed by God, may His name be exalted.

Al-Madina welcomed back the triumphant heroes with great joy, many more people now were converted to Islam, having realized that what happened near me, the Well of Badr, couldn't have taken place without God's help.

The Muslims treated their captives well, most of whom wanted to buy their freedom from the regular ransom money at the time. Some of them didn't have enough to pay it, however, and the Muslims told them: "You could go back home, if every one of you taught ten Muslims to read and write!"

The victory achieved by Muslims on my site was the first. It was the first step, rather the first link in the long chain of battles they were destined to fight. It was wonderful that I was mentioned in the great *Qur'an*, me, the small well on the Mecca-Madina highway! I had been until then a mere well, sought after for the water, now I was a symbol of victory for True Faith and Right over Falsehood and Untruth.

And say: Truth has now arrived And falsehood perished, For falsehood is (by its very nature) Bound to perish.

Holy Qur'an

And here is my direct mention:

God had helped you at Badr,

When you were a contemptible little force;

Then fear God, this May ye show

Your gratitude.

Holy Qur'an

#### I AM A MOUNTAIN

I am Mount Uhud; and I am close enough to Al-Madiha, only five kilometers away. Now in the third year of the Hijra, a whole year after the battle of Badr, I saw the army of Quraysh strike camp near me. It was a huge army, consisting of three thousand foot soldiers, two hundred horsemen, and two hundred shield bearers, accompanied by women, chanting and singing. I could also see the horses and camels of Quraysh grazing in the pastures of the city.

Prophet Muhammad mustered an army of a thousand warriors, two horsemen, and a hundred knights in armour. I was surprised by the sight of young boys in the Muslim ranks. One of them was rejected because still a minor, so he walked on tip-toes to look grown up! Another was rejected but he showed his prowess by challenging and beating a grown man, and was then enlisted.

I was also astonished to see old people who were well past the age of warfare and fighting but, being old, wanted to be martyred on the battlefield, as dying in the cause of God should secure paradise for them

So, the Muslims numbered only a third of the disbelievers, but their ranks were suddenly depleted when a 'hypocrite', together with his company of three hundred men, deserted the army. But the Muslims were not alarmed.

The Prophet had his men camp at a high point on me, Mount Uhud, so as to be able to have a commanding view of the enemy; and so that I could provide adequate protection for his rear. There was a pass or a defile in my middle, and I first feared lest the Muslims should not be conscious of the chance of penetration it offered to the enemy; but the Prophet appointed fifty archers to guard it. He ordered them never to leave their location for any reason, regardless of whether the Muslims were triumphant or not. He emphatically impressed on them the need to stick to their positions, until the end.

The usual individual duel started. Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, fought and killed the standard-bearer of the unbelievers. The battle proper soon followed, and I, Mount Uhud, could recall the three stages I witnessed.

Stage one: Valiant Muslims fighting their enemy, showing exceptional intrepidity and performing heroic deeds. Quraysh did resist, of course, but could not really stand up to such solid hearts, impelled by faith and self-sacrifice. Many Qurayshi men fell, and seven of their standard-bearers were successively killed. There was only one thing to do—flee! Muhammad and his men went after them, chasing them away, feeling that victory was at hand.

Stage two: This remarkable scene began with the group guarding the defile, delighted and tempted by Muslim victory, ignoring the Prophet's instruction never to leave their position regardless of the outcome of the engagement. Disobeying the Prophet, some of them went after the deserting cowards, hoping to get more spoils and captives.

Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, commander of the Meccan cavalry, had been closely watching. When he realized that the defile had been vacated by the Muslim guards, he went round and ordered his knights through, thus flanking the Muslims, attacking their rear. His assault was fierce and ruthless. Heartened by his advance, Quraysh regained their composure, stood their ground, and even started a counterattack—not unsuccessfully.

I, Mount Uhud, was looking on. I was plunged in grief and dismay that a little negligence by a small group nearly annihilated the victorious army. The Prophet fell in a ditch and it was rumoured that he was dead, and the unbelievers thought they had seen the end of Islam and the Muslims

The third scene was brighter. I shall call it stage three, and this is how it developed:

"What are we to do with life after Muhammad," a Muslim voice asked. It was electrifying! The Muslims quickly re-grouped, regained their positions and re-organized their ranks.

"God's Messenger is alive and well!" another voice said. Hearts were livened with hope, and the Muslims resumed fighting with the utmost ferocity. They climbed me, Mount Uhud, so as to be in full control of the battle. So, when the men in the company of Khalid Ibn Al-Walid tried to climb me, they were driven back by a shower of stones and arrows, and were forced to go down. Quraysh attempted several attacks but failed every time. Realizing that Muslims were too powerful to defeat, the invading army retreated, though Abu Sufyan, their commander, still claimed, "The day is ours, in return for the Day at Badr! The fortunes of war alternate!"

The battle was over. And there I was, Mount Uhud, looking around me, peering at the scene of those dire events. There were the bodies of martyrs, including Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, whose body was badly mutilated by Quraysh; and there were the wounded and the maimed.

I glanced at the retreating Qurayshi men. They left the battlefield and I wondered where they would be heading. They could go to Al-

Madina, now that the road to the city lay open and totally undefended. Anxiously, I waited but saw them mount their camels and go back to Mecca

Their voices rose and they looked perplexed, as they wondered: have we won? But we have no spoils! We haven't seized a single Muslim captive! How can we claim to have won, then? Why haven't we proceeded to Al-Madina? Let us go back to it!

The Prophet and all Muslim soldiers spent the night with me, Mount Uhud, and, I was stunned when, the next morning I realized that, rather than returning to Al-Madina, they still went after the Qurayshi army! When Abu Sufyan and his men heard of their intention, they ran as fast as they could, fearing a possible fresh encounter with the Muslims.

The chase abandoned, Muhammad and his companions returned, passing by me on their journey back to Al-Madina. They looked at me thankfully, I knew, and gratefully: I had protected their rear when in dire straits. But I still taught this lesson to all people down the march of history: victory needs to be always shielded, and defeat can be overcome by genuine and firm resolve. The Muslim had lost that battle in the long war for the Truth, but were triumphant in the end.

And I, Mount Uhud, am still there, standing quite close to Al-Madina, and remind people of that memorable battle.

## I AM A ROCK

Rocks, as you know, are hard, steely, unrelenting things, little affected if hit by axes.

I was there, somewhere near Al-Madina Al-Munawara, during the eventful days that followed the Prophet's flight to it from Mecca, in his endeavours to save the word of God.

News of what happened at Badr and at Uhud reached me, then I heard of the Jews as they tried to incite the tribes to rise against Muhammad. I learnt that they informed Quraysh that they had managed to unite the various tribes and parties in a solid front opposed to Muhammad and that it only remained for Quraysh to join the 'confederate' parties, for a united, final assault ensuring the end of that religion.

The Jews did, in effect, by wicked chicanery, cunning and outright lying, manage to get all the tribes to prepare their armies to fight Muhammad. Learning of the Jewish plan, especially the mustering of armies, for a final attack on Muslims in Al-Madina, the Prophet sought the advice of his companions. He knew that a confrontation was inevitable but wondered about the best way to handle it: should he stay in to defend Al-Madina or go out in strength to do battle with the huge 'confederate' armies?

Salman Al-Farisi said:

"We could dig up a ditch—call it a trench—around the entire city, provided it is too deep for the enemies to cross!"

The idea appealed to the Prophet and he got to work, instantly, with all the Muslims, during which they met with many hardships. But they persisted, with the Prophet himself digging and transporting dust. Sometimes clouds of dust rose up his waist, but he went on, chanting the following:

We owe it, God, to you,

That we've not gone astray,

But do charity know,

And we in faith pray;

Grant us holy serenity,

To stand firm in the fray,

The pagans show iniquity,

An evil n'er to obey!

The deep trench was dug, which looked like a dry moat, all around the city, except for one part, where I, the Rock was! The group assigned to dig up this side was led by Salman Al-Farisi. The man tried hard to remove me, but in vain, for I am, as I said steely and unrelentingly. Salman complained of the excessive toil, profusely perspiring, and told the Prophet who, composedly, asked for a pot full of water which Salman instantly bought. The Prophet poured the water on my head

then took the axe from Salman and raised it high saying: "in the name of God."

He struck me three times, and each time a lightening flashed under the blade. With the third stroke I was removed, and heard the Muslims shout "God is Great" three times.

Eventually the Arab armies came. The Qurayshi army alone consisted of ten thousand men. But they stopped at the trench, bewildered. They were stunned by the very idea and the perfect execution of the plan, as the Arabs had never used trenches before, nor ever heard of moats around castles.

The Muslim army, numbering three thousand and led by the Prophet, advanced. The trench stood between the two armies, and the Prophet appointed special guards all along it to make sure no unbeliever could cross over in the night, he had his own turn in guarding it, though the night was bitterly cold.

The unbelievers stood at the trench, and laid siege to the city. They kept shooting their arrows at the Muslims for twenty days. The siege had disastrous results, especially for the poor, and things went from bad to worse.

What truly exacerbated the situation was the treachery of the Jews of Al-Madina. The Muslims had made a pact with them and had been assured they opted for peace. However, the Jews broke the pack and joined the polytheists, and were actually preparing to attack the Muslims from the rear.

The plight of Muslims aggravated, as the stronger enemies were attacking them not only at the front but also from the rear. It was as the *Qur'an* says a time of great agony, "when the eyes became dim, and the hearts gaped up to the throats"—a time too, of "vain thoughts about God," the hypocrites uttered profanities, taunting the Prophet about what he said was a promise of God's support for them. The Prophet had the double task of making peace with some tribes (to ensure their neutrality) on the one hand, and urging the Muslims to stand firm, on the other. It is the last task that proved more important,

as the Prophet insisted victory would be theirs if only they preserved and held their ground. Meanwhile he warmly prayed to God, in genuine supplications, in the memorable words: "O God! Who has revealed His Book, who will quickly call all to account, defeat the 'confederates'! I pray you to defeat them and grant us victory!"

The first step on the road to victory was the success achieved by Muslims in making their enemies lose faith in one another: the Jews now suspected the loyalty of Quraysh and Quraysh the loyalty of the Jews! The secret pact they had made with one another was broken, with each regarding the battle as the other's, thus withdrawing and leaving the other party alone to confront the Muslims.

This was only the beginning, however; for God's support was to be exhibited in a much more impressive way. One pitch-dark night, there came a sudden storm, with the cold, high wind blowing so ferociously that it uprooted the tents of the unbelievers, extinguished their fires, and hurled away their very pots from the stoves! So sudden and fierce was it all that they panicked, and felt too terrified to maintain the siege. Abu Sufyan, their commander had no option but to order withdrawal; and they instantly withdrew!

## I AM AN EWE

I lived with my husband, the ram, and the rest of the sheep in a vast desert, covered mostly by yellow sand. The shepherd regularly took out in search of wells and green grass.

We've been here and there, looking for food and water the sheep spent their time playing, listening to the sound of the reed pipe played by our master, and enjoying his sweet reports of whatever occurred in our Arabian Peninsula, especially his stories about Muhammad, who also worked as a shepherd in his early years, shepherding both sheep and camels in the desert.

We never had enough of the stories on Muhammad, how kind, humane and honest he was. We loved him dearly because of his love for the sheep he shepherded. He was kind to them, working hard to satisfy their needs. He sedulously looked for the best fodder, and regularly took them to the well. Unlike other shepherds, he wasn't given to wasting his time in play, but always had his eyes on his flock, making sure no wolf or fox came near them. If one sheep was tired, Muhammad dutifully looked after it, slowed the pace of the flock until it regained its strength. If unwell, Muhammad would carry it himself for a while, carefully tending it until it got better. He would never leave it alone until it was again capable of running and gamboling.

Muhammad himself seemed to be showered with blessings from above: his flock never went hungry. Somehow he managed at all times to get them enough fodder and water. God's blessings must have been behind their good health, rich milk and fat living.

It was all such reports that made us love Muhammad very much.

We also heard of his new religion, that God has given him a mission, that he was a Prophet, a Messenger from God, sent to guide people, and to call on everybody to worship no other god but the One Great God in Heaven. We knew that the unbelievers in the tribe of Quraysh opposed him, laughed at him, and wronged him.

The Jews likewise were worried about their own religion; they were also afraid lest their status, present and future, among the Arabs be adversely affected. They secretly incited people against Muhammad, hatching dark, wicked plots, and conspiring stealthily to cause his downfall.

We, sheep, kept praying to God to save him from the evil designs of all the enemies; we implored Him to grant victory to that 'truthful' and 'honest' man.

I was overjoyed when I learnt one day, on my return home from the pasture, that my Jewish owner would serve me at dinner to Muhammad! But then I wondered: "Is this logical? My owner is Jewish, far from being generous! She doesn't like Muhammad, but in fact hates him deeply; so why feast him on me? She must have a secret evil plan against the Prophet!"

The thought made me tremble in fear.

The Jewish woman lit the fire, and the butcher came, and soon the

odour of roast lamb filled the air. Suddenly she inserted "something" in my body which caused me great pain. A little later I learnt that it was poison! O dear, I thought, I was now poisoned and anybody feeding on me would die!

The pain caused by this fire was less than the pain of having such poison spread in my body; and the wicked woman would like to have it transferred to the body of Prophet Muhammad. My pain was aggravated by the knowledge that I could do nothing to save the Prophet and his companions, but would inevitably cause their death. Could I perhaps do something to warn the Muslims, I wondered.

The Jewish woman presented me to the guests. One of them, by the name of Bishr, was too hungry to wait for his turn after Muhammad and so cut a piece of meat and ate. I wanted to tell him: why don't you wait for your turn? But Bishr couldn't, of course, hear me.

When the Prophet started eating, I cried: "I'm poisoned, poisoned, poisoned!" You can imagine my surprise when Muhammad's hand dropped my meat, as though he had heard me. I never expected it, but it was only too obvious: God was on his side; He made him hear my words. His companions were astonished when he said: "Don't touch the meat, it's poisoned!"

Obeying the Prophet, they all kept away, except for the man who had already eaten, Bishr. Poor Bishr! He suffered a great deal and soon died. The Prophet grieved for him, and deplored the wicked woman's treachery. He wondered, though, about her motives and sent her a simple question: why did you do it? Her reply was:

"I want to know whether you were indeed a prophet! If you were truly a prophet, you wouldn't touch the poison, but if you had been a man aspiring to be king, then you'd be dead, and the world be rid of you!"

The woman was thus assured that Muhammad was a Prophet, and truly the Messenger of God. Did she then adopt Islam? Far from it! When I was buried in the sand, I felt relieved for having done my duty; only a few days later, the wicked woman was buried by my side, and the world was rid of *her* and her mischief.

I may be the first ever ewe to speak after being killed and roasted and be heard by someone. People will, I am sure, retell my tale, and so always remember what the Jewish woman had tried to do to the honest Prophet.

## I AM THE STUMP OF A PALM-TREE

I was once part of a palm-tree. The Arabian Peninsula abounds in palm-trees and their fruit is sweet. Shepherds seek the shade of palmtrees, when the sun gets too hot. In my shade often sat Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, as a little boy, working as a shepherd. He was always wise, kind and decent. Children and young boys often gathered in my shade to listen to his sweet, unhurried talk.

When he grew up, Muhammad still sat in my shade. It was at my foot that he started to speak to a limited number of his companions about Islam, the new religion. Together with them I listened to him, lovingly, as he explained the meaning of the verses of the Our'an revealed by God to him.

When it was time to pray, he led them in prayer; and they prayed to God to redouble the number of the adherents of the new faith, the Muslims. They also prayed to God to guide people to benevolence, help them to choose the 'path of light' by worshipping God alone, rather than the useless idols. When the Prophet wanted to break his fast, he had a few dates of my product to eat, together with other Muslims. They were as yet few in number, and my shade was enough for them, my dates an adequate meal.

As I grew older, more and more adopted Islam. When I grew too decrepit to produce any dates and my green boughs sear and withered, they cut me down to make use of my long trunk, turning it into roofboards for one home or another. I was then left in my place, a mere fixed stump, short and helpless.

When few in number, Muslims had the Prophet sit among them to talk about their new religion. When their number swelled, he used me a as a pulpit, standing on top, as he spoke to the larger audience. I noticed how happy and optimistic the Muslims looked as they listened to the Prophet advocating righteousness. I could discern the tears in their eyes as they listened to his recital of the Quranic verses.

I, the stump, felt exceptionally happy whenever the Prophet stood on my top to talk to the swelling numbers of Muslims, in a louder voice. I felt that this was superb compensation by God for having lost my stem and head. A mere stump I may be, but I enjoy a distinguished position and high esteem: all Muslims stand close to me, around me, ant look *at* me! I felt happy and proud to be able to serve the interests of Muslims; it might have been a little contribution, but it was all I had to offer. Indeed, if everybody contributed something, however little, the cumulative result would be significant.

My joy increased daily in response to the consistent swelling of Muslim numbers, but I expected this to spell the end of my high status!

With their number multiplying in a very short time indeed, Muslims filled the vast area facing me, and the Prophet had to stand on a high wooden pulpit, so that he could be clearly seen and heard by the huge crowd. So, as much as I was thrilled by the increase in Muslim numbers, I inly grieved for being deserted by the Prophet.

I could hardly conceal my sorrow, or suppress the pain I felt, and so tried to speak out loud! It wasn't easy; nor do I expect anyone to believe it; but I couldn't but crave the company of the Prophet! I yearned for his standing on top of me, remembering his sweet face, his soothing words, and I simply sighed in pain, with my Ah's, I thought, ringing loud!

Apparently I was looking in the direction of the Prophet, and that my voice was loved enough to be heard by a number of Muslims who glanced at me and, I thought, felt my pain and sorrow. I didn't want to stop; surely I was destined by God to be the first and last stump ever to talk, to express such craving, and give vent to such grief! The reason was that I, deep down, felt the greatness of the Prophet; and would have liked to play a role, however minor, in serving the cause of Islam. But all I could say was Ah! Ah! And could hardly stop and hold my tongue.

The Prophet looked at me, then came closer. I was now happy that he had felt my presence and, perhaps, felt my yearning. My happiness was ineffable, as he approached and gently touched me with his hand. I felt relieved, fell silent and calmed down.

Now I knew I had conveyed what I felt to the Prophet, that he knew all about it, and that was enough for me. I was gratified that his call for the new religion, first sitting in my shade, then standing on me, had spread far and wide, was adopted by many people-to many, in fact, to be addressed except from the top of a high man-made pulpit.

Over the years pulpits multiplied; they were to be found everywhere in the Muslim world. The call to Islam was heeded in many countries, and Islam was adopted by millions of people-filling their hearts with faith, and brightening every region of their souls.

## I AM A TREE

I am a large, deciduous tree; and such trees are not too many in the Arabian Peninsula. Still, some of us have beautiful memories of the noble Prophet. A memorable instance of the Prophet's courage, truly unforgettable, occurred in the shade of one of my sisters before my time, and I would like to recount it briefly.

One day the Prophet went out in search of news of the unbelievers who had been on their way to fight the Muslims. He had walked a long way and liked to rest a little in the shade of my sister. He was surprised by an unbeliever, sword in hand, who shouted: "Now who can save you from me?"

The Prophet wasn't in the least shaken; not a jot fear troubled him, but in perfect composure answered: "God!" The man was overwhelmed by an apparent unaccountable fear, trembling all over, and the sword fell from his hand. Calmly the Prophet picked it up and repeated the same question: "Who can save you now from me?"

The man was speechless. He was at his wit's end with terror, but the brave, noble Prophet forgave him, and let him go.

My own story is truly more memorable and a source of infinite pride, recorded as it is by the *Holy Qur'an*: No Muslim now could claim not to have heard of me! The Prophet had sent an envoy, 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, to Quraysh, in Mecca. To inform them that the Prophet would like to visit the *Ka'ba*. The word got round, somehow, among the Muslims that he had been killed by the unbelievers, and the Prophet decided to fight them.

He then called on Muslims to make a solemn pledge to fight the unbelievers. The pledge was made in my shade, and it was in reference to this that a holy verse of the *Qur'an* was revealed to the Prophet; it said: "God is gratified with the believers when they swore fealty to you under the Tree."

The Meccan unbelievers heard of the pledge, and it struck fear in their hearts. Instantly they released 'Uthman (it transpired he was alive and well). The Prophet then declared that Quraysh wanted to observe a tree with the Muslims for ten years, revealing the conditions of the peace-treaty concluded—which came to be called the Hudaybiya Peace. The conditions were: that Muslims would not visit Mecca that year, but would be allowed to make the Pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca in the following year, and stay in Mecca for three days; that Muhammad would send back to Quraysh any number of that tribe defecting to the Muslim side, but that Quraysh would not send back any Muslim defector; that the Arabs would be free to join either Muhammad or Quraysh; and that neither side would attack the allies of the other.

Many companions of Muhammad were not entirely happy with that peace-treaty. In fact, some of them objected to the clause stipulating that any Muslim convert arriving in Al-Madina, would be sent back to Quraysh, arguing that it implied a weakness on their part. But the Prophet approved the treaty and signed it.

In time, the Muslims realized that the treaty served their best interests, and I realized this too. The Meccans suffered a great deal as a result, for the numbers of new Muslims steadily grew and, rather than re-enter Mecca, struck camp on the Mecca-Madina highway. They attacked the unbelievers, and raided their caravans. The harassment forced Quraysh to ask the Prophet to keep the new converts in Al-Madina. In fact his magnanimity thrilled many hearts, and more tribes began, wholesale, to adopt the new religion.

This was *coup de grace* for the treaty, as far as Quraysh was concerned: the tribe of Khuza'a, newly converted to Islam, was attacked, in obvious violation of the conditions solemnly declared. The Prophet had no option but to announce that the treaty was no longer in force, that peace was at an end.

Only a few days later, I watched the advance on Mecca by ten thousand Muslim men, armed to the hilt. As Quraysh could not withstand such formidable force, the men met no resistance and entered Mecca as conquerors and victors.

Still, no one could forget me, the tree, in whose shade all Muslims vowed allegiance to the Prophet, pledging to fight till victory or death. The day of the Pledge I actually prefer to call Day of the Tree!

Now came God's help with conclusive victory, and people adopted the religion of God in crowds. I heard Muslims everywhere in Arabia reporting what the Prophet had said on re-entering Mecca. He forbade them to shed blood or fell a tree—an injunction which thrilled me, and I felt my branches and twigs throbbing with joy. Then it was my heart's turn to flutter when I heard the rest of the Prophet's words.

Addressing his vanquished enemies he said, "Members of Quraysh! What do you think I shall do to you?" "Well," they said, "you're a good brother; and a good nephew!" The rest of the Prophet's words were: "You're free to go! You're all free!"

Standing where I had been for years, I heard the news of Muslim victories which followed, after the days of Muhammad, both under Caliph Abu Bakr and Caliph 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab.

I heard of the realms that had embraced Islam,--Persia, the Levant and Yemen—just as the Prophet had predicted. I heard that another prophecy he had made to Suraga Ibn Malik came true; namely that Suraga would one day wear the bracelet of Xerxes, the Persian king, no less! And when Persia was conquered in the days of Caliph 'Umar, Suraga was summoned and given that bracelet by 'Umar himself.

I heard all this and more from the many people who visited me, to recall the memory of that great day when the Prophet sat in my shade to receive the oath of fealty from the Muslims, and their vow to achieve victory or die, and so to seek thus God's blessing.

'Umar was uneasy about their growing numbers fearing that that 'rite' would develop into a cult. He ordered that I be felled and pulled by the roots. You may be amazed to learn that I never felt distressed, not to say grieved. I had more than adequate compensation in the wide branching tree of Islam, in whose shade thrived millions of those who believed in the humane Prophet, and his great mission, may God's blessings and peace be upon him.

# I AM A DINAR

A dinar, I am sometimes called a 'pound', or more precisely a 'guinea'! I am very popular; men and women would like to have as many dinars as they could lay hands on, especially if I were made of gold! They are fascinated by my glitter and may be driven to fight for me! They would like to have me, regardless of the means used. Some people hate to part with their dinars, consistently hoarding them up, so as to be called 'rich'!

I once met a man, however, who didn't want me, never paid any attention to me! This was in Mecca, more than one thousand and four hundred years ago. The Meccans worshipped their idols and worshipped me, but he worshipped neither; indeed, he took no notice at all of either of us!

He was called 'The Hones', Muhammad the Honest, because he was honest in everything—in word, in deed, and in dealing with people, never touching a dinar not his own. Naturally, many people reposed their trust in him, and kept their dinars with him. They also entrusted him with looking after merchandize, fully assured of his exemplary honesty.

Such honesty was little known in the markets of Sana'a, Damascus or Mecca, and he soon became renowned for this exceptional quality. Dame Khadija, a high born Arab lady, asked him to take care of her trade. The business flourished, and Muhammad gained a good deal and paid it all to the lady. Impressed by his superb behaviour, she

wondered if he'd ask her hand in marriage. He did; and the couple became noted for honesty in transactions and for honouring their word

I, the dinar, could not find my way to his hand easily: he always worked hard to gain me. He never forced me out of anybody else's hand, never got a dinar unless he deserved to get by right; he made an effort and got paid for it.

He never hoarded, never kept dinars in coffers. When his friend, Abu Bakr, offered him his she-camel to ride on the eve of their flight to Al-Madina, he declined the offer, but actually bought the animal and paid the price in cash. In Al-Madina, he would not accept the gift of the plot of land needed for his future mosque and home, but also paid in cash for it.

The Prophet was never interested in acquisition of money, and I and my brother dinars—often disappeared from his generous hand. Very rarely did I spend a whole night in his home! I could tell you of many instances of this—events which I witnessed myself, and much surprised me!

\*The spoils of war once included ninety thousand dirhams, including me, when the Muslim army won a remarkable battle. When taken to the Prophet, he put the money on a mat in the mosque and started to distribute it among the Muslims, until it was all gone! Nothing was left, in fact, for him and his family.

\*One day a poor man came to beg for alms, but the Prophet had nothing to offer and asked the man to sit beside him and wait for whatever God may send. A little later two other men came to ask for aid, and the Prophet with four dinars and asked him to spend them in anyway he liked. The Prophet gave one dinar to each of the three poor men, and I, the fourth, stayed with him. However, he lifted me for all his companions to see and said: who would like to have this dinar?

Having learnt from the Prophet not to care much for money, none would take me. The Prophet took me back to his house, and put me under his pillow when he went to bed. But he couldn't sleep; he kept twisting and turning until day break. At first light he went out in search of the poor, and managed to distribute me among me among them. With a sigh of relief he then said, "I feel more comfortable now!"

\*From the Prophet, Muslims learnt austerity, a general lack of interest in money and they followed his example in spending it in the cause of God

'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, a rich man indeed, once stood out in the market with huge piles of merchandise just arrived from the Levant, I remember. The year had been an exceptionally lean one. There was an unprecedented drought, food was scarce and scarcity led to excessive price-rises, apart from the usual opportunities of some traders. For something worth one dinar, like me, people were made (to pay) two or three. And this is precisely what 'Uthman was told when he began to offer his goods for sale—in a kind of mini-auction.

When he heard the bids, 'Uthman smiled and said he had higher ones—namely ten times the going price! "Could any one of you pay me as much?" he asked. Everybody fell silent; it simply proved too much for any one, and beyond everybody's means. Helpless and astonished at what they heard, they were now disturbed by the prospect of their famine continuing. The silence was broken by 'Uthman who confidently said:

"God's reward of a good deed is ten times its worth; and I am now donating all this merchandise to God!" Whereupon he set about distributing the goods to all Muslims, free of charge. He was simply, I knew, obeying the noble Prophet who said that withholding charity was tantamount to a dinar-worship! Such a person would be, the Prophet meant, not a God-worshipper but a dinar-worshipper. He succinctly put in the following words: "How miserable is the servant of a dinar or a dirham!"

Since I heard those noble words, I have felt that my own worshipper—me, a dinar—are wretched people who'd never attain happiness.

\*The Prophet was often offered thousands of dinars, by Quraysh,

to wit, in return for abandoning his mission, and he consistently declined. The Muslims often offered me, together with colleagues, to the Prophet as his share in the spoils of war-to be spent on his home and family; but he never accepted any one of us, saying:

"Oh, no! My God! I'm willing to go hungry one day, with a full stomach the next! In hunger I would pray and call for your kindness; with a full stomach, I would thank and praise you."

\*The Prophet remained literally moneyless all his life. During his last illness, he summoned the Muslims and said: "I may still be in possession of some money owed to one of you; here is all I've got, and I would like such a person to come forward and take back his due." A man rose and said, "O Prophet of God! You owe me three dirhams." And he was instantly repaid.

When on his death bed, and in agony, the Prophet called on his wife, 'Aisha Bint Abu Bakr, and said: "O 'Aisha! What have you done with that gold?" "What gold?" she asked. "The six dinars I have," he said. "Oh, I still have them," she answered. Whereupon the Prophet said: "Wouldn't my faith in God be tarnished if I went back to Him, with this gold? Spend it all in charity!" "I will, O Prophet" she said.

"O God! Let me live in poverty, die in poverty, and rise on the last day among the poor!" was a prayer the Prophet loved. And God granted him his wish: his legacy included no money at all, but consisted solely of the following:

- A little barley with 'Aisha, his wife;
- The white mule which he rode;
- A plot of land which he donated, in charity, for use by wayfarers;
- And his weapons.

In fact, his shield was pawned at a Jew's shop, in return for a little money he needed for food, for himself and his family. From him, his family had learnt that this world was false, ephemeral and mortal; that another life, more charming, beautiful and immortal, would be theirs

in Paradise. Naturally they showed no interest in gold, or in me-the dinar!

One day the Prophet went to see his daughter Fatima at her home. He noticed that she wore a gold 'chain' around her wrist, and heard her tell another woman that it had been presented to her as a gift by her husband, Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

"O Fatima!" he said, "will you be pleased to hear people say that the Prophet's daughter is wearing a chain of fire around her wrist?" He cut short his visit and left. Soon Fatima arranged for the chain to be sold, and used the money in buying a slave only to set him free. When the Prophet heard about it, he said, "May God be thanked for saving Fatima from fire."

Another memorable prayer by the Prophet was, "O God! May the means of Muhammad's family never exceed the level of subsistence!" He thus wished to gain no more than to satisfy the basic needs of his family.

#### I AM A BANNER

Sometimes I am a banner of cloth; sometimes I am not! This is particularly true of me, the banner of Islam, the True Religion of God, with whose dissemination Muhammad was entrusted, as the last of all Prophets and God's Messengers.

In my life there are memorable days, and events that continue to shine bright in the annuals of mankind. The first city in whose sky I flew high was Yathrib, later called Al-Madina Al-Munawara. It was to that city that Muhammad and his companions migrated, seeking refuge and to establish the Religion of God away from the persecution, conspiracies and depredations of Quraysh. I fluttered happily as I witnessed the forging of fraternal bonds between the Muhajireen (migrants) and Ansar (partisans)-both devout Muslims—as the latter warmly welcomed their guests and shared their property with them.

The first battle in which I functioned as a standard, or a Muslim ensign, was the battle of Badr. I was valiantly defended by the great Muslim heroes who, assisted by the angels, thoroughly defeated the unbelievers and raised me high—me, the Banner of Islam.

I nearly had a relapse in the battles of Uhud and Al-Khandaq (the Trench) but God provided the Muslims with strength—and they proved strong enough to show the expected persistence, perseverance and willingness to be martyrs in defending the Religion of God. Some of them gladly sacrificed their lives to keep me flying high; and so I am, to this very day, and the numbers of those over whom I fly steadily increase.

I flew even higher in the Meccan skies, on the day the Muslims reentered Mecca in triumph—the Day of God's victory, of the conquest, when whole tribes adopted the Religion of God. It was also the day that the folding up, forever, of the banner of the idols.

Only one year after the conquest of Mecca, I could be seen everywhere in Arabia, flying high and powerful. Delegations from the four corners of the Peninsula came to the Prophet to confirm their adoption of "Islam, and so confirm my eminence.

One day in the tenth year if the Hijra Calendar (the tenth anniversary of the Flight-Hijra-to Al-Madina) stands out in my memory. The Prophet was performing his last pilgrimage to Mecca, and he was joined in the Ka'ba during the final circumambulation by more than a hundred thousand Muslims, with me flying sky high! What an awesome day, and how powerful its echoes ringing in my memory!

My memories are too many, however, and too varied, in my truly eventful life; for I have always been with the Prophet wherever he went, not just in battle. I know how he spent his days and nights, and I have witnessed his deeds and heard his words. In everything, I now testify, the Prophet was great—in his humaneness, inspiring leadership and pioneering spirit. He was valiant, intrepid, generous, wise, tolerant and noble. I find it difficult, in fact, to enumerate his virtues or specify his good qualities; it may be sufficient to cite Quranic verse in which God says to His Prophet: "Truly thou hast a great character."

Like all people I too loved him deeply. I fluttered happily and proudly over the heads of the crowds who came every day to him, to declare their adoption of Islam, pledging to work for the dissemination of God's religion and to raise me even higher—me, the Banner of Islam.

Then came a day, the darkest in my life, when I felt deeply perturbed, agitated, and my very mast shaken with terror, as the sad news reached my ears. I did not believe it, just like many Muslims; Umar Ibn Al-Khattab himself didn't, and even threatened to punish anyone who'd dare report it. For a while, which seemed too long, all Muslims felt puzzled, bewildered, even horrified; then rose the voice of Abu Bakr addressing the gathered crowd:

"Listen you all! If anyone had worshipped Muhammad, then let him (and you) know that Muhammad is dead! But we worship God, and God lives, never dies!"

To the stunned crowd, Abu Bakr recited the following verse from the *Qu'ran*:

"Muhammad is only God's messenger, who was preceded by many Apostles. Should you, if he is dead or slain, turn back on your heels? If any of you does turn back on his heels, he won't do the least harm to God. God will reward those who're grateful (for their unfaltering faith)." Though well known to many, the verse seemed to bring home the sense of shock which Umar Ibn Al-Khattab eloquently expressed; "It was as though I had never read that verse before!" he said.

Everybody else was speechless, and the long, sad silence seemed endless. But then it had to be broken, as life must go on, and the noble vocation of the Prophet couldn't be interred with him: there was an army prepared by him personally, with 'Usama Ibn Zayd as commander and standard-bearer, on its way to the Levant.

Other difficulties came about, too, and had to be dealt with, urgently: some people recanted, some said they wouldn't pay any *zakat*, and there were those, the worst of all, who declared their disobedience and tried to stop me flying high—me, the Banner of Islam!

The events which followed in quick succession ensured, however, that I continue to fly high wherever I was-the apostate few once again saw the light, *zakat* was regularly paid, and the rebellion was quelled.

Eminent army commanders such as Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, Abu 'Ubayda Ibn Al-Jarra, Sa'd Ibn Abu Waqqas, Amr Ibn Al-Aas, Usama

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Ibn Zayd, to mention but a few of the numerous, brave 'soldiers of God', I soon flew high, and far and wide in triumph outside Arabia, both east and west: in Persia, over the old bastions!

The message of God spread farther east to China, and farther west to Andalusia, with the new conquests, so that the number of those over whom I, the Banner of Islam, fly has exceeded seven hundred million Muslim men and women, of all races, and all peoples.

# A Reading of Two Translations of Abdel-Tawab Youssef's *Hayat Muhammad Fi 'Ashrine Quessa*:

## **A Cultural Perspective**

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Translating for children is a literary challenge in its own right. The needs of the target readers of such translations are difficult to define as a result of the dual nature of the target readers (both adults and children), the intended age of the child reader and viewing child readers individually rather than "en masse". The last factor should be viewed in the light of Louise M. Rosenblatt's assertion that the reading of a literary text is an "event" in the life of the reader which requires some kind of "transaction" involving "not only the past experience but also the present state and present interests or preoccupation of the reader" (Rosenblatt 20). This applies to what Roland Barthes terms a "writerly" text. According to Barthes, achieving a" writerly" as distinguished from a "readerly" text is the ultimate aim of any literary text, where the reader becomes, so to speak, "a producer" rather than a "consumer" (Allen 88). Accordingly, the nature of the ethical responsibility of the translator of children's literature, stressing the importance of education, entertainment and inspiration might be elusive since as Ritta Oittinen affirms, "(I)deology and ethics always go hand in hand in translating for children, which is no innocent act" (43). Involvement with the text presupposes a certain stance adopted by the reader which, in this case, depends mainly on the choices made by the translator and his intention. These choices, whether conscious or unconscious, are governed by the translator's social and cultural background, in addition to his idiosyncratic temperament.

This is suggested by Lawrence Venuti in "The Difference that

Translation Makes: The Translator's Unconscious" when he refers to the linguistic and cultural resources that a translator internalizes over the course of a professional career, resources that are used spontaneously in the translation process but can be articulated upon reflection and might constitute latent thinking, easily recoverable rather than repressed. (33)

Venuti attempts to prove that the unconscious, to a great extent, is responsible for the translator's choices which can be traced in the translated text. Thus he affirms that "(i)n producing a chain of signifiers to render the source text, the translator releases a remainder that exposes the workings of his or her unconscious--but only in relation to that text or even a particular passage in it" (40). "Remainder" is a term which Venuti borrows from Jean-Jacques Lecercle to refer to "the textual effects" which exceed "lexicographical equivalence to signify primarily in the terms of the translating language and culture" (37). He shows that the "translator's desires" revealed in the translation are not only "personal, but political as well" since these desires "can take collective forms, determined by cultural traditions and social institutions" (41).

This paper contends that the translations of children's literature, especially those works which refer the reader to cultural and historical "truths", reveal the translator's ideology and his/her socio-cultural background. A reading of two translations of Abdel-Tawab Youssef's text by two translators from two different cultural backgrounds attempts to assert this thesis. The first translation is entitled *The Life* of Muhammad May the Blessing and Peace of God be Upon Him in Twenty Stories by Tony Calderbank published by Dar al Shorouk, and the second entitled A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales is translation by Mohammad Enani, published electronically on the website of Abdel-Tawab Youssef: ayoussef.org and included in this book. The analysis of the two translations will rely on paratextual information and an adapted version of Jan Van Coillie's model employed in her insightful article "Character Names in Translation".

The model is based on four factors that impact a translator's choice of translation strategies: The first is "The translator's Frame of Reference" which she defines as "the total sum of their knowledge, experiences, ideas, norms and values" (132). The second factor concerns the translators' notions regarding "adequate" translation based on their "training and reading." The third stresses the influence of "reviewers, publishers and other actors in the literary field" which will be termed in this study "patronage", to borrow Lefevere's term in his seminal book *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. Finally, Collie adds "the broader literary climate" and she refers to the example of "Flanders and the Netherlands" where writers of children's literature prefer "to write literature, without targeting a specific age group."

Paratextual information sheds light on the intentions and the decision making processes adopted by each translator. Gerard Genette regards paratextual information as a "threshold" which constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that--whether well or poorly understood and achieved--is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies). (Introduction 2)

In the forward to Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Richard Macksey lists paratexts "that mediate the book to the reader" as follows: "titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forwards, dedications, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues and afterwards" (xviii). Of these only two elements are available in the two translations: the blurb which Genette describes as a "promotional statement" (25) and the title of each translation. A third paratextual element, absent in Genette's book-which does not discuss translations--but is crucial to the present study, is the glossary added by Calderbank at the end of the book.

A comparison of the source text and the two blurbs will shed light on the intentions of each translator:

كتاب فريد في المكتبة العربية والإسلامية

كتاب فريد في فكرته .. وفي إسلوبه.. وفي تناوله.. وفي رسومه.

فهو أول كتاب يفوز ناشره بأكبر جائزة عالمية لكتب الأطفال هي جائزة الآفاق الحديدة ٢٠٠٠ في معرض بولونيا الدولي لكتب الأطفال، وذلك بعد أن شرف يفوزه بحائزة راعية ثقافة الطفل.

السيدة سوزان مبارك لأفضل ناشر عام ١٩٩٩.

من خلال عشرين قصة تجلاي على ألسنة المخلوقات من الجماد والنبات والحيوان، استطاع المؤلف الموهوب عبد التواب يوسف أن يأخذها في رحلة ممتعة لإلقاء الضوء على جوانب من النبع الصافى المتجدد لسيرة الرسول الكريم الذي أرسله الله رحمة للعالمين، وليصبح هذا الكتاب علامة بارزة في مسيرة كاتبه الحافلة بالعطاء لحيلنا الحديد تثقيفا وامتاعا.

ويسر دار الشروق أن تقدم هذه الطبعة الجديدة في إخراج متميز ورسوم بديعة للفنان الموهوب صلاح الدين صلاح الدين بيصار الذي نالت أعماله كثيرا من الحوائز المصرية والعالمية.

Calderbank gives a gist translation of the S.T. blurb, but he also resorts to addition, emphasizing his approach. The first two sections in the blurb are summarized in one word "unique". The next section refers to the publishing awards won by Dar el Shorouk for publishing the book, a national award and an international one. The translation cites the international, but not the national. Calderbank, however, also employs addition, emphasizing the fact that the book is addressed to children and young readers. Besides, he adds information about the Prophet's life span and also quotes the international jury commenting on the book. Thus the influence of the publisher cannot be missed.

This unique book is one of the few biographies of the Prophet Muhammad may Allah bless him and grant him salvation, written especially for children and young readers. In 20 stories narrated by various plants, animals or even objects who were either part of or witness to the events, the well-known Egyptian author, Abdul Tawwab Yusuf takes

the reader on a journey to cast light upon many aspects of the Prophet's character, life and message: a journey which spans almost 63 years from his birth in 570 till his death in the year 633. The vivid illustrations by Salah Bissar perfectly compliment the dialogue.

- Dar el Shorouk was the proud recipient of the Bologna Bookfair New Horizons Publishing Award for publishing this book in the year 2000, the international Jury said:
  - "...This book is a successful attempt to bring into the modern day the Arab tradition of fantasy and fable. In purely illustrative terms the book serves as a link between cultures, thanks to the consummate quality of the graphics and the dialogue..."

In contrast, the influence of patronage is missing in the case of Enani's blurb:

- A biography of Prophet Muhammad told by various unusual speakers- animals, plants, rocks etc., the book is addressed primarily to young Muslim readers. However, the literary quality and the novel presentation of the biography as well as meticulous commitment to historical fact, recommend it to older audiences, regardless of religious creed.
- A bestseller, repeatedly printed and admired by readers of all types throughout the Arab world, the book is a contribution to the new wave of children's literature designed to stimulate the imagination of the young and encourage them to respond positively to fresh reinterpretations of history.

Whereas Calderbank seems invisible in the first blurb, in the second, Enani's voice is clearly heard, refusing to limit the translation to young Muslim children and commenting on the literary worth of the book. In his translation, Enani never forgets that he is also addressing an audience that is not familiar with the language and culture of the ST and attempts to stress three features that contribute to the uniqueness of the book: literary quality, novel presentation and meticulous

commitment to historical fact. These features determine the choice of his translation strategies.

Well versed in contemporary theories of translation studies, both use the hermeneutic approach stressing effect. Hermeneutic translation theories, according to Venuti, "privilege the interpretation of creative values and therefore describe the target-language inscription in the foreign text, often explaining it on the basis of social functions and effects"(6). Each translator, however, creates a title which matches the strategy revealed in his translation of the blurb: "The Life of Muhammad may the blessing and peace of God be upon him in Twenty Stories" is a close adherence to the source text (S.T.) title . Calderbank, a حياة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم في عشرين قصة professional translator, does not seem to interfere with either the title or the intention of Abdel-Tawab Youssef; his translation addresses an audience of young Muslims.

Enani, however, is an intellectual, a dramatist and a translator of Milton, Shakespeare and Heidegger to mention just a few. He is a staunch defender of the Arabic language and Islam. The title of his translation is <u>A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales</u> (emphasis mine). According to Enani, this is one of many biographies; it is a biography, a life. "Prophet" is a key word that he consciously adds to the title, and accordingly deletes the prayer (may the blessing and peace of God be upon him) in order to achieve a form of English which is contextually acceptable to non-Muslim readers. Finally as tale emphasizes the fact that the biography is "imaginatively recounted" and that the book, as he wrote in the blurb, " is a contribution to the new wave of children's literature designed to stimulate the imagination of the young and encourage them to respond positively to fresh reinterpretations of history." The last sentence touches on the fourth factor, "the broader literary climate", that impact the translator's choice of translation strategies according to Coillie's model. Both translators seem aware of "the new wave of children's literature" and how it "encourages fresh interpretations of history". However, the previous three factors seem more influential in determining the ideology of each translator and his choice of translation

strategies. Calderbank's translation addresses young Muslim children, whereas Enani's endeavours to secure the emotional involvement and sympathy of a larger audience.

The third paratextual element, Calderbank's use of a glossary, illustrates his translation approach where the reader is constantly reminded that s/he is reading a translation. Nevertheless, Calderbank does not consistently employ a source text oriented approach; neither does Enani opt for a purely domesticating strategy. A comparison of the two translations of the following extract is illustrative. This extract refers to the incident, narrated here by the blessed black stone, when Prophet Muhammad's wisdom ended the fight among the chiefs of tribes who all wanted to restore the blessed black stone in its place after rebuilding the Kaaba. The Prophet took off his cloak and placed the stone in the middle asking each chieftain to take one end of the cloak carrying the stone to its destination. When they conveyed the stone to the Kaaba, they placed the cloak on the ground, and the Prophet restored it in its place.

وحملنى جميع رؤساء القبائل إلى مكانى. وقد شملهم الرضا والإرتياح، وغمرتهم البهجة والسرور، وزالت من بينهم الضغينة والشحناء، وحل محلها الصفاء والإخاء. فلا حرمان لقبيلة ولا امتياز لقبيلة، بل اشتركت كل القبائل فى حملى ووضعى فى مكانى، وأشتركت على قدم المساواة. (28) (emphasis mine)

So, the leaders of the tribes carried me to my place, and as they did so the malice and hatred in their hearts disappeared and was replaced by feelings of brotherhood and understanding, for no tribe was left out and none was favoured and they all helped equally to carry me and set me in my place. (Calderbank 28)

All the tribal chiefs carried me to my position, *relieved and* satisfied, even pleased and delighted. In place of the dispute, there was now a common bond of fraternity: no tribe was deprived of the sought-after honour, no discrimination was practiced against any of them, as all tribes had taken part in carrying and replacing me on equal footing. (Enani 8) (emphasis mine)

As far as diction is concerned, the level of language utilized by Calderbank succeeds in employing the appropriate register and tone. Nevertheless, he sacrifices peculiar stylistic elements, as he deletes two clauses describing how the chiefs felt, adopting a domesticating strategy, defined by Venuti as" an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home" (Invisibility 20). Contrariwise, Enani successfully emulates Abdel-Tawab Youssef's style following the syntax with minimal variation. To tone down semantic repetition peculiar to Arabic but not to English, he uses a superordinate term together with merging, "dispute", to render «الضغينة والشحناء». He, however, uses an exalted diction to emphasize the literary worth of the book as he promised in the blurb. The elevated style seems to target teenagers and adults rather than children. The choice of words such as "common bond" and "discrimination" also reflects Enani's attempt to foreground specific Islamic precepts: fairness and non-discrimination.

وأعذب نشيد في الدنيا. The following is another illustrative example (emphasis mine) The children يرتفع من أفواه أحباء الله أطفال يثرب. (101) of Yathrib were singing. It was the sweetest song I had ever heard. (Calderbank 101) I heard the sweetest song ever sung reverberate in the air! It was sung by the children of Yathrib, so beloved by God. (Enani 25) (emphasis mine) Enani's translation avoids deletion and is closer to the syntax of the S.T. where the emphasis is on the song, the most famous song in Islamic history. Calderbank's translation, on the other hand, foregrounds "the children of Yathrib", and unnecessarily resorts to deletion.

A third example that illustrates the strategies employed in each translation is the following. The night of power addresses the readers والحقيقة أن الدنيا منذ خلقت كانت تنتظرني. لأني ليلة لي: as follows I am a night of great power and glory. I قدري ولى ذكري ولى أثري! (30) will be remembered forever and ever. My effect will be felt forever. (Calderbank 30) The fact is that the world had been waiting for me since it was created, being a night of great esteem, fame and influence. (Enani 8) The Night of Power is greatly revered by Muslims. The syntax of the first sentence matches the meaning which describes

humanity's eager longing for such a night since creation. The second sentence in the ST emphasizes the significance of such a night by structural repetition. Enani, however, avoids the repetition and creates the same effect by retaining and rendering the three adjectives qualifying such a night. Thus the grandeur of the Night of Power is conveyed in both the Arabic ST and Enani's translation. Calderbank's gist translation is reductive while his use of gratuitous repetition, in an attempt to give the impression that he reproduces the S.T. style, mars the intended effect.

Comparing the two translations, Enani shuns deletion, but Calderbank does not. He sometimes deletes repetition to produce an elegant and resonant translation or to protect his target readers from details which could be deemed unpleasant. An instance of the latter is when the she donkey was recounting how the two angels ripped open the Prophet's chest to purify his heart. This is toned down by deletion of the detailed description, which might be harrowing for the young children. At other times, however, deletion in Calderbank's translation is unwarranted. For example, in the Night of Power tale, when the persona introduces herself as "The Night of Power", the sentence is deleted. Another unjustified deletion occurs in the Burag tale, deletion of historically and religiously vital information: ثم ركبني الرسول وأنطلقنا، وفي صحبتنا جبريل، إلى بيت المقدس في سرعة خاطفة. (56) Then the Prophet mounted me and we set off at amazing speed with Jibreel beside us. (56.58) The destination Beit Al Magdis, Jerusalem, is deleted in this sentence. In Calderbank's translation, deletion, also, downplays the wicked plotting of the Jews against Prophet Muhammad as narrated by Abdel-Tawab Youssef in the S.T. A comparison of the source-text and the two translations of the following two examples is self-explanatory: ونجّح اليهود فعلًا، بالخبث واللؤم والكذب، في تجميع (120) العرب كلهم و دفعهم إلى تجهيز جيوشهم لمحاربة محمد وقتال محمد (emphasis mine) So the Jews actually succeeded in uniting all the Arabs and convincing them to prepare their armies to go to war against Muhammad. (Calderbank 120) The Jews, in effect, by wicked chicanery, cunning and outright lying, manage to get all the tribes to prepare their armies to fight Muhammad. (Enani 30) (emphasis mine)

فأخذوا يؤلبون الناس عليه في السر ويكيدون له بالخبث واللؤم، ويتآمرون (128) عليه في الخفاء They began to incite people against Muhammad (emphasis mine) secret, and to plot against him behind the scenes. (Calderbank 128) They secretly incited people against Muhammad, hatching dark, wicked plots, conspiring stealthily to cause his downfall. (Enani 32)

In translating cultural specific items, both translators retain the names of persons and places except, perhaps, the name of the Persian king, Xerxes (Enani 36) (144) (سيلبس), which Calderbank omits, possibly regarding it as an insignificant piece of information for a child reader. Each translator, nonetheless, adopts a different strategy. opts for a foreignizing strategy, "an ethnodeviant pressure on" target- language cultural "values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (Invisibility 20), while Enani often avoids foreignization, his intention being to ensure the identification process of the readers with the unfamiliar cultural elements. Few examples suffice to illustrate this claim:

Calderbank Enani Allah God Ibrahim Abraham Kuffar pagans, disbelievers Gabriel **Jibreel** Sheikhs of the tribes chiefs of the tribes Munafigun hypocrites Allahu Akbar... Allah is Greatest God is Great

Both translators, however, use transliteration: Yathrib, Al-Madinah Al-Munawara, and explicitation to secure comprehension. Enani's translation reads "the Israa and the Mi'raj" (the night journey to Jerusalem and the Heavens) (16). Calderbank also uses extrapolation, but does not abandon foreignization in "al israa' wal mi'raj, the

midnight journey to the seventh heaven" (56). It should be noted that the explanation leaves out the journey to Jerusalem.

In an attempt to disambiguate Islamic and cultural references and to illustrate historical truths, Enani avails himself of explicitation. Listing the prophets whom Prophet Muhammad meets during his journey, Enani not only transliterates their names, but adds the counterpart in the Target Language (exonym): Isa Ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary), Youssef Ibn Ya'coub (Joseph son of Jacob), Moussa Ibn 'Imran (Moses son of 'Imran), Ibrahim Al Khalil (Abraham). He also adds definitions and explanations to clarify cultural concepts and historical truths. Following are a few illustrative examples: "Gabriel provided the Prophet with a Mi'raj (ladder)" (16), "The Prophet called the former *Al-Ansar* (patron/partisans) and the latter *Al-Muhajereen* (the migrants)(16). "The deep trench was dug, *which looked like a dry moat.*." (30) (emphasis mine).

Although Calderbank adds titles of chapters and verse numbers to Quranic allusions in the original, Enani, following Abdel-Tawab Youssef's example, does not opt for such a strategy. However, conversant with the Qur'an, he detects Quranic references in the narrative and adds guidance alerting the reader to the fact that the words allude to " فزاغت الأبصار وبلغت القلوب الجناحر وظنوا بالله : a Quranic verse as follows "الظنون) (124). "It was as the Ouran says a time of great agony, 'when the eyes became dim, and the hearts gaped up the throats" (31) (emphasis mine). Commenting on the victory of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr, Badr Well alludes to a verse from Quran as follows: "فسينتصر" The rendering of this line by الحق وينهزم الباطل. إن الباطل كان زهوقا" (110) each translator is typical. Whether he is aware of the Quranic allusion or not, Calderbank resorts to a close translation without hinting at the Ouranic verse: "Truth is victorious and falsehood are [sic] defeated. Falsehood will always perish" (110). Enani, on the other hand, insists on enlightening the foreign reader, quoting the intended verse: "And say: Truth has now arrived/And falsehood perished/For falsehood is (by its very nature)/Bound to perish. *Holy Quran*"(27-28).

From the above, it is evident that the cultural background and ideology of each translator, are traceable in their translations. In contrast

to Enani's, Calderbank's translation seeking a freer strategy sometimes undermines "historical truths" and merits recounted by Abdel-Tawab Youssef. Prophet Mohammad was referred to as "الأمين". The people of Makka agreed to accept the judgement of Muhammad concerning which tribe would have the honour of restoring the black stone in its place, for he is "Al Ameen (the trustworthy one): (28) "نعم ...إنه الأمين"

A comparison of the translations of Enani and Calderbank reveals the impact of the strategies chosen by each of them in conveying the message of the S.T.: "Absolutely! Isn't his nickname the honest?" (Enani 8) "Yes, for he is a reliable and trustworthy young man." (Calderbank 26) In rendering the Prophet's address to his wife, Aesha, on his deathbed. Calderbank converts one sentence into indirect speech, thus missing the implication that Muhammad shared his feeling and thoughts with his wife. A comparison of the S.T. and the ''وما ظن محمد بربه، لولقي الله وهذه عنده؟! "two translations is illustrative (150) أنفقيها كلها صدقة '' (150) Muhammad was thinking of his Lord, and what would happen if he met Allah with those dinars. "Give them all away to some poor person," he said. (Calderbank 150) "Wouldn't my faith in God be tarnished if I went back to him, with this gold? Spend it all in charity." (Enani 38) In contrast to Enani's exegetic translation in rendering culture specific items, Calderbank's literal approach, at times, produces an ambiguous rendering. An example is his rendering of the cultural specific item, ibn Alsabeel (wayfarer):) أرضا جعلها (152) محمد) صدقة لابن السبيل" (152) Though singular in form, the item, as utilized in the sentence, indicates the plural. Enani, familiar with the language and the concept, employs interpretation. A comparison of the two translations supports the former claim: "some land which he gave to a traveler..." (Calderbank 152) "a plot of land which he donated, in charity, for use by wayfarers." (Enani 38)

A final example concerns the basic teachings of Islam. Responding to the people's request, Prophet Muhammad started to preach the basics "فتحدث اليهم، يطلب منهم أن ينشروا:of Islam shared by all other religions السلام، ويطعموا الطعام، وأن يتصادقوا وأن يتحابوا، وأن يصلوا لله سبحانه وتعالى" (101). (emphasis mine) Spreading peace is the first demand. Abdel-Tawab Youssef emphasizes the fact that the message of Islam is to promote peace, love, friendship, attend to the needs of the people and pray to God. However Calderbank renders spreading peace "spreading Islam": "He spoke to them and asked them to spread *Islam*, to share their food with one another and to live as friends and respect one another and to pray to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted" (101) (emphasis mine). This "slip" undermines the humane message of Islam and conveys a faulty impression about Muslims, an impression that has long prevailed in the West. To emphasize the fact that the basic teachings of Islam do not require much effort as they conform to human intuition, Enani adds the word "simply" as follows: "He *simply* asked them to establish peace, feed the hungry, befriend and love one another, and pray to God, may His name be exalted" (25) (emphasis mine).

In sum. Calderbank's and Enani's translations reveal each translator's ideology and his socio-cultural background. Each translator has successfully achieved his intention. Calderbank attempted to strike a balance between foreignization and domestication. He, however, intentionally, employs strategies that distance and at times alienate his audience from the culture of the source text, but presents them with an enjoyable and informative experience. The effect of the publisher is felt especially in the blurb and the length of the translation which might suggest the constraints placed upon the translator and how the power of patronage manipulates the translator's choices. On the other hand, aware of the poor prestige of the image of Islam, Mohammad Enani did not expect non-Muslim parents to expose their young children to such a culture by choosing this book to read with their children. He has thus targeted curious teenagers and adults choosing a register and a style that would appeal to older children and adults. The identification of his audience with the ST cultural elements necessitated the employment of domesticating strategies, on the one hand, and emulating the style of the author highlighting the beauty and eloquence of the Arabic language, on the other. As Venuti suggests:

The signifying chain created by the translator does not translate any dream embodied in the source text, but rather replaces it with the translator's own unconscious desire, a desire for a particular meaning or ... a particular theory of meaning in translation. (39)

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## Bakhtine's Chronotope and Bal's Narratology in Youssef's "I am a *Burāq*"

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The Burāq, the Arab Pegasus, is the hybrid creature identified by Ibn-Katheer and Al-Qurtuby (Vol. 3, 4; Vol. 6, 3821) as the extraordinary creature that the Messenger of Islam, Prophet Muhammad, rode during his well-known journey known as alisrā' wa almi'rāj. The details of this night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem are not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, but are alluded to in Surat Alisrā' (Sura 17). However, this journey was described in the traditions by Anas Ibn-Malek, (one of Prophet Muhammad's trusted and loyal followers). The alisrā' wa almi'rāj journey and the Burāg as a supernatural being inspired many writers for children. "I am a Burāq", a short story by the late prominent writer for children and intellectual, Abdel-Tawab Youssef, was published in two different series. It was first published in Youssef's Arabic book A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales (1981) which won the Bologna Award for Children Literature in 2000 and sold more than seven million copies (Al-Hazek n.p.). Ten of the stories of this Arabic book were included in the school curriculum of 6th graders in Egypt (Ibrahim 18) and six million copies were printed by the Egyptian Ministry of Education. The book was also read widely in the Arab region and it is safe to infer that it influenced writing for children in Egypt and in the Arab world. The twenty story book was translated into English by Mohamed Enani in 2003 (published in this volume)1 and by Tony Calderbank in 2004. Because the story seems popular among children, "I am a Burāq" was re-published in another series for children, namely للقدس ألف حكاية وحكاية (Jerusalem has a Thousand and One Stories). In 2010, it was re-published for a third time, but as a single story by Dar Al-Buraq in Baghdad, Iraq.

Before, discussing this story in depth, it is relevant to shed light on the fact that in A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales, Youssef chooses many significant animals, objects, plants, rocks, nights, and items and gives them a voice to narrate the story of Prophet Muhammad's life in an original creative style. This did not only attract millions of readers, but it also paved the way for future writers for children to follow his footsteps. Walid Helal, the writer for children, used Youssef's method in his book أشياء في حياة الأنساء (Things in the Life of Prophets) (2014) in which he has many short stories narrated by animals, objects, and items that were significant to some Prophets. Similar to Youssef's short story "I am a *Burāq*", Helal has a short story in his book, namely, "البراق" (The Burāq), which also narrates alisrā' journey by giving the Burāq a voice. Helal applies Youssef's method to stories about many other Prophets. He narrates the story of Prophet Joseph by giving a voice to the well in which he was left, the cell where he was imprisoned, his shirt which brought back his father's eye-sight, and the wealth that he was in charge of in Egypt. Helal does the same thing with Virgin Mary, Adam, Moses, Jesus, and Noah.

This paper aims to analyze Youssef's short story "I am a *Burāq*" to understand the message of this work of art. Youssef portrays Prophet Muhammad as worthy of this extraordinary journey and in the process teaches children about *alisrā' wa almi 'rāj* and stresses that the journey is real and truthful. This is done through an entertaining and captivating way in which Youssef chooses to use the *Burāq* as the narrator of the story to introduce an extraordinary yet original animal to children, to entertain them, using a technique often used in stories for children (talking animals), but, more importantly, and paradoxically, to narrate the story in a credible way. The paper will use Mieke Bal's theory of narratology as well as Mikhail Bakhtine's chronotope in order to understand the impact of using the *Burāq* as the narrator and to discuss the broken bond between space and time during the journey of alisrā' wa almi 'rāj. This will be done by analyzing the method of narration, the characters, the setting, and finally the images and the symbols. It is necessary, though, to initially shed light on literature for children as a genre.

The three salient features of children's literature that need to be mentioned are first, there is a debate concerning whether children literature should be treated as a genre that ought to be studied by means of using its own critical tools, or should be treated like other literary genres. This research will adopt the approach of Peter Hunt, an important critic in the field of children's literature, which accepts that the canonic critical tools of literature apply to children literature. Hunt argues that "children literature has a different form, but [is] not lesser than, other literature." (Hunt "Criticism Theory" 14). He argues against the "assumption that what is written for children must be simple" because he believed that this assumption leads to another "assumption that children's literature is necessarily inferior to other kinds" (Hunt 21). On the contrary, literature for children is special because it addresses the children's limited linguistic and cultural knowledge, but this does not mean that the literary work for children is shallow. Writers for children use structures that are often clear and straightforward and the writer has to have the skill to convey ideas and feelings with depth and levels of meaning that the child can perceive. Hunt is, therefore, justified in believing that children literature is a canonic genre and that any critical theory can be applied to the language used and the ideas conveyed like other genres. This explains why this paper will apply Bal's narratology and Bakhtine's chronotope to "I am a Burāq".

Secondly, a relevant seminal feature of literature for children is the use of speaking animals which many western and Arab critics of children's literature discuss. Children's literature critics, like Peter Hunt and Rebecca Lukens, stress the importance of producing writings for children that are entertaining and can be read and reread. One of the techniques used to make the story interesting is to use speaking animals. It is popular for animals to be personalized in children's literature as characters that speak their minds and that have feelings and qualities which are comparable to those of humans. This technique has been used in writings for children for centuries in many different cultures. Muhammad Fathy Abou Bakr, who wrote a historical background about Ibn Al-Muqaffa's\_Arabic Classic

(Kalila and Demna), states that Kalila and Demna was originally a book of Indian fables in which Indian wisdom was passed on through the voices of animals and birds (Abou Bakr 13). He also states that they were translated to Persian during the time of Kesra, the famous Persian King. It was translated from Persian to Arabic by Ibn Al-Mugaffa (Abou Bakr 13). Ibn Al-Mugaffa's Arabic translation of *Kalila and Demna* is still read to and by children till this day. Similarly, George Orwell's masterpiece Animal Farm is a work for both adults and children in which all the characters are animals and the events take place on a farm. However, when this work is read by adults, they will dive in deeper political messages behind the speaking animals. In all of these previously mentioned bestselling works of art, the use of animals who have voices is used not only to entertain and teach, but to introduce reflections on serious political matters. Children can enjoy them while young and reread, or recall the stories as adults.

Hunt adequately explains that using entertaining techniques is more accepted by children than direct lessons or moralizing. He states that there are two types of didactic books for children. The first directly encourages children towards accepting adult behavior. He defined the second type as also didactic, but in an indirect enjoyable way. Hunt praised the second type for using pleasurable styles for children, namely talking animals. He believed that these techniques encourage the children to "indulgence in what we see as a natural behavior" (Hunt International Companion 117). In other words, children see the natural fortunes and misfortunes that happen to the characters of the story and relate to them naturally. Therefore, the second type is more effective because children start copying the good behavior presented and avoid bad conduct conveyed in an interesting story.

Praising the technique of the use of talking animals to entertain children. Hunt also believed that "the state of animals who talk like humans is a metaphor for the state of human childhood, in which children must learn to negotiate between the animal-like urges of their bodily desires and the demands of adults that they repress, desire and behave in social acceptable ways—that is, as adult humans do" (Hunt International Companion 117). Therefore, children can relate to the

animals in the story. They also start to make connections with events that they are facing or similar dilemmas with the society that the animal characters face to control their urges and to have acceptable conduct. So, in the mind of the child, good fortune becomes connected with good behavior that is accepted by society. Children also learn to avoid bad behavior for fear of bad fortune similar to what characters face in stories

Many Arab critics of children literature, like Naguib Al-Kilany, Araby Al-Asy, Sohair Mahfouz et al., and Naglaa Ahmed also discuss how the use of animals in children literature is a popular theme that helps entertain the children as well as teach them a moral, or a religious lesson in an indirect interesting way (Al-Asy 106-108; Al-Kilany 15-16; Naglaa Ahmed 56; Mahfouz et al. 212). Al-Asy discusses how writers link a certain trait to a certain animal in their works. For example, a dog is loyal, a donkey is stupid, and a fox is sly (AL-Asy 106). He also discusses that writers usually avoid any change of the connotations of the pre-set traits, for they fear that it may confuse the children. In "I am a *Burāq*", Youssef did not follow the established method of using an animal that are often mentioned in children literature, but he studied a new creature that never had a voice in children literature. After conducting research in the field of the Islamic studies, he introduced the voice of the *Burāq* to Arab child for the first time. Therefore, Youssef used the popular style of speaking animals, but he never fails to impress when it comes to experimenting with an interesting original creature.

A third feature that is significant about literature for children is the writer's awareness not only of children readers, but also of the adult. Despite the fact that most children, nowadays, have access to libraries, or online material, the influence of adults is still prominent. This is through parents, teachers, older siblings and librarians, or the influence can be indirect through the publishers who choose what to publish for children and what not to. In *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children Literature*, Hunt states that writers for children must keep in mind that "parents are willing to buy them [their books], educators to promote them and publishers to produce them"

(4). This implies that writers must bear in mind parental concerns regarding terrifying themes, or cultural taboos. In the novel *The Lion* The Witch and The Wardrobe, which is a popular children novel in the popular series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis states a direct statement to children on how writers for children must bear in mind parental taboos and fears as he describes the evil camp. He said, "ogres with monstrous teeth and wolves and bull-headed men; spirits of evil trees and poisonous plants; and other creatures whom I won't describe because if I did the grown-ups would probably not let you read this book" (Lewis 165). Lewis clearly states the social restrictions that stop him from giving more terrifying details to readers. This shows his awareness as a writer for children of what is accepted by society to be read for children and what is not. Similar to Lewis, in "I am a Burāq", this awareness of the audience is crystal clear in some of Youssef's choices regarding "what" and "how" he chooses to describe the events, and the places.

This technique of using talking animals in children literature is clear when analyzing the first literary element in Youssef's "I am a Burāq", namely the method of narration. Youssef uses the technique of speaking animals and takes it to a more challenging level by using a supernatural creature who took the Prophet on an incredible journey. Although Surat Alisrā' in the Holy Qur'an does not include details of the journey as mentioned earlier, one of the ayat (verses) states that تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَ اتُ السَّبْعُ وَ الأرْضُ وَمَن فِيهِنَّ 🛘 وَ إِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَٰكِن لَّا تَفْقَهُونَ which is translated as "The seven heavens and the earth and whoever is in them extol to Him, and decidedly not a thing (is) except that it extols His praise, but you do not comprehend their Extolment. Surely He has been Ever-Forbearing, Ever-Forgiving" (Holy Qur'an 17:44)<sup>2</sup>. From this aya, it can be inferred that any animal, object and item has a language of its own, a language that human beings might not understand. In "I am a Burāq", Youssef is applying this Quranic idea that anything talks in its own language. In giving the *Burāq* a voice to narrate the story, Youssef is assuming and claiming that the *Burāq* is a firsthand witness and, therefore, a credible source. For the child, this is a supernatural *Burāq* narrating the events of Prophet Muhammad's

miraculous *alisrā' wa almi 'rāj* journey when he ascended to the seven heavens and returned back to Mecca in one night, a journey that could not have happened to a common man, in real clock time.

In order to discuss how in choosing the *Burāq* Youssef manages to introduce a credible story that has a message and entertains the child, it is necessary to make use of the theory of narratology. In Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, Mieke Bal, a Dutch scholar. analyzes narratives using three questions: "who is the narrator? What does the narrator choose to include, or exclude? And how does the narrator tell and represent the events?" (Bal Narratology: Introduction 9). Bal emphasizes "focalization" in her work which she defines as the point of view and perception of the narrator (Bal Narratology: *Introduction* 145). She states that no matter how the author attempts to "avoid adopting shape" and has a position, there is always a point of view that is direct or indirect (Bal "The Point of Narratology" 732). Therefore, by trying to answer Bal's three questions, Youssef's point of view that is conveyed through the *Burāq* can be identified. According to Bal, the narrator has a certain vision and perception of the events which determine his angle of the narration (Bal Narratology: Introduction 145).

Before directly answering these questions by analyzing Youssef's story, it will be necessary to also shed light on what the French philosopher Tzvetan Todorov, who coined the term narratology in his book *Grammaire du Décaméron*, said. He argued that space and time are two significant elements that contribute to the creation of the narrative in literary works. In his book *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, Todorov discusses Mikhail Bakhtine's theories, gives them a systematic structure, and establishes a link between the narrator of a work of art and Bakhtine's theories (Todorov 11). He explains how Bakhtine's chronotope both reinforces the voice of the narrator and does not ignore the form and the content of the narrative (Todorov 35). Thus, since both Gerald Prince and Mieke Bal stress that space and time are two elements that influence the narrative, Bakhtine's chronotope will be used to understand Bal's "what" and "how" in order to discuss Youssef's narrative in depth.

In The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtine, Bakhtine borrows the term chronotope from Einstein's relativity theory (Bakhtine *Dialogic Imagination* 84). He uses the term as a reference to the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtine Dialogic Imagination 84). He also states that the "chronotope is the place where knots of the narrative are tied and untied... To them [space and time] belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (Bakhtine Dialogic Imagination 250). This sheds light on the crucial connection between the chronotope and the narrative. It is necessary to analyze the chronotope in "I am a Burāq" because the development of the events occur outside the human daily clock time that uses minutes, hours, days, and months. In "I am a *Burāq*", the events take place on a time of its own.

The first main point in the analysis is answering Bal's first question "Who is that narrator?" (Bal Narratology: Introduction 9). Although it seems simple and straight forward, but the answer in the case of "I am a Burāq" is rather complex. That is because, naturally, Youssef is the narrator, but he has chosen to speak to the children through the voice of another narrator, namely, a Burāq. The title of the story "I am a Burāq" confirms that this hybrid creature is directly talking to the children. When he first speaks, he introduces himself in the following terms: "More than fourteen hundred years, before the invention of rockets and satellites, was I, Al-Burāq!" ("I am a Burāq"). By this direct confirmation of his identity as a living being who precedes the invention of modern devices, the Burāq is establishing his sense of superiority. In comparing himself to "rockets and satellites", he is also introducing the idea of speed, one that the children understand. This piece of information will help them in accepting the speed with which the *Burāq* took the Prophet on this journey. In Arabic, the root of the name *Burāq* is *barq* which means lightning or flash of lightning. The name, therefore, refers to light and speed, both of which are significant with reference to the enlightening experience the Prophet went through in his ascension to the seven heavens and the speed with which the *Burāq* travelled.

The second statement made by the Burāq is quite significant in

addressing children. The *Burāq* said "Reports vary in describing me, and even in specifying my shape and kind, but the important thing is that I was made by God, Creator of the earth and the sky, may His name be exalted, the All-Capable" ("I am a *Burāq*"). Initially, the child is being told that the *Burāq* is different, unique and controversial. These can be disturbing features if a creature is eager to have an identity that is definitive. But children have a vivid sense of imagination that allows them to accept robots, batman, superman, dinosaurs, ninja turtles and incredible hulks. In the case of the *Burāq*, it is significant and important that Youssef, through the *Burāq*, tells the children that the identity of the *Burāq* is disputed. Highlighting that this is not a problem, the *Burāq* resolves this controversial issue by confirming an awareness of being created by God. Indirectly, the *Burāq* is establishing an affinity with the children who realize that they too have been created by God.

One can speculate that Youssef chooses to narrate the events through the voice of the *Burāq* for three reasons. He uses the *Burāq* to convey the details of the story through a character that witnessed the events and is, therefore, credible; second, to convey the details to the children in an entertaining way; and third, to introduce an original yet extraordinary animal to children. First, Youssef used the voice of the *Burāq* to give credibility to the events. To narrate an extraordinary journey that happened more than a thousand of years ago, Youssef cleverly chooses a narrator who actually took part in the journey. This creature establishes a supernatural mood since the *Burāq* is an unusual creature. Also, the description of places like Heaven and Hell, is better introduced by this extraordinary creature to capture the children's imagination. The children become ready to use their imagination in understanding the abstract extraordinary concepts which are not common. Secondly, Youssef used the voice of the Burāq to entertain the children and to teach them about alisrā' wa almi'rāj journey. The Burāq teaches children when and how one of the five pillars of Islam, the five daily prayers, was introduced to Prophet Muhammad. The Burāq also teaches children that "Muslims should pray five times a day, directing their faces towards the Ka'ba in prayer" ("I am a

Burāq"). The lessons that are indirectly conveyed by the Burāq are clear in the following,

We passed by some people who had planted a crop and every time the harvest was over, the crop was renewed and they had to harvest it again. The Prophet asked about them. Gabriel said: "There are people who have fought for God; the reward of their good deeds is multiplied seven hundred times. We also witnessed the punishment of those who would not pray or pay their zaka (2.5 % of uninvested capital annually) ("I am a *Burāq*").

Through this simple scene of a field in which there are crops and harvest, the children not only learn about the value of productivity and "good deeds", but they also learn about another pillar of Islam, namely zaka (almsgiving). At this early age the child understands about duties and responsibilities, reward and punishment. Children learn that following God's orders will be rewarded and being disobedient leads to punishment. Third, in choosing the Burāq as the narrator, Youssef is being true to life. There are many ordinary and extraordinary animals known to children, but by giving the Burāq a voice Youssef is adhering to Muslim traditions and is contributing to children's literature in Arabic.

After dealing with "who" the narrator is in "I am a Burāq", it is necessary to examine "what" Youssef chooses to mention and "how" he deals with what he conveys. Bal's "how" and "what" are interconnected, so they have to be analyzed simultaneously. The "what" and "how" will become clearer when the characterization, setting, imagery and symbolism of the work of art are examined. In "I am a Burāq", the characters that the child encounters are the Burāq, Prophet Muhammad Gabriel the Archangel, and a few other Prophets. This implies that the *Burāq* is a narrator as well as a character in the story. Youssef also gives the *Burāq* extraordinary features, namely it speaks, and travels in no time. The *Burāq* is aware that the Archangel Gabriel is the Prophet's guide on journey and states that "on the way Muhammad saw a great deal. He had many questions to ask, and Gabriel gave the answers" ("I am a Burāq"). Therefore, Gabriel plays an active role in assisting the Prophet in grasping what he hears and sees during the journey. Youssef does not describe the Prophets that Prophet Muhammad meets, but they are mentioned to show the universality of Prophet Muhammad's message. This is a point that will be discussed in more detail later.

In "I am a *Burāq*", the focal character is that of Prophet Muhammad. Youssef stressed three of his qualities, namely endurance, wisdom, and universality. Youssef uses the Burāq to narrate the problems the Prophet encountered in his life saying "He had suffered from many hardships during these years" ("I am a Burāq"). Some of these are that "his uncle and his wife died; his companions emigrated; and his journey to al-Taif came to nought" ("I am a Burāq"). Al-Taif was a group of people who lived under al-Taif Mountain in Saudi Arabia. Prophet Muhammad visited them to preach about Islam. They made fun of him and his beliefs, sent their children to call him names and to throw rocks at him until he bled. The resilience of the Prophet is praised to stress how the Prophet always asked God to grant him patience to endure hardships. The reader is told that "his faith never faltered, and he continued to ask God to grant him more support and fortitude" ("I am a Burāq"). Similar to the popular saying "good things come to those who wait", the narrator aims to teach children that patience is rewarded to encourage them to be patient.

Wisdom, the Prophet's second trait, becomes clear as he avoids the temptations of life and notices the caravans. Youssef introduces the temptations of life through an interesting dialogue between the Prophet and the Archangel Gabriel who said, "He [Muhammad] saw a beautiful girl wearing magnificent clothes; she called out his name, but he never looked. Gabriel said: 'that was this world, looking splendid for you!' The Prophet said: 'I have no need of her'" ("I am a *Burāq*"). Youssef uses this dialogue to engage the children. It also teaches children about the vanity of life and how the attractions of life can be futile and temporary. The dialogue also reflects how physical appearance can be tempting and distracting, but sensible human beings should not be tempted by materialism. Here, the Prophet is portrayed as wise enough to know that it was a trap and he did not fall in it. In children's literature, the concept of the test is a recurrent theme during

any journey, and the main character has to face challenges to learn and to prove to be worthy of the journey. The Prophet ignored and avoided the temptations of life. His wisdom is also clear in his observations during the journey. These observations were useful to convince nonbelievers that he did go on this journey. The *Burāq* narrates,

> Just outside Mecca, we passed by a caravan belonging to Quraysh. A she-camel had strayed from the caravan, and the Prophet told them where it was. We passed by another caravan whose camels had dispersed, and one of which had a broken leg. We passed by a third caravan, at the forefront of which was a camel carrying two black bags ("I am a Burāq").

Mentioning the three caravans they saw are important observations that are useful when he convinces the people of his time that the journey is real and truthful. The portrayal of the qualities of Prophet Muhammad adds to the credibility of the story since he is the original source in all the details of alisrā' wa almi'rāj journey.

The third quality that Youssef sheds light on is the universality of the Prophet and his message. The Burāq narrates that the Prophet "went into Al-Aqsa (the farthest) Mosque where all the Prophets and Messengers of God were waiting. They stood in their ranks as he led them in prayer" ("I am a *Burāq*"). The scene of Prophet Muhammad leading the other Prophets in a prayer implies that he is a Prophet in a long line of Messengers from God. The fact that Prophet Muhammad went to Jerusalem is significant because this is a city that is sacred in Christianity and Judaism. So, performing the prayer in this sacred city also sheds light on the universality of the message of Islam. This message addresses not only Muslims, but also Christians and Jews and is not different from theirs

The setting, which constitutes the portrayal of space and time, is the second salient feature that requires analysis in "I am a *Burāq*". This short story presents a challenging portrayal of space and time because the journey takes place in a time of its own. In order to discuss how the use of the setting is challenging, it is necessary to shed light on

Bakhtine's chronotope. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtine*, Bakhtine, the Russian thinker, discusses the theory of the chronotope which he defines as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtine 84). He asserts that he borrows the term chronotope from Einstein's relativity theory (Bakhtine "Dialogic" 84). Bakhtine uses the term chronotope to refer to space and time in literary works. He also discusses how space and time are two main components in the creation of meaning (Bakhtine 250). Bakhtine's chronotope focuses on the bond between space and time that creates meaning. This bond is broken during *alisrā wa almi 'rāj* journey because space goes beyond the familiar space to the unfamiliar Seven Heavens. Also, the events occur in a time of its own beyond our familiar perception of time. This challenging portrayal of the setting is important because it helps the child in understanding that the Prophet's journey is miraculous.

Before analyzing the chronotope in "I am a Burāq", it is necessary to understand the difference between space and place. Yi-Fu Tuan, a famous Chinese-American geographer who writes about the geographical differences between space and place, states that space has roots in the mathematical and physical fields because it is always used in relation to "distance and time" (Tuan 390). Like Tuan, Helen Couclelis, a professor of geography, also stresses the relation of the term space with time as she defines space as "both expanse and confine, both what is between things and what contains them, both empty of matter and defined by the presence of matter; space is even a period or interval of time" (Couclelis 215). Therefore, the definitions of space stress that the term "space" is used in relation to time. On the other hand, Tuan states that place "has more substance than the word location suggests" as he emphasizes the "sense of place" (Tuan 387) which he defined as the personality and the spirit that are associated with a certain place (Tuan 411). So, he believed that a "place calls for humanistic understanding" of both "culture and humanistic geography" (Tuan 389). Therefore, the term place is used in relation to abstract associations of a certain place by an individual or by a group of people.

Bakhtine does address this distinction between space and place as well. He stated that the term "chronotope" literally means space and time (Bakhtine 84), acknowledging the relation between the term "space" in relation to time. He also states that "the place figures in solely as a naked, abstract expanse of space" (Bakhtine Dialogic Imagination 100). In other words, Bakhtine states that any abstract naked qualities and connotations that are associated with a certain area is called a place. This distinction will be useful when analyzing "I am a Burāq" because some places are mentioned in relation to the connotations associated to those places, while other spaces are mentioned in relation to time

In "I am a *Burāq*", Youssef portrays some places to emphasis their abstract religious values to teach these values to children, while spaces are used to reflect on the time taken to highlight that the journey is miraculous. Since children cannot understand the concept of a place without visiting it, or seeing a picture that has the spacial features, it was challenging for Youssef to describe two places, namely Heaven and Hell, which are abstract and not found in daily life. Youssef describes the two places using sensory images to help children in grasping the feelings associated with them. He identifies the sharp contrast between them through imagery: Heaven is described as "a breeze wafting" and "a fragrance sweet as perfume" ("I am a *Burāq*"), whereas Hell is described as having "a nasty scent" and "a jarring voice" ("I am a *Burāq*"). Youssef's use of sensory images appeals to the children's imagination and facilitates the process of the comprehension of abstract concepts and places, like Hell and Heaven. Therefore, the use of the voice of the *Burāq* and the sensory images help children to grasp that Heaven involves reward for being good, while Hell involves punishment for wrong doing.

Youssef's challenge was not only in portraying abstract places to children, but in presenting space. Since space stresses the use of time, Youssef's challenge was in portraying the element of time, since the events take place in a time of its own. Bakhtine gives this phenomena the name "vertical chronotope". He regards time as having two dimensions, the first is the "horizontal", "biological", or "historical"

time which is the human daily clock time that uses minutes, hours, days, and months to logically determine the time span of a certain event (Bakhtine 156); the second is a transcendental dimension which he named "the vertical chronotope" (Bakhtine 157). Bakhtine stated that "in this [vertical] chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biological time" (Bakhtine 248). In other words, in this vertical dimension, the development of the events occurs and develops outside the horizontal clock time, in a time of its own. Therefore, the events that require months, or years to take place on the horizontal chronotope occur in minutes, seconds, or absolutely no time on the vertical chronotope. This vertical chronotope breaks the usual bond of the everyday biological time as we know it. Bakhtine stresses how the vertical chronotope represents events happening in no time, which can be traced in "I am a *Burāq*".

During the Prophet's journey from Mecca, to Jerusalem, to the Seven Heavens and back to earth on the same night the vertical chronotope can be detected. Youssef introduces the idea of breaking the bond between time and space when the Burāq says, "We arrived in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in no time at all" ("I am a *Burāq*"). Also, the *Burāq* adds that,

The pagan members of Quraysh did not believe him, with Abu Jahl the most persistent in disbelief. One of them said: 'It takes us a whole month to go to Jerusalem, a whole month to come back; now how can Muhammad go and return in one night?'("I am a *Burāq*").

The question that the people of Quraysh ask is logical, but the answer has to involve an understanding of Bakhtine's vertical chronotope. At the time, a one way journey from Mecca to Jerusalem required one month. This asserts that the broken bond between space and time stresses that the journey is miraculous.

Although Youssef is dealing with an extraordinary journey, he depicts it as real and truthful by dealing with two public square events. Bakhtine defined the public square chronotope as the act of making

a personal event one that is public, that is in a certain space and time (Bakhtine *Dialogic Imagination* 132). Therefore, the public square event is introduced to listeners, or readers who judge and criticize an event that happened to a certain individual in order to make it public rather than "intimate or private, secret or personal" (Bakhtine 132). In "I am a Burāq", although Prophet Muhammad is the one who went on alisrā' wa almi'rāj journey, the public during his time, namely Quraysh, gave themselves the right to discuss and criticize his journey. They did not regard the journey as the Prophet's individual spiritual journey, or as a religious journey that only concerns and affects Muslims, but the journey became a public matter that concerns the Quraysh tribe. Quraysh's debate is based on the disrupted bond of the chronotope. Introducing such a controversial chronotope in "I am a Burāq". Youssef refutes the arguments of not only one public square, but two, namely that of Quraysh and of modern readers, with a time difference of a thousand years between them. Youssef refutes the arguments of Quraysh using the Prophet's qualities and witty observations; while Youssef's refutation to the modern readers is science.

The first public square scene addresses the people of Quraysh who did not believe the Prophet's story. In the Arabian peninsula at the time of the Prophet, a good reputation was the most important element that determined the credibility of a man, and all the information that circulated about a person spread orally. The Prophet had a good reputation and was known by his people as "الصادق الأمين" (honest and trustworthy). In the narrative, it is clear that the Prophet used the space in his favor from the words of the *Burāq* who said,

The argument raged unabated. Finally they challenged the Prophet to describe the *Agsa* Mosque, secure in the knowledge that he'd never visited it. But Muhammad began a detailed description, as though he was looking at something in front of him. He spoke of every part of it, with a degree of precision that stunned everybody. Abu Bakr said: "You're truthful, O Messenger of God!" ("I am a Burāq").

For Quraysh, the concrete details about the route between Mecca and Jerusalem were accurate because this was a popular trading route during that time, which they were very familiar with. However, what remained a mystery is how Muhammad managed to go on the journey overnight. At that time, science and scientific theories were not advanced enough to introduce machines that travel with the speed of sound, or measure distances in the speed of light. Therefore, during the Prophet's time, Quraysh did not understand the disruption of the bond between space and time; and it was impossible to comprehend that an event may occur in a time of its own, outside the regular earthily time. Some of the people of Quraysh, however, believed in miracles and in the trustworthy character of the Prophet. When Muhammad gave them details about the caravans that he had seen on his way, his credibility was confirmed. The *Burāq* narrates the following,

Nor did the Prophet confine himself to the detailed description of the mosque; he had further proofs of the truth of his story. He spoke of the caravans he had seen on the outskirts of Mecca which, later on, arrived back in Mecca. With them were the shecamel that had gone astray, the camel with the broken leg, and the one carrying two black bags—precisely as reported by the Prophet ("I am a *Burāq*").

The Prophet's detailed report was enough for Quraysh to believe him and "The disbelievers were bewildered, and speechless" ("I am a *Burāq*").

With globalization and two translations of "I am a *Burāq*", the short story addresses the whole world. Aware that he is writing to the modern reader, Youssef steps in and presents the critical readers with proof that they can relate to and understand. The proof is introduced through science. Youssef starts and ends the short story by referring to the well-known scientific discoveries and breakthroughs of the rockets and satellites that travel in space with unbelievable speed and of the idea of traveling in no time. Einstein's black-hole and time travel theory, which is also called relativity theory, challenged the regular understanding of time. This theory instigated research in the field of the atomic bomb and the field of time travel (Moyer 52). In

the article "The Physics of Time Travel", Moyer, a popular physicist, defines how a black hole is like a gate through which an item can teleport from one black hole to another through an astronomical tunnel, namely "worm-hole" (Moyer 52). Therefore, an object can teleport from one black-hole to another in no time just like the Burāq did. When Youssef starts his story and ends it by referring to science, he addresses the modern readers who believe in science, in order to convey an incredible journey in a credible way.

In "I am a *Burāq*", Youssef starts and ends with scientific proof that the journey is scientifically possible. He mentions rockets and satellites which are scientific inventions that redefined the definition of time. In the first line of the story, the *Burāq* said, "more than fourteen hundred years, before the invention of rockets and satellites, was I, Al-Burāq!" ("I am a Burāq") which is a reference to scientific inventions that are real nowadays, but were incredible and unimaginable at the time of the Prophet. In the lines that follow the reference to scientific facts. Youssef directly stresses the truthfulness of the story with the statement that alisrā' wa almi'rāj is "a unique miracle, a story that is real in every respect" ("I am a Burāq"). At the end of the story, Youssef reiterates the argument when the *Burāq* said, "Thus I, Al-Burāq, conclude my story with the Messenger of God in the Night of Israa and Mi'raj: It is a true and real story, which occurred fourteen centuries before the age of rockets and satellites" ("I am a Burāq").

Clearly, Youssef chooses to put the events of alisrā' wa almi'rāj journey in a scientific framework, emphasizing the scientific possibility of the journey. Referring to rockets and satellites reminds the modern reader of the scientific inventions that exceeded human expectations in traveling. Some of these inventions allow traveling in space in a very short time like, satellites and rockets, and some of them even allow traveling in no time, like the black holes. His choice of satellites and rockets, specifically, is to emphasize how the old traditional boundaries of traveling in relation to time were broken after these inventions. In the modern world, rockets and satellites are commonly known to both adults and children for orbiting the earth at a very high speed and they can orbit the earth many times in one day.

Comparing the two translations of "I am a Burāq" by Enani and Calderbank shows how modern readers can accept Youssef's scientific framework. Youssef does not directly state the black hole theory which can be too advanced for children to understand at a young age, so he refers to the commonly known satellites and rockets. However, some parents and adult readers will recall Einstein's theory of time travel and the black hole when reading Youssef's statement. This reference to scientific discoveries is also clear in Calderbank's translation of قبل الصواريخ، وقبل الأقمار الصناعية" Youssef's original statement which is (Youssef 2). Calderbank translated this ''بأكثر من ألف سنة كنت أنا البراق as "One thousand three hundred years before missiles and satellites were invented there was I ... Al Buraq" (Calderbank 56). Translating as "missiles" is not appropriate because missiles have "الصواريخ" negative connotations because they allude to carrying weapons and bombs which the Arabic word "الصواريخ" does not suggest. Enani translates this Arabic word as "rockets" which is better for two reasons. First, the word "rockets" does not have the negative destructive link to wars and bombs that do not match the nature of the spiritual religious journey of alisrā' wa almi 'rāj. Second, a rocket is known for its speed and for exploring outer space which are compatible with alisrā' wa almi 'rāi journey.

Through this scientific allusion, Youssef succeeds in giving depth to the text that can be understood by children and, of course, by adults. Such allusions show depth and although the storyline of "I am a Burāq" may seem simple allowing children to grasp the main events, the details reveal a multilayered text. Even if children do not grasp all the layers, they will when they reread the story as young adults. Elaine Moss, a critic in the field of children's literature, argued, in her book Part of the Pattern, that "young people should come across a great deal of literature that, at some point in their lives, they will return to and understand better, even return to for an enlightenment they had recognized as being there, but had not been fully absorbed". This depth and enlightenment in works for children is clear in Youssef's "I am a Burāq", for he had experimented new styles in his writings that inspired the future generations of writers for children.

The fourth literary element that also has depth in "I am a Burāq" is the use of figurative language. Youssef uses figures of speeches to emphasis the universality of Prophet Muhammad and to entertain the children in a framework that is acceptable by the adults. He uses the idea of passing the torch from one Prophet to another to symbolize Prophet Muhammad's universality. The Burāq narrates that "all the Prophets and Messengers of God were waiting. They stood in their ranks as he led them in prayer" ("I am a Burāq"). This prayer is a symbol of the continuation of the message of God. The same symbolism is emphasized when Prophet Muhammad ascends in the Seven Heavens where he meets many of the prophets who welcome and greet him. The Burāq said,

> The Prophet ascended to the first heaven, where our father Adam welcomed him. In the second he met Prophets Issa Ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary), Yehya and Zakaria; in the third, he met Youssef Ibn Ya'coub (Joseph son of Jacob); in the fourth, Idris; in the fifth, Haroun Ibn 'Imran; in the sixth, Moussa Ibn 'Imran Moses son of 'Imran); in the seventh, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Abraham). Each welcomed the Prophet saying: "Welcome! Good Prophet and good brother!" ("I am a Burāq").

In the first Heaven, Prophet Muhammad meets the first Prophet Adam, the first human being created by God, to indicate that the message is the same from the creation of Prophet Adam until Prophet Muhammad. There is always an emphasis on how welcoming they were to Prophet Muhammad which is a message to their people to follow Prophet Muhammad, for he is the successor and the continuation of the message. Youssef's detailed description adds to the universal effect.

Youssef appeals to children and helps them to grasp abstract concepts through the use of imagery. His choices of "what" he describes in relation to Heaven and Hell are well chosen. As previously mentioned, Youssef uses sensory images to compare Heaven and Hell to introduce the idea of reward and punishment. He also appeals to their imagination and personifies Heaven and Hell giving them voices to speak for themselves. However, there is more emphasis on Heaven in this description: "وغبلى وأبارقى" (Youssef 8) (I am full of sumptuous chambers and silken material, gold and silver, cups and jugs, honey, milk and water) ("I am a Burāq"). This reflects the infinite joys and pleasure that those who are virtuous will enjoy. On the other hand, it is very clear in the original Arabic version that Hell is described in only four words: "كثرت اغلالى واشند حرى" (I am so full of chains and shackles, and my heat is scorching) ("I am a Burāq"). Giving more attention to Heaven rather than Hell shows that Youssef is aware of the parental concerns regarding exposing children to terrifying beliefs and places at a young age. There is barely a mention of the horrors of Hell to avoid scaring children.

Youssef is revolutionary in introducing stories for children about Muslim beliefs through following the steps of Hans Christian Andersen and Lewis Carroll to convey a belief and a journey that has been known to Muslims for years. Although Surat Alisrā' mentions alisrā' wa almi 'rāj journey as well as the statement that everything talks in a language of its own, no one before Youssef thought of connecting them. This original challenging experiment resulted in a unique style and in the method of narration in which animals and objects have a voice, which added to the value and the mystery of the journey as well as inspired future writers for children to experiment with this technique in writing about many other Prophets. Youssef did not invent the story, but the challenge was in conveying it in a way that both parents and children can accept. As a result, he introduced the young minds to a journey that happens on a time of its own, outside our own time, breaking the ordinary bond of space and time which develops in seconds, minutes, and hours. Another challenge was to present this extraordinary journey as truthful. So, Youssef excelled in refuting the arguments of non-believers by dealing with two public square events that are separated by a gap in time of more than a thousand years. Youssef succeeded in changing the expected representations and in challenging fixed molds. His techniques, teachings, and his works will live to inspire more writers as well as children and adult readers.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> All the quotations inserted in this chapter from Abdel-Tawab Youssef's story "I am a  $Bur\bar{a}q$ " are from translated version of Mohamed Enani's translation of A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales published in this volume.

# I AM A BURĀQ

More than fourteen hundred years, before the invention of rockets and satellites, was I, *Al-Burāq*!

Reports vary in describing me, and even in specifying my shape and kind, but the important thing is that I was made by God, Creator of the earth and the sky, may His name be exalted, the All-Capable.

I had been ridden by God's Prophets, but with Prophet Muhammad I had a unique miracle, a story that is *real* in every respect, though stranger than the flights of fantasy.

Twelve years had elapsed since Revelation first came to Muhammad, during which time he had suffered a great deal of hardships. His uncle and his wife died; his companions emigrated; and his journey to al-Taif came to nought, but his faith never faltered, and he continued to ask God to grant him more support and fortitude.

After these eventful years, my miracle with the Prophet took place-the *Israa* and the *Mi'raj* (the night journey to Jerusalem and the heavens). The night was that of the 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab, the lunar month. Gabriel first went to the house of the Prophet, and accompanied him to the Inviolate House, the *Ka'ba*, where I had been waiting. Having washed the Prophet's heart with Zamzam water, Gabriel filled it with wisdom and faith. Then the Prophet rode me and set off, in Gabriel's company, to *Beit Al-Maqdis*, Jerusalem, with the utmost speed.

Just outside Mecca, we passed by a caravan belonging to Quraysh. A she-camel had strayed from the caravan, and the Prophet told them where it was. We passed by another caravan whose camels had dispersed, and one of which had a broken leg. We passed by a third caravan, at the forefront of which was a camel carrying two black bags.

On the way Muhammad saw a great deal. He had many questions to ask, and Gabriel gave the answers. He saw a beautiful girl wearing magnificent clothes; she called out his name, but he never looked. Gabriel said: "that was this world, looking splendid for you!" The Prophet said: "I have no need of her."

When we arrived at Yathrib, Gabriel said: "This is Yathrib; you will migrate to it; it will be called *Al-Madina Al-Munawara*; and therein you will die.

We passed by some people who had planted a crop and every time the harvest was over, the crop was renewed and they had to harvest it again. The Prophet asked about them. Gabriel said: "There are people who have fought for God; the reward of their good deeds is multiplied seven hundred times. We also witnessed the punishment of those who would not pray or pay their *zaka* (2.5 % of uninvested capital annually). We felt on the way a breeze wafting a fragrance sweet as perfume, with the echo of an indistinct voice. "What is this, Gabriel?" Muhammad asked. "This is," Gabriel replied, "the voice of the Garden saying: O God! Get me that which you've promised; I am full of sumptuous chambers and silken material, gold and silver, cups and jugs, honey, milk and water; get me, O God, that which you've promised me."

Passing by another valley, we smelt a nasty scent, and heard a jarring voice. "What is this, Gabriel?" the Prophet asked. "This is the voice of Gehenna calling," Gabriel answered, "God! Get me that which you've promised; I am so full of chains and shackles, and my heat is scorching; so get me that which you've promised me."

We arrived in *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) in no time at all. Muhammad took me, *Al-Burāq*, and bound my halter to a ring in a high rock, which still stands, where later Muslims built a beautiful, towering dome. He left me there and went into *Al-Aqsa* (the farthest) Mosque where all the Prophets and Messengers of God were waiting. They stood in their ranks as he led them in prayer.

After the prayer Gabriel provided the Prophet with a *Mi'raj* (ladder) which reaches into the heavens, and the Prophet climbed it, making another journey simply called *Al-Mi'raj*. The Prophet ascended to the first heaven, where our father Adam welcomed him. In the second he met Prophets Issa Ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary), Yehya and Zakaria; in the third, he met Youssef Ibn Ya'coub (Joseph son of Jacob); in the fourth, Idris; in the fifth, Haroun Ibn 'Imran; in the sixth, Moussa Ibn 'Imran (Moses son of 'Imran); in the seventh, Ibrahim Al-Khalil (Abraham). Each welcomed the Prophet saying: "Welcome! Good Prophet and good brother!"

Then God raised His chosen Prophet to the "Lote-tree of the Ultimate", to the High Divine Presence. The Prophet fell prostrate in a prayer of thanks to the One God, for allowing him to be where no one else had ever been before. It was here that God decreed that Muslims should pray five times a day, directing their faces towards the *Ka'ba* in prayer.

Then the Prophet went down to the noble rock, having bade farewell to all the Prophets and God's Messengers. He then rode me, Al-Burāq, on the journey of Israa and Mi'raj which came to an end. I said goodbye and he went home. On the next day he went to the Ka'ba and told this story to the people, but the pagan members of Quraysh did not believe him, with Abu Jahl the most persistent in disbelief. One of them said:

"It takes us a whole month to go to Jerusalem, a whole month to come back; now how can Muhammad go and return in one night?"

At this moment Abu Bakr arrived at the Ka'ba and sat near the Prophet. He heard from the pagans what the Prophet had to say about his journey, and how they wouldn't believe any part of it.

The argument raged unabated. Finally they challenged the Prophet to describe the Agsa Mosque, secure in the knowledge that he'd never visited it. But Muhammad began a detailed description, as though he was looking at something in front of him. He spoke of every part of it, with a degree of precision that stunned everybody. Abu Bakr said: "You're truthful, O Messenger of God!"

Nor did the Prophet confine himself to the detailed description of the mosque; he had further proofs of the truth of his story. He spoke of the caravans he had seen on the outskirts of Mecca which, later on, arrived back in Mecca. With them were the she-camel that had gone astray, the camel with the broken leg, and the one carrying two black bags—precisely as reported by the Prophet.

The disbelievers were bewildered, and speechless. Abu Bakr said, yet again, "You're truthful, O Messenger of God! I believe everything you've said." The noble Prophet said, "You are the *siddeeg* (true believer) O Abu Bakr!" the word used by the Prophet that day became the title of Abu Bakr, who is always referred to as Abu Bakr Al-Siddeeg.

Thus I, Al-Burāq, conclude my story with the Messenger of God in the Night of Israa and Mi'raj: It is a true and real story, which occurred fourteen centuries before the age of rockets and satellites.

Glory to God

Who did take His servant

For a journey by night

From the Inviolate Mosque

To the Farthest Mosque

Whose precincts We did

Bless,--in order that We

Might show him some

Of Our signs: for He

Is the One Who heareth

And seeth (all things).

Holy Qur'an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> All the translations of the *ayat* quoted from the Holy Qur'an are from Ghâlî, Muhammad Mahmud. *Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qurân*. Al-Azhar University: Dâr An-Nashr Liljâmiat, 2005.

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# Child Language in Abdel-Tawab Youssef's Children's Arabic Novel Khayaal al-Haql [1969 The Scarecrow]

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#### **Abstract**

Reading children's literature has often been commended for its role in contributing to children's linguistic and conceptual growth. The present study belongs to the area of language acquisition where studies such as Clark and Clark (1977) and Short and Candlin (1989) asserted the role of reading literature throughout the different stages of language acquisition. One of the novels that played a prominent role in Egyptian children's literature is Abdel-Tawab Youssef's "Khayaal al-Haql" (1969) [The Scarecrow]. Millions of copies were printed and it was included in the "Best of the Best" list. This paper analyzes this Arabic novel for children to identify the suitability of its language to its readers' linguistic and conceptual competence. The paper shows how the author focuses on familiar areas of experience and simplifies new elements. The paper analyzes the drawings used and the Scarecrow's role as a narrator. It also investigates the lexical items used to help children visualize the story and enrich their repertoire with new vocabulary items explained in context. Additionally, it demonstrates how syntactic simplicity in the first few pages leads gradually to longer, more complex sentences facilitated by a special use of punctuation marks as the story develops. The study concludes that the novel, set in rural Egypt, achieves the two goals of literature, namely instruction through reading practice, lexical and syntactic accessibility and gradual development, and pleasure in reading about fictional characters, the victory of cooperation and perseverance, and the happy ending for the protagonists.

#### (1) Introduction

Reading children's literature has often been commended for its role in contributing to children's linguistic and conceptual growth. The reading course in primary education has often used children's literature to help enhance children's Modern Standard Arabic, both through using it in studying the language system as in syntax and morphology, and less formally in reading and discussing those novels in Modern Standard Arabic as a means of communication.

One of the children's literature books written in Arabic that has proved successful in this area is Abdel-Tawab Youssef's (1969) novel The Scarecrow (entitled "Khayaal al-Hagl" خيال الحقل in Arabic), which was adopted as a school textbook taught to sixth graders in the 1970's. The present paper analyses the language used in this novel for the purpose of assessing the suitability of *The Scarecrow* to children's linguistic and conceptual abilities during this stage of language acquisition in the light of the lexical, syntactic and other linguistic choices. The paper argues that the novelist writing to children capitalizes on specific fields of experience, and uses easily accessible/comprehensible lexical items, and simplifies such elements for the purpose of intelligibility.

# (2) Characteristics of childhood

Psycholinguists such as Clark and Clark (1977) and Mansour Hussein and Mohamed Moustafa Zidan (1982, p. 82) identify three major stages of childhood: 1) early childhood (ranging from birth to the age of five or six); 2) middle childhood (from the age of six to eight years); and 3) late childhood (from the age of nine years to twelve years). Early Childhood is characterized by love of play and fantasy/imagination where children are interested in stories with talking/speaking animals, birds and objects. Their language is focused on concrete entities from their immediate environment, the "here and now". Abstractions like injustice and manipulation would be totally incomprehensible to them due to their inability for abstract reasoning. They are also incapable of focusing for extended periods of time due to their short attention span (Tucker 1981). Middle childhood is characterized by children's love of play and mimicry as their main activity. Language is an arena for play and mixing reality and fiction, and attributing human characteristics to objects and animals. Children's linguistic repertoire is still limited, and confined to sensual experiences. Children begin to learn literacy skills in both reading and writing. As for late childhood, it is the stage of adventure and heroism according to Ahmed Naguib (1968, p. 34). The child loves belonging to a team of peers and friends especially when it comes to alliances, competition, bravery, and adventure. Children begin to move from loving fantasy to coming to grips with reality. Abdel-Tawab Youssef's *The Scarecrow* tends to address children in the stage of late childhood (from nine to twelve year olds) as it presents good role models, also belonging to late childhood, and depicts their positive moral values without direct preaching.

### (3) Reading literature:

Realizing the various literary, linguistic and conceptual benefits of reading literature has motivated educationalists to advocate teaching children's literature in the primary stage (K-6<sup>th</sup> grade). On the literary level, the child enjoys reading literature and enjoying the fantasy world it represents. Reading literature also helps develop the reading skill enjoyably. It introduces children to the elements of the novel and the factors that make it successful. Linguistically, it helps enrich their lexicon and improve the basic reading skills including understanding, reasoning, and inference, which enhances their cognitive skills. It could also occasionally help develop readers' creative writing skills through exposure to good fiction models. Additionally, reading literature helps develop children's cognitive and conceptual maturity through comprehension of certain cognitive and schematic processes, such as the concepts of farming, family life, and coordinating team work. It also encapsulates such moral values as heroism, self-reliance, cooperation, courage, and the sense of adventure.

# (4) Children's literature:

The term "children's literature" is used to refer to the literature written by adults for children of all ages starting with pre-school picture books read by adults to children or read by children with the help of adults, and ending with late childhood. The genres of children's literature vary to achieve pleasure and instruction in the light of children's linguistic and conceptual abilities, understanding, taste, mindset and personality. It plays an educational role in answering their questions and encourages them to use their imagination, discovery and calculated risk (Ghanem 2009, p.23).

The child is the subject matter of children's literature. The main characters are children, and may even include animals, and plants and even objects (like the Scarecrow). Children's literature is characterized by its simple plot, clarity of meaning with no ambiguity, mixing reality and fiction through the action and the characters it involves. It is also distinguished by the polarization between right and wrong and good and bad as extremely clear values whereby the hero/main character who represents right/good wins and emerges as victorious at the happy ending of the novel, and wrong/evil loses. In this way, it supports such values as heroism, and self-reliance.

Children's literature evolved in the Arab world starting with Ibn al-Mugaffa's translation of Panchatantra into what is known in children's literature as Kalila and Dimna, a collection of parables told and narrated by animals. A later landmark is the folk tales of The Thousand and One Nights, which is often regarded as children's literature due to the elements of fantasy that characterize the tales. A much later landmark in children's literature, according to Ghanem (p.139), is the avalanche of children's stories in the twentieth century by such literary figures as Kamel Kilani, and Abdel -Tawab Youssef. These writers have revolutionized Arabic children's fiction with an abundance of children's stories and quite a few novels.

Such novels often comprised primary school textbooks in Egypt. Children enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> grade (at the age of 11-12 years) were assigned complete novels that they were linguistically and conceptually capable of reading on their own with some "scaffolding" in the form of class discussion, and various activities to help them understand, analyse and benefit to the maximum.

# (5) Abdel-Tawab Youssef's "Khayaal al-Haql" [The Scarecrow]:

Abdel-Tawab Youssef (1928-2015), who is the "pioneer of Arab children's literature" according to Rakha (2015), wrote more than 950 books, only 40 of which address adults, while the rest were addressed to children. Most famous of his books are *Muhammad's Life* (of which sales reached seven million copies) and *Khayaal al-Haql* (with sales of three million copies). Other books that also gained him recognition and outlived him are "Scheherazade's Tales", "The Lost Clock", and "The Educated Cat". He also started the book series "Let's Read" and "The Prophets' Miracles". He won numerous local and regional awards, including the State Award in children's literature (1975, 1981, and 1998); the Arab Culture Organization Award (1990), the International Council for Children's Literature Award (1998), and King Faisal's International Award in Literature (1991). Seven books and a number of MA and doctoral dissertations were written about his work, according to the official Abdel-Tawab Youssef website.

Khayaal al-Haql is one of the early Arabic full-length novels for children. The Ministry of Education adopted it in the Arabic curriculum for the 6th grade for five consecutive years, and printed more than three million copies. The novel met with huge success and was included in the "Best of the Best" nominations in Germany (Ghanem 2009, pp.132-133). The story is quite simple. The Scarecrow, who lived in feudal timesin rural Egypt, and saw the tyranny of the Pasha, now wakes up years later to see his late master's children struggle to maintain the farm against the greedy uncle. In their struggle, the children adopt revolutionary farming methods, new crops, shifts and cooperate till they eventually succeed in paying back their debt, and harvest a lucrative crop.

Khayaal al-Haql may be regarded as both realistic and fantasy fiction. It displays the fantasy characteristics of animal stories as the character of the Scarecrow is personalized with human qualities, since children easily accept seeing objects speak, dress in human attire, see, hear, think, remember, talk with and about children. Meanwhile, the novel is realistic as the events happen in the real world following natural law. Thus despite the characters and plot being fictitious, it

is realistic in that it focuses on the children who struggle and on how they relate to others and to their environment. The story also has social dimensions as it depicts a group of young friends and how they deal with adults in the light of social problems and issues such as feudal manipulation and oppression of small tenants, and the children's struggle to sustain their farm and upgrade its produce. The events revolve around the issue of social justice and equity while accepting individual differences and diversity in skills and values. However, Youssef defends the rights of the poor and the weak in obtaining their rights without oppression, and their right to independent thinking, free from adult interference. The novel also advocates the application of science to alleviate the characters' suffering and improve their status. It, thus, depicts clear polar values including right and wrong, good and evil, bravery and cowardice, and portrays the children as characters with agency and dynamism in facing the forces of evil. The present paper argues that such content suited to adults and children alike is presented in a way that is linguistically and conceptually suited to children in the stage of late childhood.

# (6) The scope of the study:

The present study belongs to the field of language acquisition as it analyses the language of children in children's literature. One of the most effective fields of language study is the study of literary texts using the target language at a very young age so as to enhance the children's proficiency in the vocabulary and syntactic structures of the language, together with its conceptual and socio-cultural constructs. This is because children's literature is characterized by linguistic and conceptual features based primarily on lexical and grammatical simplicity and on using concrete language away from abstractions and related to children's daily language, and what they can comprehend at this early stage. This is compatible with the effective role of reading literature in language acquisition according to numerous studies by Short and Candlin (1989) for example, and in forming children's linguistic and conceptual consciousness (Clark and Clark 1977).

The present study aims to address the following questions. 1) How does the narrator tell the story? 2) How does the novel portray the characters of children? 3) How far do the lexical and grammatical choices suit the target readers age group? To answer these questions, the paper analyses the tools the used to address children, including the use of drawings, the character of the narrator, the characterization of children, and the lexical and grammatical choices involved.

### (7) Drawings:

Khayaal al-Haql makes use of elementary skeletal lines without the use of color or detail in most pages of the novel. Such drawings add an aesthetic dimension to the novel, and attract the child's attention and address his senses and his intellect/brain, as it helps form an image that clarifies the overall meaning. Drawings usually occupy approximately 10% - 50% of the page space either horizontally or vertically, thus creating shorter lines with fewer words per line in case of vertical drawings, side by side with the writing. Alternatively, horizontal drawings result in fewer lines per page. The use of wide margins on all four sides gives the child reader the sense of reading quickly and moving fast between the pages, which enhances the enjoyment of reading.

Such drawings also help explain new vocabulary and unfamiliar concepts which may be alien to some child readers, such as "the Scarecrow" standing in the field in the middle of trees and animals (p.5). Before the novel even begins, the title is followed by a drawing of the Scarecrow's face on the first page of the novel (p.6), followed by numerous drawings of the Scarecrow's whole posture, side by side with the lines of the novel, on numerous pages. This is coupled with drawings of the process of constructing the Scarecrow out of sticks (pp.12-13); a drawing of the fezz-wearing cashier collecting money from the gown-dressed peasant (p.37). In this way, drawings help in portraying and conveying a mental image of culturally remote concepts in need of clarification to help the child reader to visualize them.

#### (8) The narrator:

The Scarecrow plays the role of the narrator as a witness who can see and hear the events, and narrate them to the reader. He also holds conversations with insects, birds and animals, such as the butterfly, the sparrow and the rat/mouse (pp. 22-25). He even gives them names as if they were human beings, such as "the funny Samra Goat" (الماعزة) the "Aboul-Sebai Dog" (الظريفة سمرة"), the "Aboul-Sebai Dog" (الظريفة سمرة), and "the Buffalo Aziza" (الجاموسة عزيزة) (p.17) (translations mine). Such personifications of animals are a characteristic feature of children's literature, whereby animals, plants and even objects speak. Typically, the Scarecrow has conversations with nine-year-old Salma who once tells him, "These are sunflower seeds, Scarecrow! They are a hundred (هذه بذور عباد الشمس يا "ناطور" .. الطن يصل ثمنه الى مائة جنيه) "pounds per ton (p. 85). He often acts like one of the boys and expects them to discuss their problems with him as one of them. He once comments, "I was surprised they didn't mention fertilizers in their conversation as if they didn't want me to know. Maybe they realized how anxious I was and "أدهشني ألا يرد ذكر موضوع السماد." wanted to provoke me to the maximum في حديثهم كأنهم لا يريدون لى أن أعرف أو لعلهم يدركون مدى قلقي ويودون اثارتي الى آخر مدی" (ص ۸۶)

The Scarecrow stands in the fields as a witness to the events he sees along the years from this fixed position. Despite his experience in life, he wakes up from his long sleep, half-conscious of the political and social transformations he heard about during his sleep for various years in the hut, and he discovers them with the readers when he sees them as can be seen/implied in his comments on the children's conversations. He said,

They have changed a lot. I have seen many of their buildings as white as milk. Maybe these are the buildings I heard the children talk about when sitting next to me when I was lying in the hut. I heard about the Combined Unit, the Hospital, the Agricultural Unit, the Cooperative Society, and the Farmers' Club.

انها تغيرت كثيراً اذ رأيت العديد من مبانيها أبيض بلون اللبن، ربما كانت هذه المباني هي التي تحمل الاسماء التي سمعتها تتردد في أحاديث الأولاد من حولي، وأنا

راقد في الكوخ .. لقد سمعت عن الوحدة المجمعة، والمستشفى، والوحدة الزراعية، والجمعية التعاونية، والنادي الريفي  $(\cdots Y)$ .

He also says, "I grew extremely curious while in the hut, wondering, 'Who are they? What are they doing? Where is Uncle Abd-El-Salam? Why has he been away so long?"" (والنبطلاع بي، وأنا بداخل) (بداخل) (p.24). The Scarecrow thus behaves and thinks very much like a human being.

The Scarecrow also functions as a witness to previous times as he is older than the young children. He tells Salma his memories of the times of the Pasha who was the sole owner of the land, of the oppression and tyranny that peasants suffered from then. He tells Salma.

Your father, the peasants and I were always fearful of men in suits as they always took and never gave. They were always enemies – they were either English soldiers, Pashas or Beys. Or they were policemen who arrested people with or without reason. Or attorneys who interrogated and arrested people. Or they were bailiffs who confiscated the produce, the buffalo and the house. Or they were lenders who collected the price of all the cotton grown by the peasants. Or they were inspectors who recorded violations of the irrigation policies or some other policies, and the poor peasants [always] had to pay the fine.

كان أبوك والفلاحون وأنا نخاف من أناس يلبسون البذلة، لأنهم كانوا يأخذون دائماً، ولا يعطون، وكانوا دائماً أعداء، فهم اما جنود انجليز، أو "بشوات" و"بكوات"، أو هم شرطة يقبضون على الناس بسبب وبلا سبب، أو هم من رجال النيابة يحققون ويحبسون، أو هم "محضرون" يحجزون على المحصول، والجاموسة والبيت، أو هم "صيارفة" يقبضون ثمن كل القطن الذي يزرعه الفلاحون .. أو هم مفتشون يكتبون مخالفات بسبب الري و غير الري، ويدفع المساكين الغرامة (ص ٣٧)

In contrast to narrating the past and drawing a mental image of the different people he saw in the past, the Scarecrow also describes the reality he can see now in the light of the efforts of the children in applying scientific tools to grow new types of plants.

I didn't feel bored now that all around me was changing. There was something new every day. The farming, the singing, the work, the stories and the news. They'll collect the beans and the wheat. In their place, there'll be a field of cucumber, watermelon, and tomatoes. Near the canal, they'll grow sesame. Around the field, there'll be "sunflowers", which I've never seen before.

ولم أشعر بالملل وكل ما حولي يتغير . كل يوم هناك جديد: الزرع والغناء والعمل والحكايات والأخبار، سيحصدون الفول والقمح .. مكانهما سيكون هناك حقل خيار وبطيخ وطماطم .. وعند حافة الترعة سيزرعون السمسم .. ومن حول الحقل سيكون هناك "عباد الشمس" الذي لم أره من قبل (ص ٦١).

In this way, the Scarecrow helps connect the past to the present while juxtaposing them to one another. It is also noteworthy how he acts as a cultural interpreter for the readers, describing the field and referring to new types of crops.

Due to the Scarecrow's inability to move, he stands fixed in the field. It is the other characters that come to him, bringing some of the action to his location, and narrating the action that occurs far from him. Little Salma often narrates to the Scarecrow what her elder brother and his friends do. Additionally, the children often use him as a postman, as work teams leave messages for one another in his pockets. As the narrator, the Scarecrow said, they took the notebook out of my big pocket and the pen from my small pocket, and wrote their message to their mates: Thursday, the first team finished digging the western field, we left it to air. We flattened one of the sides bordering the field for the sunflowers.

أخرجوا الكراسة من جيبي الكبير والقلم من جيبي الصغير وكتبوا رسالتهم الى زملائهم .. يوم الخميس .. شهر .. سنة .. انتهى الفريق الأول من عزق الحوض الغربي .. تركناه للتهوية. قمنا بتسوية جانب من حدود الحقل من أجل عباد الشمس (ص ٨١-٨٢).

In this way, the Scarecrow manages to tell the readers a lot about the news of the children.

Through using the character of the Scarecrow as a narrator, the author also attempts to use an oral style. The Scarecrow talks to the child reader and narrates in Modern Standard Arabic that approximates the colloquial in a number of ways. The orality attempted by the author is conveyed through the narrator in such successive questions as in "I saw Saber open his mouth and mumble. I wonder whether he is answering my queries. Is he talking to himself? Is he dreaming? I "ورأيت صابر يفتح شفتيه ويتمتم .. ترى هل يرد) .(p.46) منابر يفتح شفتيه ويتمتم .. ترى هل يرد) The Scarecrow). (على أسئلتي؟ .. هل يحدث نفسه؟ هل هو في حلم؟ لست أدري" also manages to depict the exchanges among the children, like Salma's prayer to her brother, for instance, "What a heavy burden "ما أثقل الحمل عليك يا أخي) "this must be to you, bro. May God help you "معك" ...) (p.29). and Saber telling her rather elliptically, "Still here? ("أنت هنا؟ لماذا لم تعودي الى البيت؟") "Why haven't you gone back home?" (p.29). Despite using Modern Standard Arabic, such orality-sounding language should facilitate comprehension to the child readers.

# (9) The characters of children

Despite the role of the Scarecrow as a fixed narrator telling what he sees from his place along the years, the real heroes are the group of children—the boys Saber, Tawfik, Abdel-Rahman, Hafez, Shehata and Khalifa ranging from ten to twelve years of age, and the little nine-year-old girl, Salma. The children do the farming chores themselves, self-reliantly/depending on themselves in the face of the adult enemies as represented in the oppressive Uncle Attwa, and in the absence of their father, who went to the frontline in the war and never came back. Eventually they manage to operate the field using new techniques, and producing non-traditional crops while maintaining their high standards at school. They go to morning or evening school and take

shifts to work in the field so as to pay back their debt and overcome the problems caused by the adults. (It may be worth mentioning here how the theme of the child hero was predominant in the mid-sixties as exemplified in the valiance and self sacrifice by a child who saved a train from derailing after he noticed the missing stolen rails, stood on the rails in the way of the train, kept waving his red shirt and risking his life till the train slowed down and braked, thus saving the train and hundreds if not thousands of passengers from an immense tragedy.)

The traditional conflict arising from the generation gap can be seen in the words of Saber heard by the Scarecrow,

Adults scare us from going through experiences. Do they think this is the way to raise us? We'd like to learn, experiment, try and err, and then they can punish us when we err. But they shouldn't deprive us of trying; they shouldn't erect a scarecrow everywhere to scare us so as not to dare endeavour. No, we're not going to be afraid! We want the adults to help us and support us. We don't want them to take all the responsibilities from us.

ان الكبار يخيفوننا من التجربة هل يظنون أنهم بذلك يربوننا؟ نحن نريد أن نعرف ونجرب ونخطئ، بل ولهم أن يعاقبوننا، ولكن يجب ألا يحرمونا من أن نجرب، يجب ألا يضعوا في كل مكان خيال حقل، يخيفوننا به حتى لا نقترب من العمل، لا، لن نخاف، نحن نريد من الكبار أن يعينونا، ويساعدونا، ولكننا لا نريد منهم ان يحملوا عنا ... كل مسئولية (ص ٤٦).

The wishful agency of the children is evident in Saber's frequent use of "we" in subject position and "should" in relation to "them", the parents.

The contrasting gender roles of boys and girls are noticeable in Youssef's Khayaal al-Haql. While the boys (Saber, Tawfik, Abdel-Rahman, Hafez, Shehata, and Khalifa) farm the fields, purchase the farming equipment and necessities, sell what they produce, and negotiate with their uncle, the only girl, Salma, undertakes the traditional duties of rural females including preparing meals, sewing, and making marmalade – besides chatting with the Scarecrow. While the portrayal of such a gender role can seem patriarchal, it is a realistic reflection of pervasive social attitudes towards gender roles in rural Egypt. Interestingly, Salma often expresses her displeasure with the patriarchal social bias, saying once

Scarecrow, why are you a man [not a woman]? Why do men win everything? Even when they want to scare birds, they cannot conceive of a woman-Scarecrow as fit for the job!

She even suggests that she should make a female Scarecrow «to keep you company and help you with your work" (عمالت وحدتك وتساعدك وتساعدك ) from a familial perspective, after which the Scarecrow imagines himself "a husband and a father of baby Scarecrows that never fall asleep, and remain alert doing their duty" (تروجاً وأباً لخيالات حقل صغيرة) (p.91). The author thus seems to shed light on gender roles, with the division of labour between the genders without questioning women's competence and efficiency in undertaking various tasks traditionally assigned to men.

### (10) Lexical choices in the Scarecrow

Khayaal al-Haql, like most children's novels, is characterized by lexical choices that suit the linguistic and conceptual ability of the age group of the child readers. The lexical choices can be argued to be simple, yet rich and diversified. The novel is rich in sensual lexical items related to the senses of seeing, hearing and smelling, especially in describing nature through the use of color words to paint a portrait of the landscape in rural Egypt in the opening section of the novel:

Spring caught the brush and used the colours in the paint box to draw a portrait of nature. It painted land green, covered trees with leaves, decorated them with fruit, and coloured the roses and flowers red, white and yellow.

The same applies to the following description, One side of the field looked like a sea of yellow gold, its banks green trees, crowned

with red and yellow flowers. I felt that Spring was a color festival resembling, to a large extent, the wings of the beautiful butterfly that stood on my shoulder and whispered in my ear a greeting. We had a brief conversation. I asked her, like a dreamer, "Which of these colours are necessary for life?" She replied, «All of them, of course».

وبدا جانب من الحقل بحراً من ذهب أصفر، شاطئاه أشجار خضر، تتوجها ز هور حمر وصفر وأحسست بالربيع مهرجان ألوان يشيه الى حد كبير أجنحة الفراشة الجميلة التي وقفت على كتفي وهمست في أذني بالتحية والسلام ودار بيننا حديث قصير بسألتها كالحالم: أي هذه الالوان ضروري للحياة؟ أجابت الفراشة: كلها

The terms referring to colours here are given in context as descriptive of the beauty of nature. There are also references to the names of birds and animals such as the crow, the sparrow, chicken, dog, donkey, mouse/rat, buffalo. The onomatopoeic terms indicating animal voices such as the "bleating" (مأمأة) of goats. (p.18) are also prominent. The novel also has an abundance of names of plant, especially ones that feature as traditional crops such as corn, wheat, cotton, and trefoil, as well as the less familiar ones that the characters start growing like cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelon, sesame, melons, potatoes, and sunflowers. They also list the months of the year in relation to farming as in "watermelon in June, sesame in July, melons in August, ... we "البطيخ في يونيو. والسمسم في يوليو.) . (p.62). (p.62) harvest tomatoes in September As such, reading the (والشمام الجميل في أغسطس. ... نجني الطماطم في سبتمبر" novel contributes to consolidating such lexical items, most of which are already familiar to children of this age, to help them memorize the terms, and feel reassured they understand them and are capable of having a mental image of them.

New terms are also used, denoting innovations that the characters adopt from the context of the industrial and corporate world into their work in the field, including terms that surprise the Scarecrow after he comes back to life from his long sleep. In his own words,

I got to know 'the day of the oath', the 'field board of directors', and the first team only came with sunrise as its members went to school in the afternoon, while the second team

arrives after my shadow turns to the east ... I got to know the meaning of 'shifts' and 'quotas'.

عرفت 'أيوم القسم''، و'مجلس ادارة الحقل''، والفريق الأول الذي يأتي مع الشمس لأن أعضاءه في الفترة المسائية في المدرسة، والفريق الثاني الذي يصل بعد أن يستدير ظلي الى ناحية الشرق ... وعرفت معنى 'النوبات'' و''الحصص'' (ص ٦٠)

In this way, reading the novel becomes a means of enriching the readers' lexical repertoire with new terms explained in context in a way integrated into understanding the meaning of the novel. What makes this easier is the Scarecrow's explanation of certain vocabulary items in context, allowing the readers to understand their meaning and acquire new terms such as "the production register where they record all the land produce" ("كراسة الانتاج يكتبون فيها كل ما تنتجه الارض") (p.64), and the Scarecrow saving "fertilizers are the food of plants. "السماد غذاء للزرع، كهذا [مشيرا) "exactly like this [pointing to food] to us "السوق) (p.71). He also explains "black market" (للطعام] بالنسبة لنا تماماً" "هل سيبيعه بسعر) "by asking, "Will he sell at a higher price?" (السوداء) (أعلى!") (p.72). The Scarecrow also provides explanatory comments on non-traditional plants like henna and sunflowers by saying "What is this henna that Salma says all the village girls dream of putting in "ما هي الحنَّاء التي تقول سلمي أن كل فتيات) "their hands to colour them red (p.80), and comments on the (القرية يحلمن بأن توضع في أيديهن لتجعلها حمراء" sunflower as "the amazing flower which they said they'll grow to face the sun" ("الزهرة العجيبة التي قالوا أنهم سيز رعونها لتتجه الى الشمس") "(p.80). The novelist has excelled at making the Scarecrow explain these terms as neologisms that he found challenging to understand, so that the explanation is integrated and realistic without seeming imposed.

 means of enriching the readers' repertoire and enhancing the pleasure obtained in reading and making sense of the novel.

# (11) Syntactic simplicity in the Scarecrow

In addition to the lexical ease, the use of concrete vocabulary, and the contextual explanation, syntactic simplicity helps readers follow with ease and suits the short attention span characteristic of children. The first few pages are full of short successive sentences as in the following extended quotation:

I stood there long

I didn't breathe

I didn't move

I didn't speak

I knew and understood a lot

I was patient

I was quiet

I was wise

Though my head is stuffed with straw

I want

To speak

To state

To talk

I have ideas

I have stories

And I'd like

to tell

To narrate

To recount

One of my adventures.

وقفت مكانى طويلاً لم اتنفس لم اتحر ك لم اتكلم عرفت وفهمت الكثير و أنا صابر و أنا صامت و أنا عاقل مع ان رأسي محشو بالقش أريد أن أنطق أقو ل أتكلم عندى أفكار عندى حكايات وبودى أروى أحكى أقص و احدة من مغامر اتى

Clearly, this excerpt, at the beginning of the novel, consists of short parallel successive clauses in triads that share the same syntactic and morphological structure and often consist of synonymous lexis. This enhances the meaning and musicality of the passage on the one hand. One the other, the young reader enjoys the flow, the ease of comprehension, the swift involvement in the events of the novel, and

the interest to read on.

However, these short successive simple sentences are soon replaced by long, complex ones as the novel proceeds and the plot thickens, featuring more complex events. Such complex sentences are often punctuated intensively to cut them into shorter units and facilitate their reading aloud and comprehension as in the following example:

I have wonderful memories with them, which makes me feel - now that I'm restarting my life - that all is well .. and life is good .. I sighed as I looked in the distance .. at the village .. it has changed a lot, as I have seen a lot of its buildings through the children's conversation around me, while I was lying in the hut.

Despite the length of this compound-complex sentence due to the use of connectors, conjunctions and relative pronouns, the author manages to cut the sentence into shorter units through using commas, dashes and double dots to facilitate decompression of the units one by one, and to enrich the children's syntactic competence assuming the gradual development of the readers linguistic growth parallel to reading the novel, which they can later use in writing with greater ease.

# (12) Conclusion

It can be seen from the above that Abdel-Tawab Youssef's *Khayaal* al-Haql is an effective work of children's literature as it addresses the linguistic and conceptual needs of the readers' developmental competence. It thus achieves the two goals/objectives of literature often cited by Aristotle as pleasure and education. The child reader enjoys visualizing the fantasy character of the Scarecrow and rejoices at the victory of the children, who represent commitment, cooperation, hard work, time management, land reclamation and reconstruction. The reader is delighted to see the optimistic happy ending which

enhances positive thinking. Meanwhile, the novel achieves the other end of indirect education in facilitating the reading of the novel, and grading the style from concrete simple vocabulary to lexis referring to unfamiliar concepts related to the rural background, the processes of farming, trade and simple industry, and also grading the morphological and syntactic structures from simple sentences to complex ones. This helps improve the children's reading skill on the one hand, and improves their linguistic repertoire on the other, to use it in creative writing later on.

It is a pity that currently the widespread exposure to a plethora of children's programs through the mass media, such as radio, television, songs, magazines, animation films and puppet theatre, have led to diminishing opportunities for reading in the face of such competition. The paper therefore concludes by recommending that more attention be paid to reading children's literature that suits children's linguistic and conceptual repertoire to achieve the objectives of pleasure and education and enhance the readers' lexical and syntactic repertoire and literacy skills.

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# الملخص العربي

طالما ساهمت قراءة ادب الأطفال في تشكيل وعي الطفل باللغة والمفاهيم العقلية والاجتماعية المناسبة لسنه. تقع هذه الدراسة في مجال علم اكتساب اللغة حيث اثبتت دراسات عديدة منها دراستي Clark and Clark 1977 وShort and Candlin 1989 دور الأدب في اكتساب اللغة من خلال مراحل اكتساب اللغة المختلفة. ومن الروايات التي لاقت نحاحا واسعافي ادب الأطفال رواية «خيال الحقل" لعبد التواب يوسف (١٩٦٩) والتي طبعت منها ملايين النسخ وضمتها قائمة »أفضل الأفضل «الألمانية. يقوم هذا البحث بتحليل هذه الرواية للتعرف على مناسبة اللغة المستخدمة بها لقدرات الطفل المفاهيمية واللغوية حيث يركز الكاتب على مجالات معينة من الخبرات والمفردات المألوفة ويقوم بتبسيط العناصر الجديدة بغرض تيسير الفهم والتشويق. وتقوم هذه الدراسة بتحليل الرسوم المستخدمة ودور الراوى الذي يقوم به خيال الحقل ودراسة انواع المفردات التي ترتبط بحياة الطفل اليومية مما يساعد الطفل على تذكرها ورسم صورة ذهنية واضحة لها كما يثرى حصيلته اللفظية بمفردات جديدة يشرحها الراوي بشكل يندمج مع السياق. ومن الناحية النحوية تتدرج الرواية من البساطة النحوية والجمل القصيرة المتعاقبة في اول الرواية لتعين الطفل على القراءة السلسة الى جمل طويلة مركبة تقطعها علامات الترقيم بغية تيسير الفهم مع تقدم القصة واندماج القارئ. وبذلك يوضح البحث كيف نجح الكاتب في تحقيق هدفي الأدب المعروفين بالتعليم والإمتاع من حيث التعليم غير المباشر من حيث صقل مهارة القراءة وإثراء الحصيلة اللغوية للقارئ والتدرج بالتراكيب النحوية من الأسهل للأكثر تعقيداً من ناحية، وامتاع القارئ بالشخصيات الخيالية وانتصار الحق والنهاية السعيدة من ناحية اخرى

### "Far from the Madding Crowd": Abdel-Tawab Youssef's Narrative Creed

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لقد كان فى قصصهم عبرة لأولى الألباب ما كان حديثا يفترى ولكن تصديق الذي بين يديه وتفصيل كل شئ وهدى ورحمة لقوم يؤمنون سورة يوسف

"In their stories is surely a lesson to men possessed of minds; it is not a tale forged, but a confirmation of what is before it, and a distinguishing of everything, and a guidance, and a mercy to a people who believe." (Yusuf 111)

Abdel-Tawab Youssef (1928-2015) is a *readerly* writer whose oeuvre is inspired by his rich reservoir as a reader. Its candor and straightforward lucidity exempt the reader from the obligations imposed by encrypted texts. Growing with books, Youssef waited for the definite moment to launch his writing career as a classical modernist who, narratively, synthesizes the seminal accomplishments, in form and content, of both classical and modernist storytelling. His narrative creed, in theory and practice, proves he is a writer/reformer whose career is braced by *internarrational* goals, a universality that is acquired by locality and the natural similarities among nations and cultures.

His writings reveal his personal moderation and strong visualization of morality-in-narration. Being both old-school as well as futuristic, Youssef created an all- timer narrational space for the children of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He experimented with versatile authorial tools to earn his stature as the Grandpa who narrates the (hi)stor(ies) of everything. Youssef said that as a "writer of children's literature [he] is a great dreamer" ("Acceptance Speech") whose age is counted by the number of books he published. ("My Experience Writing for Children" 65) Throughout a career that spanned over

more than half a century of storytelling, he provided Arab/Egyptian families with a family time for reading and telling stories in which grandfathers/mothers, fathers/mothers, and children shared a legacy of storytelling whose custodian and godfather was none but Abdel-Tawab Youssef himself.

Uninhibited by popularity and fame, Youssef pursued a writing career that cherished a shared heritage, a national inheritance that comprises: language, religion, history and geography. The Upper Egyptian boy-turned-writer from a remote village was not born into the composition of Giovanni Straparola or Giambattista Basile. Yet, he filtered all the deep serious ideas for both children and adults. interweaving cultures, hi/stories, key concepts of Islam in narration.

He singled himself out as one of the three musketeers of the controversial children's literature next to Kamel Kilany (1897-1959), and Mohamed Said El-Eryan (1905-1964). The former is well known for appropriating western and eastern tales into the splendor of Arabic, most notably in his famous intergenerational bestselling series The Green Library, (Al-Maktaba Al-Khadra'), which is still published to date. The latter is notable for molding the traditional tales into a dual blend of contemporary scenes and senses immortalized in his legendary Sinbad magazine (52 issues), a publication that welldeserved its tagline "a magazine for all children.. in all countries." Thanks to El-Eryan, for two Egyptian piasters only, an Arab child was entertained and educated to the utmost

Influenced by, while adding to the unique literary achievements of these two pioneers. Youssef's career evolved into a new narrative order for children, where a child's world can transform from a nursery to a fairy forest like the journey of the young Darling siblings from their nursery to Neverland island. His narrative-changing creed was to enlighten, entertain, and edify children. His predecessors were largely influenced by the Arabian Nights paraphernalia. However, his writerly mission was shaped differently. He embarked on a journey based on a solid principle: "The children of my nation are my responsibility; it is for them that I hold my fervent pen." ("Acceptance Speech") It is for the sake of the children of his nation that Youssef's frequent visitations to narrative cultures took the form of a forked path: human (international), and national Arab/Muslim/Egyptian (regional/local). He created original texts, translated canonical children's literature, and appropriated tales from different corners of the world.

Bent on inspiring children to rise above their lower selves, he held the belief that literature can offer "a new color of knowledge" (*Literature of the Muslim Child* 229), following the principle that "Man is a composite being, having affinities both with the invisible world and with the visible, and torn between two sets of impulses: one urging him to seek the things that are above, and the other tempting him with the baits and allurements of the flesh." (Willey 17) He authored a number of books for children contemporizing *Sahihu'l Islam* to the present reader: the Quranic library, the Pillars of Islam, the Life of the Prophet, the Childhood of the Prophet, Tales from Prophetic Hadiths, Muslim Personalities and Knights, and Islamic Ethics.

Youssef gained a narrative-based insight, showing a distinctive power of making the concrete palpable without causing boredom to the young readers: "writing for children is creative, not educational or sermonic." Consequently, a "teacher/writer" is considered by Youssef "exasperating". ("My Experience" 67) He started a tradition of storytelling for children and young adults named after him. Its unique quality which distinguishes it from the larger tradition of children's literature in Arab culture resides in the manner in which he sees the world, both fresh and mature, innocent and experienced, light and dark, as a small boy and an old man all at one time! Facing the problem of how to impress producers/publishers with "unprecedented, original ideas" he chose to write in a specific locale where all ideas "belong to his country, society, and age clearly, or to his religion and its values, and the spiritual values which he believed gained precedence over material ones". ("My Experience" 66-67)

Youssef addresses a child reader whose senses through clarity and soundness of thought are trained to be receptive to the outer world. The tales rest on no possibilities or probabilities, but rather facts clad in imagination. Youssef ignores the western and eastern popular fairy tale conventions and builds up his own instead. He creates his very

own cultural tradition far from the madding crowd. He nestles an authentic literary tradition that transforms into an entire kingdom whose inhabitants are no trolls, elves, 'grinches', charming princes, damsels in distress, envious sisters, ogres, wizards, stepmothers, or witches. Similarly, there are no magical transformations, pumpkins turning into golden carriages, talking pets, nor flying carpets or magical lamps as well! Youssef's narrative authenticity is not earned by casting a spell. Mature and outright, he aims to take his reader by the hand and convince him/her to roll the magic carpet and use feet or vehicle for transportation to see the world without!

Youssef's oeuvre is based on retellings, adaptations, or originals. He appropriates or adjusts old tales, parables, and anecdotes forming a mosaic of smaller pieces representing his wide canvas of works to fit a new context. The narrative brush with the absolute, basic, clear as daylight facts serves as the child's tool facing a merciless future. Youssef's child reader is the father of the man. The narrative is parenthesized by the primacy of ideas, and the virtue of knowledge. It invokes the reader to show restraint, elegance, and care. Thus, the basic quality of the immortality of a literary tradition, especially addressed to a younger readership, lies in the writer's care for the future of his nation.

The writer is not the centre of his literariness, the child is. Guided by a truth-telling narrative, a child is not deceived by the fogginess of the imagination. The stories are no material for nightmares or dreams, but rather for reality. The young reader is not lulled to sleep; bedtime stories are a luxury. Such is an indication of the writer's early awareness of his role and responsibilities. Writing is thus, "a patriotic national duty," and "a vocation to educate the children of his country, Egypt, and his Arab nation." ("My Experience" 73)

Through two good allegorical friends: Reason and Reality, the child learns the basic dictum: What is.. becomes! Truths are not to be overridden. In touch with their cultural treasure trove, the young Arab readers do not lose their way in the desert. They are empowered as young Egyptian (Arab) readers through ethics and knowledge. Youssef's narrative scheme shows the children of his nation the uniqueness of what may seem predictable or banal. He, also, draws their attention to the joy of going deeper beyond appearance as well as that of being autodidact. His story-cum-advice, told to adults, is an organon-in-miniature: "Do not think you are a pot of tea, and the children cups to be filled with it. Rather let them be their own pots of tea." ("Acceptance Speech.") Eventually, this means "to leave his young reader an impression that he hopes will last and find its way deeper into his mind and soul, something that he will build to support him in the present and the future." ("My Experience" 68)

A Youssef story follows the discipline of *Being not Telling*. In this sense Youssef created an oeuvre not as a magician, but rather as a teacher telling a story in the remaining minutes of class, thereby, transforming his classroom into *an everywhere*. Therefore, Youssef's works are part of the Arab literary canon. The texts reveal a kind of austere authorial dedication over time. At the heart of every text lies a medicinal control, a discipline that aims to inspire the reader as how to be a good citizen of the world? Fulfilling his dream "for the poor, among whom he came out, to gain their rights, be aware of them and hang on to them." ("My Experience" 67)

Youssef's authorial project took the shape of a dream of a unified World Treasury of Children's Literature in which Children of the World are united by *internarrational* telling and reading experiences. These internarrational experiences he propagated joined together Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail's *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* (end of the twelfth century), Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Johann David Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson* (1812), Armstrong Sperry's *Call it Courage* (1941), and Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1960). What politics divides, children's literature unites. Every child in the world has the right to grow entertained and educated by a literature that does not exclude any young reader because of his/her gender, race, or religion. Children's literature for Youssef is, thus, a multicultural genre whose universal shared principle is equilibrium:

He approached world literature, to open up for the Arab children a window through which he introduced to them (Children's Literature in our Contemporary World), followed by the

Children's Literature Tree series. He commenced with the seeds; the collectors of folk tales, the French Charles Perrault, Wilhlem and Jacob Grimm from Germany, Joseph Jacobs and Andrew Lang from England, and Krylov from Russia. He did not neglect to insert among them Ibn al-Muqaffa' and animal fables... the roots were among writers who wrote for adults and their writings appealed to children like Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver. ("My Experience" 78-79)

Youssef's famous *narrative quilting*, carefully placed in textual positions, metamorphed into a *narrative geographics*. Its canonical, restorational and conservational narrative practice is a constant revival of the human tradition and a preserver of the children's literary and cultural milieu. However, his self-inscribed obligation to introduce universal canonical works to Arab children is part of his central authorial concern as a primer of right and wrong. His choice of socially-driven works that give pleasure and gratification to a young and adult readership implied subtle moral dictums rather than a sermonized crude morality. Above all, they stand, to date, as practical modes of the east/west dyad, following the divine order to "know" others, and thereby, making the planet one whole again: "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware." (Al-Hujurat 13)

Youssef, as a writer declared, proudly, that his readings outnumbered his writings. Wholeheartedly, he favored to share his *readerly* instinct, which surpassed his writerly interest, with his children of the Arab world. His literary/cultural choices, thus, formed a basic unity, which widened the compass of children's literature and culture in the Arab world. He leaves the Arab child with a shared universal gift of artistic playful charm, implicit doctrines of the refinement of character, and interest in impeccable morality that uniform with Hans Christian Andersen's:

Wise men of ancient times ingeniously discovered how to tell people the truth without being blunt to their faces. You see, they held a magic mirror before the people, in which all sorts of animals and various wondrous things appeared, producing amusing as well as instructive pictures. They called these fables, and whatever wise or foolish deeds the animals performed, the people were to imagine themselves in their places and thereby think, 'This fable is intended for you!' In this way no one's feelings were hurt. Let us give you an example. (Andersen "This Fable is Intended for You" 520)

Andersen (1805-1875) called his original folk tales "trifles" (Owens xi). Yet, children to date find Thumbelina, Snow Queen, ugly duckling, little mermaid, red shoes, toads, and emperors unforgettable to memory. (Owens xii) The homogenous creative creed holds a mirror up to which nature strengthens the symbiotic relation between art and life. Therefore, "(t)he subject-matter of literature, after all, happens to be Life, and conduct makes up, if not three-fourths of life as Matthew Arnold said (perhaps he understated the proportion?), at any rate a very considerable part of it." (Willey 11) Reading, thus becomes an attempt to answer the question: how to live? Readers are expected to follow a behavioural pattern that leads to maturation: "Listen. Learn. Go on. That is every tale's essence." (Estés ix)

Youssef, thereby, is a true believer of the essence of human creativity that is described by René Wellek in "The Crisis of Comparative Literature": "once we conceive of literature not as an argument of foreign trade or even as an indicator of national psychology we shall obtain the only true objectivity obtainable to man." (295) Youssef's toil, therefore, challenges world literature bigotry notions of "an antiquarian pastime, a calculus of national credits and debts" (Wellek 295). It serves, through translations and adaptations, as a bridge across geographical borders, and a gate to the world canon of children's literature.

The stems come later. It is those who stand tall in writing for children like Hans Christian Andersen, and Lewis Carroll, and (Eleanor) Graham. They followed the stems, the leaves, and the flowers.. and finally the fruits. A sequence of works by those great writers followed suit. What do children nowadays read? Award

winning books.. he [Youssef] wants to bring to our children the latest of whatever that is written east and west to save them from detective stories, and from the institutions which put pressure [on writers] to produce what is not real literature, but rather trade. ("My Experience" 79)

This extended tree-anatomy metaphor he uses blossoms into a magical garden, which he helps children to gain access to by translating and adapting world canon for children.

In search of the common narrative ground, Youssef showed awareness of the books that should be in the hands of our children. His choices were intentionally beyond the limitations of Anglophone or Francophone stories. Too smart to be involved in a repelling direct narrative disclosure of ethics, he favoured works that are subtly connected with a concentricity of moral and artistic goals. His schema to transcend the consumerist ethos of modern times persists. Youssef is not a utopian narrator. He is a writer who showed the belief that art must be governed by cultural and moral perceptions of aesthetic values, and moral principles. Always at one with his public and personal images, he perceived 'once upon a time', 'Mother Goose', and 'Nursery Rhymes' as possible threats that herald a false beginning leading to a happily ever after false ending! It is, therefore, a moral obligation to remember that a child's trust must not be gained by counterfeit. A writer's duty is "to think of literature, not as an isolated phenomenon with its own internal laws of growth and change, but as a product of the soil and climate which have also nourished all the rest of human living and thinking." (Willey 11)

Combating brain-washing literature, the most dangerous choice a writer would face is: What to write to a child/young adult reader in a constantly changeable hostile world? A material aging society? The best-selling young adult popularized fiction like Stephenie Meyer's Twilight (2005), Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games (2008), or John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) are similar to "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz itself (which) has become a window dressed to lure its reader-audience with the glitz of twentieth-century American culture, precisely because its author believed in pleasing on the surface."

(Wolstenholme x) They belong to a negative genre which does not inspire hope for an inspiring ethical and aesthetic awareness. They are damaged cultural yields, which intensify the severity of the young readers' polarized world.

Youssef took the side of literature that is all against repression and deception, whose universal view represented a self-conscious narrative that is to open up, and teach and tell. His resourceful textual practice showed a natural inclination to a literature that addresses children using a performative dialogue in telling, teaching, and informing. Therefore, in 1962 his overture was translating Hans Josef Schmidt's three-act adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Red* Shoes. In the 1990s, he translated/adapted among scores of children's stories: Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Mermaid, Tom Thumb. and many others. He read, then, retold stories published into Tales of the Nations Series: Slavic (Mr. Mayor and Other Stories, and Who Wins? and Other Stories), Japanese (Tokutaro and Other Stories), Indonesian (Anthill and Other Stories), Spanish (The White Peacock and Other Stories), and African (Yellow Butterfly and Other Stories). He wrote and published anthologies of the "Most Beautiful World Stories for Children" which "merge both originality and modernity without risking subjecting our children to an intellectual invasion, considering that when dealing with these works we know that we are facing true literature which has achieved an international sweeping success." ("My Experience" 80)

He translated best sellers such as the French *The Little Prince* (1945) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and Norwegian *Zeppelin* by Tormod Haugen's (1982). Youssef's cross-cultural awareness extended over to include his 1973 translation of Leonard S. Kenworth's "The International Dimension of Education" (1970). He dedicated a book to introduce leading international humanitarian figures such as Helen Keller. Finally, the crown achievement of his work as a translator is Hans Christian Andersen's *Muhammad's Birthday: A Scene in Constantinople* (2009). It is in this work's introduction that Youssef gives evidence of the similarity of authorial doctrines between him, and Andersen, his Norwegian predecessor: "Andersen went on various

journeys out of his hometown Denmark. Such trips fire the enthusiasm of writers and inspire them. They meet different people, go to new places and get acquainted with other cultures. They can learn from them in order to write with warmth, love and tolerance, even if they were contrary to their countries." (Youssef "Introduction" 9)<sup>2</sup>

L. Frank Baum (1856-1919) dedicated to his sister a children's book in which the inscription read as follows: "I have learned to regard fame as a will-o-the-wisp, which when caught, is not worth the possession; but to please a child is a sweet and lovely thing that warms one's heart and brings its own reward." ("The Wizard of Oz") In certain authorial cases, a writer's tool to please is none but his/her protagonist, as in the case with Eleanor H. Porter's Pollyanna the young female lead in the eponymous novel: "So irrepressibly cheerful that her name survives in any standard American dictionary. A Pollyanna is 'an excessively or blindly optimistic person." (Bauer vii)

However a writer's aim should go beyond pleasing a child! Similarly, children's literature should warm the heart and illuminate the mind. Canonical writers for children are artists whose endeavor is not restricted to a coterie audience. They aim to amuse and instruct inspired by their feeling for the dynamic emotional landscape of childhood. There could be "a certain tension in the cultural definition about what 'children's literature' ought to be, and certain suspicions as well, if we attend to the metaphors here." (Wolstenholme ix) By code of simplicity it is a double movement, showing no dividing line in reception between adult and child. Therefore, it is literature, which redefines its readers, turning adults into children, and children into adults, while both are enjoying their newly acquired free storytelling zone, reverberating "(James) Barrie's lifelong obsession with the child-in-adult and adult-in-child." (Hollindale xxii)

Canonical world children's literature can also testify to the fact that "salesmanship became entertainment" (Wolstenholme xvi). However, Youssef's choices did not settle for saccharine or cotton candy fictionalized trifle tales. Not every writer is necessarily a revolutionary. However, works of literature that deserve to cross borders to expand the geography of their readership must not distance the reader by turning him/her into a purchaser of their commodity.

Oz is commercialized by a shallow tagline: "there's no place like home", whereas the concluding statement in *Pollyanna*'s introduction is printed in a separate line: "Read *Pollyanna* and rejoice!" (Bauer xii) Sadly, it is a truth universally acknowledged: "Writing is both showmanship and salesmanship." (Wolstenholme xvi) In this case, children reading literature of that saccharine artificial texture are, like Dorothy, Peter Pan and Pollyanna, not allowed to grow. The literary work is nothing but a dream, leading the protagonist back to square one.

Youssef contemporizes pre-Islamic paganism: "we should transcend the past as much as we could. The ancient idols Hubal and Manah no longer scare us. There is no going back to them." However "(t)he tragedy is in the new idols which some invent in our contemporary world: money, vehicles, and clothes. We want for our children to realize that they are but materialistic possessions, whereas the spiritual are more in grandeur and splendor." (*Muslim Child* 23) His warm, enthusiastic reference to sculptures in the streets of both Cairo and Baghdad as Mahmoud Mokhtar's "Nahdet Misr", Jawad Salim's "Monument of Freedom", Badry al Samurra'y "Abbas Ibn Fernas", and Mohammed Ghani Hikmat's "Kahramana and the Forty Thieves" is an indication of an awareness of his authorial duty to support correct cultural renaissance.

The Armageddon between the *Andersens* and the *Hubals* of today concretizes further in Michael Ende's *Momo* (1973). Children are baited by mechanical toys and expensive real-life sized 'living' quasi-Barbie dolls. Storytelling and imaginative play are prohibited:

they left nothing at all to the imagination. Their owners would spend hours watching them, mesmerized but bored, as they trundled, whizzed or waddled along. Finally, when that palled, they would go back to the familiar old games in which a couple of cardboard boxes, a torn tablecloth, a molehill or a handful of pebbles were quite sufficient to conjure up a whole world of make-believe." (Ende 42)

In a similar vein, Youssef would express his antagonism towards a

Barbie whose manufacturers went off limits by placing a fetus inside her belly which a female child would simply unzip to play with!! He would also eulogize the disappearance of the woolen rag dolls which children would play with to kill off time waiting for the Maghreb call for prays to end their fasting. (Muslim Child 28)

In *Momo* Grey Men steal time from both parents and children and leave them with an unquenchable desire to possess and consume. Children become a burden to their parents who are too busy to look after them. They are, eventually, sent to "Children depot" to be cut off from the human experience. The futuristic dystopian novel is a warning against the status quo, what the world has degenerated to:

'Children,' declared still others, 'are the raw material of the future. A world dependent on computers and nuclear energy will need an army of experts and technicians to run it. Far from preparing our children for tomorrow's world, we still allow too many of them to squander years of their precious time on childish tomfoolery. It's a plot on our civilization and a crime against future generations.' (Ende 103)

The curse lies in the transition "from production to consumption, from industrial capitalism to consumer capitalism" (Wolstenholme xi). Shirley Temple was not, literally, the sunshine girl. Her trademark perfect curls were paid the price for, painfully, by forcing a child to go to bed with scores of hairpins in her head! The extravagant birthday parties inflict pain on family members and friends. They are no longer happy social gatherings. There is no more fun with *Dick and Jane!* The tale is what the teller makes of it. Writers are turned to salesmen who are trained to convince clients to pursue happiness in buying not learning. A book is a magic show: a fantasyland, a cyclone, a snowstorm. (Wolstenholme xx)

A "special Americanness" (Wolstenholme xxxii) in commercial undertones inspires a selected mimesis which forces its doctrine on the lives of children who are no longer to be regarded as little men. The *Happy Culture* in which children are served a *happy meal* is a façade of virtual great time elucidated by airborne multimedia

commercials of dreams of the ideal family vacation in Disneyland, the postmodernist homeland. The land which is synonymous with adventure, enchantment, and fun "resembles *Oz* in that both are finally reflections of the commercial society that produced them." (Wolstenholme xxii) This justifies the "discomfort" which Italians felt over Disney's *Pinocchio* where Carlo Collodi's was curtailed, appropriated and commodified. (Eco ix) The manic success of the replica exceeded that of the original! Umberto Eco speaks, further, of a notorious cult: "In the history of pop religions I think only Mickey Mouse has surpassed this level of success." (Eco xi) Back to Pinocchio, Eco also lists "devotional forms" and "versions of and variations of Pinocchio" such as postcards, games, miscellaneous objects in cardboard, ceramics, rubber, plastic, celluloid or metal, etc. (Eco xi)

Accordingly, Youssef's work stands in opposition to that literature which is "Read as an endorsement of cultural consumerism" (Wolstenholme xxvii). It lacks subtle characterization and a valid sense of reality. It constitutes a double bind to its audience, sending contradictory, confusing messages, while gnawing at the very fiber of his being. Eventually, "while the show window allows the consumeraudience to admire the technological wizardry behind the scenes, a distancing mechanism that keeps the onlooker a safe distance away, it also invites the onlooker to participate in the fantasy by purchasing what it offers." (Wolstenholme xvi)

The true fairy tale charm is to reside in its real simplicity not in its ostentatious display of classic or contemporized dragons and dungeons, knights and damsels in distress, a prick of a spinning-needle wheel, cauldrons, toads, evil spells, and mutilations. Both children and adults will remain captivated by classic and modern variants of "tales of wonder and enchantment" (Lurie xii). Written by fantasists or modernists, their plots evolve into subtle, slow patterns of transformation. They are guarded by the simple ethical rules of reward and punishment. Composed as original fairy tales (Andersen), or collected (Grimms), or rewritten into recontextualized contemporary literary pieces, they remain to be told to family members as tales

of triumph, not submission in which humans live unrestrained by the power of oligarchy, or negative matriarchy or patriarchy. They inspire a degree of equality and respect, and envisage a future, which encompasses homogeneous individuals who adopt homogeneous principles.

Canonical fairy tales faced a setback: "Today the fairy tale is often dismissed as old fashioned, sentimental, and silly: a minor form of literature, appropriate only for children." (Lurie xviii) Youssef's tales are tales of survival. They show a strong religious characteristic. His oeuvre is an authentic example of a specific genre which he founded and adopted. His heroes, whether military warriors, scientists of Islam, or ordinary individuals compensate for the fairy tale heroes, and fairy godfathers, or mothers. They are preoccupied with contemporary issues and are addressed from a classical, traditional and safe position. They manage to break the spell of westernizing the young Arab mind with foreign tales which "(w)e remember and refer to ... all our lives; their themes and characters reappear in dreams, in songs, in films, in advertisements, and in casual speech; we say that someone is a giantkiller, or that theirs is a Cinderella story." (Lurie xi)

Authentic traditional tales open up and pave an illuminating path for generations of writers to come, and in their turn, provide future generations of adult and child readers with a treasure of amusement and instruction: "fairy tales are not merely childish entertainments set in an unreal and irrelevant universe. It is true that they can and do entertain children- and adults; but we will also do well to listen seriously to what they tell us about the real world we live in." (Lurie xviii) However, when asked if Arabian Nights were valid for modern ages, Youssef's answer was: "we need fairy tales to widen a child's imagination...writers will tell stories of giants and goblins entertaining children bent over their PCs to read them." (Muslim Child 200)

Youssef's work is driven by positive cultural values, awareness, and correctness. It follows the path of the Disciplined Raconteurs who help their target audience rediscover their canonical texts, iconic heroes, and hi/stories. These basic narratemes are similar to the cultural mode of the Grimm Brothers who: "help us to understand just what is at stake in your own cultural stories. The tales we tell each other and our children not only reflect our own lived experience and our psychic realities, they also shape our lives, enabling us to construct our desires, to cope with our anxieties and to separate fantasy from reality." (Tatar 15)

The sufficient attention to children's literature and culture is a preventive rather than therapeutic procedure. World children who are brought up to the early and sound appreciation of culture and literature show more readiness to use their creative and emotional faculties. Youssef shows his admiration to attempts of western publishing houses to release anthologies of poetry for children based on the principle 'a poem per day': "the anthology is given to the child at the beginning of the year from which he reads a poem every day." Youssef concludes: "and, thus, poetry accompanies (the child) on daily bases." (Muslim Child 21) Youssef's reference is to a subgenre that safeguards a daily space for literary genres in a child's life as in Suzy Goodall's 365 Poems for Children (1996). He also refers abruptly, to the BBC's poetry project for children in collaboration with Poet Laureate Ted Hughes. (Youssef Muslim Child 21) Hughes' broadcasts, Listening and Writing Series, were later published into a book Poetry in the Making: An Anthology (1967) and a double CD (2008). They add to Hughes' prolific writings for children, and renew his radio lessons to schoolchildren to whom he explained how he used his imagination to capture animals and moments of his early life into a poetic form. ("Poetry in the Making")

C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* begins in a traditional way: "Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids." (Lewis 1) The Pevensie children are kings and queens of the magical land of Narnia. They wage war to save it from a sad fate trying to regain it, and raise it from its ruins, and restore its past glory. The novel chronicles the attained victory which involves talking animals and trees, Aslan, the majestic lion, false kings, an evil Snow Queen, and battles to restore the honor of Narnia. Lewis is saving

children from a world war on a quasi-realistic narrative strata, to help them embark on a fight against extinction in the future, in a wider war, but waged on a parallel timeline.

Sadly, Lewis's child heroes were "adapted into a franchise of major international feature films? Modern merchandising techniques are now geared up to impress these titles upon markets all over the globe" (Ward 4). The literary work is, thus, resisting being commercialized and drained of its high cultural value. It does not, though, slip down to the fate of Oz, which attunes to the cultural consumerist metrics of billboards, top charts, and ratings, in general, of the nomenclature of MTV ethics, or Teen Choice Award ethos.

By Writing/Reading from the heart, rather than Proselytize, Youssef entrusts us with an oeuvre that shows how he succumbs to the storyteller's narrative call, his cultural vocation to become part of a universal urge to tell stories and inspire morality narratively: "to be moral means to obey the promptings of our 'higher' selves, our 'best' selves: that is, all that belongs to the rational and spiritual part of our nature as opposed to the bodily part, to the intellectual rather than the carnal, to the abstract, unchanging world of Being rather than to the world of Becoming, to the One that remains rather than to the Many that change and pass. (Willey 17)

Individual texts of the same cultural fiber form a homogeneous conglomeration, a constellation where there is no thematic or artistic discordance. They share a subtle intertextuality, each sings a hymn to one's cultural heritage that is part of a world culture. The war between enemy culture and home culture is fallacious: "(o)nce we grasp the nature of art and poetry, its victory over human mortality and destiny, its creation of a new world of the imagination, national vanities will disappear." (Wellek 295) In literature, there should be no Them and Us. The pseudo-borders separate human beings that are, in essence, similar hoping for a literary genre which truly reflects their humanity, and leads them the way out of the magical forest or the stormy desert.

Youssef considers awards "a pat on the shoulder which tells him he is on the right track no more. He simply pursues his path, bent over his work, carrying it out in dedication and love, getting in touch with international organizations in the field, on a reciprocal basis, for they know nothing of our children's literature. They stopped at Arabian Nights, copying, forging its patterns without having anything of our writings reaching them." ("My Experience" 81)

In his testimony Abd-el-Tawwab Youssef declared the nature of his *quest* "to place our children's literature in its proper stature among world literatures." ("My Experience" 81) Youssef's oeuvre is an affidavit of his fulfilled cultural quest: "All I want is to make some children happy—on the summit of mount Taiz" in Yemen, in the rural areas of Egypt, in the Levantine desert, in Saudi Arabia desert, in the woodlands of Sudan, or others in Djibouti, Somalia, and Mauritania." ("Acceptance Speech") It is a practical proof, in print, of C. S. Lewis' definition of writing as a vocation in a letter sent to Arthur Greeves, 30th May 1916 "Whenever you are fed up with life, start writing: ink is the great cure for all human ills, as I have found out long ago." (Quoted in Ward 216)

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The magazine also propagated itself in its first issue on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>, January 1952 through one of its leading figures Auntie Mousheera: "All children of the world are my children or grandchildren." Sinbad himself addressed the readers: "To all my young friends in all countries.. I send my special greeting, along with the first issue of my magazine. Forgive me friends! Actually it is, rather, your magazine!" (2)

<sup>2</sup> Last part is omitted from the translation: "even if they were contrary to their countries."

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## Egyptian Children's Literature: Ideology and Politics

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A children's story, however trivial it might be, is more than just a story. Because stories grow out of particular cultures and societies at particular points in time, they reflect the values of these societies, "to imagine a story... is to imagine the society in which it is told." (Dowling 115). Therefore, stories that are weaved out of the imagination of their writers are part of a larger body of stories which together form a kind of national allegory putting forth the dreams, desires and fears of a particular culture. Since children are the future of any society, the literature adults write for them is a conscious effort to shape the ideology of its readers. The socialization and politicization of children's literature has been and still is a reality in children's books. Roderick McGillis has argued that "Children and their books are ideological constructs" (106) and that the publishing industry is continuously "perpetuat[ing] the values and cultural conceptions of the ruling group." (112) The role of children's texts, is to help acculturate children into society and to teach them to behave and believe in acceptable norms.

The existence of children's literature as a genre has, to a large extent, depended on its function as a force of social manipulation, rather than on any concern with literary value. Certainly one can speak about the single literary fairy tale for children as a symbolic act infused by the ideological viewpoint of the individual author. Almost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe (Soriano 43) agree that educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folk tale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time. Therefore, fairytales and

folktales operate ideologically to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards which were not necessarily established in their behalf. Given the constant changes in the classical tales, the socio-literary variables in different countries, and the relative nature of reception since the 17th c, one must pay close attention to the socio-psychological mechanisms through which ideology exercises an influence on readers of fairytales.

Therefore, it is advisable to uncover paradigmatic patterns, which may correspond to social configurations, to shed light on the way ideology works. As Christian Zimmer has said:

to grapple with ideology is to grapple with a phantom since ideology has neither a body nor a face. It has neither origin nor base which one could recast to provide the battle against it with a precise and well-defined object. Ideology only manifests itself under the form of fluid, of the diffuse, of permanent polymorphism and acts through infiltration, insinuation and impregnation. (138)

The fairy tale hence is designed to both direct as amusement and instruct ideology as a means to mould the inner nature of young people. Like other types of literature, works written especially for children are informed and shaped by the author's respective value systems, their notions of how the world is or ought to be. These values reflecting a set of views and assumptions regarding such things as 'human nature', social organization and norms of behavior, moral principles, questions of good and evil, right and wrong, and what is important in life – constitute the ideologies of authors. They may be idiosyncratic to the individual author, or may reflect and express the values of the culture at large, or of subgroups within the culture. The promulgation of these values through publication is a political act. In well-written books, the authors' narrative skill, imaginative brilliance, and ability to create engaging characters and plot lines tend to mask the ideologies being expressed. But if ideologies have potential powers of persuasion, they are no less persuasive because they are hidden. The perspectives and positions assumed by members of society toward the dominant activity amount to a configuration. The configuration designates the character of a social order since the temporal-corporal arrangement is designed around a dominant activity that shapes the attitudes of people toward work, education, social development and death. Hence, the configuration of society is the pattern of arrangement and rearrangement of social behavior related to a socialized mode of perception.

In the folk tale the temporal-corporal arrangement reflects whether these are perceived to be new possibilities for participation in the social order or whether there must be a configuration when possibilities for change do not exist. This is why, in each new stage of civilization, in each new historical epoch, the symbols and configurations of the tales were endowed with new meaning, transformed, or eliminated in reaction to the needs and conflicts of people within the social order. The writers of fairy tales for children acted ideologically by presenting their notions regarding social conditions and conflicts, and they interacted with each other and with past writers and storytellers of folklore in a public sphere. For Jameson the individual literary work is a symbolic act "which is grasped as the imaginary resolution of real contradiction" (77). Such a definition is helpful in understanding the origins of the literary fairy tale for children because through it is immediately perceived the process of writing as part of a social process, as a kind of intervention in a continuous discourse, debate, and conflict about power and social relations. Jameson sees ideology not as something "which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act itself is ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable contradictions" (79).

This interaction led to an institutionalized symbolic discourse on the civilizing process which served as the basis for the fairy tale genre. The importance of the term 'institutionalization' for studying the origins of the literary fairy tale can best be understood if we turn to Peter Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Burger argues that 'works of art are not received as single entities, but within institutional frameworks and conditions that largely determine the function of

the works. When one refers to the function of an individual work, one generally speaks figuratively; for the consequences that one may observe or infer are not primarily a function of its special qualities, but rather of the manner which regulates the commerce with works of this kind in a given society, or in certain strata or classes of a society. I have chosen the term 'institution of art' to characterize such framing conditions<sup>1</sup>. In fact, literary fairy tales were constantly employed in the 17th century to reinforce the Western civilizing process and their discourses on manners and norms has contributed to the creation of social norms. This 'symbolic act of writing' marks the birth of the historical rise of the literary fairy tale for children. Perrault and his predecessors designed to rearrange the motifs, characters, themes, functions and configurations of oral folk tales in such a way that they would address the concerns of the educated and ruling classes of late feudal and early capitalist societies.

Therefore, the adaptation of folk material, as an act of symbolic appropriation, was a re-codification of the material to make it suitable for the discursive requirements of French court society and bourgeois salons. Implicit pedagogy and didacticism characterized the writing of fairy tales with the aim of moulding the manners and mores of the young to reflect the standard mode of socialization at that time. Fairy tales were a functional vehicle advocating exemplary models of child behavior patterns. Similarly, in Germany the Grimm Brothers constantly endeavoured to link the beliefs and behavioral patterns of the characters in the tales to parallel, enhance and cultivate bourgeois norms. The Grimm fairy tales were a vehicle for the common people to make themselves heard in folk tales that symbolically represented their needs and dreams. They were literary products voicing the German bourgeois quest for identity and power. Therefore, in the tales, the Grimm Brothers cultivated a value system which advocated an objectified, standard way of living that encapsulated the values of work and productivity at its core and was popular not only in Germany but throughout the western world. Based on this hypothesis that folk tales and fairy tales have always been dependent on customs, rituals, and values in the particular socialization process of a social

system, the same applies to the Arab world. Similar to the west tales have always symbolically depicted the nature of power relationships within a given society. Thus, they are strong indicators of the level of civilization, that is, the essential quality of a culture and social order. The effectiveness of emancipatory and reutilized tales has not only depended on the tales themselves but also on the manner in which they have been received, their use and distribution in society.

My thesis rests on the theoretical premise that children's literature is a social product and a social force. A clear example of that is how fairy tales and folk tales were never originally invented for mere pleasure, but were always a response to some need from the surrounding environment and society; they were the offspring of a dialogic situation with nature, human beings and animals. Jack Zipes has rightly stated that fairy tales "are historical prescriptions, internalized, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them" (11). The essence of our lives has been prescribed and circumscribed by common cultural discourses and filled with artifacts that we can never really bypass. Between fairy tales and society there exists a complex relationship, the nature of which is understood in radically different ways from one discipline to another and from one investigation to the next. Furthermore, the apparent relationship of fairy tales to society shifts according to whether one regards the fairytale as a record and reflection of society, as a normative influence on its reader or listener, or a combination of both. Within the context of fairytales as social rewards, the existence of specific themes informs us that a given society recognized and addressed certain topics that eventually became part of our common cultural heritage. Fairytales and their reception through history indicate the hidden power of the common place, a power we forget or tend to repress.

### Children's Literature in Arabic

The Arab World has been, and is still referred to, by the West as the Orient, the land of *The Arabian Nights*, with its connotations of magic and glamour. The popularity of the famous tales of Aladdin, Ali Baba and Sindbad has been circulating in the Arab World for

centuries long before they were translated and exported to the West. Throughout history, tales have been told and retold orally, attesting to the phenomenon that the oral tradition exists at the root of every civilization and children adopted adult literature that they found diverting. Likewise, storytelling played an important role in the lives of the Ancient Egyptians. The deeds of gods and kings were not written in early times and only found their way through oral tradition into the literature of a later date. This treasury of popular tales, myths and legends was transmitted orally until finally set to writing an example of which is the first Egyptian Cinderella written on papyrus under the name Radoubis, and, a black and red twenty four page collection of children's stories made out of papyri.

In pre-Islamic Arabia origins of children's literature can be identified in popular stories, songs and legends that mostly recounted the valor of various heroes and the wars between the tribes. With the advent of Islam, there was a shift in the story telling tradition to more serious and religious topics drawing from the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's life. Other famous narratives that were popular with children were Hayy Ibn Yakzan written by the medieval philosopher Ibn Tufayl (d.1185) (which inspired the much later Robinson Crusoe) and the Sirat of Sayf ibn dhi Yazan. Storytelling was popular throughout the Arab World fuelled by the rich and diverse folkloric tradition. Stories about Clever Hassan, buffoons like Goha and the popular Arabian Nights were part of the fabric of Arab culture. Epics about brave warriors such as Abu Zaid Al-Hilali, the sirat of Al-Amira Zat Al-Hima, the saga of Banu Hilal, the romances of chivalry like Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan and Sirat 'Antara have all contributed to the formulation of the Arab identity through concepts of Arab 'Shahama' (chivalry), courage, love for one's country and the sacredness of honor. This rich repository of narratives was shared from one generation to the next and is still popular till the present. Animal stories also found their place in *Kalila wa Dimna* whose origin goes back to the Indian Panchatantra- and was Arabised by Ibn al-Muqaffa' from its Pahlavi translation

It was in Egypt, the oldest cultural center of the Arab World

that modern Arabic children's literature originated. Early interest in children and their development goes back to the intellectual enlightenment witnessed at the end of the nineteenth century under the reign of Muhammed Ali who sent scholars on study missions to France. Sheikh Rifa'a al-Tahtawi was extremely impressed by the French educational books for children and so he published his Guide for Boys, a book about child education and development in 1870. An immediate follow up on that was the appearance of *The School* Children's Meadows (1870) the first school journal for children by Ali Mubarak, which was a channel for the pupils own creative literary works in addition to adult contributions from professional writers. Ahmed Shawki (1868-1932) the Egyptian poet laureate, who had also been to France and studied French literature, wrote a volume of poems Shawqiyaat Saghirah ("Shawki's Verse for the Young") strongly influenced by La Fontaine's Fables in a simple, direct and humorous style suitable for the child. In response to Shawqi's call to other Arab writers in 1897 Ma'aruf Al-Rasafy from Iraq and Ibrahim Al-Arab responded by producing a number of poems specifically for children. In 1927 a collection of animal fables in verse form similar to la Fontaine called Adab Al Arab ("Arabian Ethics") was distributed to all primary schools in Egypt. Later, in 1894 Muhammad Othman Jalal, translated Aesop's Fables into Arabic. Although these books were important in the development of interest in children's readings, they would not be considered suitable for children by modern standards. Their language was difficult, the tone was often didactic, and the topics were not chosen with children's interests and needs in mind. It is the prolific Egyptian writer Mohamed Al-Harawy (1885-1939) who wrote songs, poems, musical one act plays especially for children. In 1922 he produced an illustrated collection of poems Children's Companion for Boys in three parts followed by Children's Companion for Girls in two parts. He also wrote five plays for children, three of which were in verse form and two in prose. In 1931 he published two collections of stories; Goha and the Children and The Pie Vendor, both were very popular at the time. Al-Harawy dealt with a wide range of topics, the didactic, the religious, the nationalistic, the social, and the moralistic

The real revolutionary movement in children's literature in the Arab world, however, started with the pioneer Kamil Kilani (1897-1959). During the 1930s, Kilani gained prominence as a publisher by translating, adapting and simplifying more than two hundred foreign titles for children. Kilani's dedication to children's literature is evident in the works he produced in a span of approximately thirty years. His first book, Sindbad the Sailor, was published in 1927. He translated, re-wrote and Arabised nearly all the children's classics and western fairy tales for Arab children. Inspired by Kilani a number of writers were encouraged to translate children's stories from both English and French like Hamid Al-Kassaby and Boulos Effendi Abdel Malek who translated eight Hans Christain Anderson's stories. This opened the way to more creative writings like Mohamed Said Al Erivan's *The Sindbad* Stories, and Ateya Al Ibrashi's series The Green Library Children's Stories. Longer fiction in the form of novellas for teenagers were the contribution of Mohamed Farid Abu Hadid like *Amrounshah* the long series called Awladouna ("Our Children") which was influenced by The Arabian Nights. All these works contributed to the modernization of Arabic children's stories till the end of the British rule in Egypt in 1952. In the 1960s the entire Arab World underwent dramatic changes when the Arab countries gained their independence and this was in turn reflected in the field of children's books.

From this survey of children's literature in Egypt it becomes apparent that the classical fairy tales of late seventeenth century and nineteenth century Europe were not adapted by Egyptian writers for purposes of socialization and politicization. All the Arabic translations in Egypt endeavoured to maintain a simple linguistic style that defined these stories as 'children's stories' without the slightest attempt to Egyptianize any of them. The indigenous Western motifs of forests and fairies, red-roofed houses and snow-covered mountains, green meadows and little girls with red hoods were all kept intact. Contrary to this total passivity in the re-telling of the fairytales, Egyptian writers drew generously from their own rich heritage, mainly from the Ancient Egyptian tales, Arab folktales and of course, *The Arabian*  *Nights* which has attracted many writers with its 'plural and mercurial' qualities to re-tell and re-conceptualize many of its tales.

The aesthetic arrangement and structure of the tales were derived from the way the narrator or narrators perceived the possibility for resolution of social conflicts and contradictions or felt change was necessary. This is exemplified in most of the writing for Egyptian children today. For the purposes of illustration I will analyze the story of "The Fisherman and the Demon" which appeared in *The Arabian* Nights, in the Grimm brothers and in the Egyptian version by the prolific writer Abdel Tawab Youssef.<sup>2</sup> The original version of "The Fisherman and the Demon" tells how a poor fisherman while casting his net finds a brass bottle which he opens and from which a demon appears. The demon threatens to kill the fisherman but then the latter uses a ruse to get him back in the bottle, by stimulating wonder at his ability to do this, and the fisherman quickly closes the bottle. Then the demon begs the fisherman to let him out. The demon rewards him by taking him to a lake with magic coloured fish. The fisherman catches four of these fish and sells them to the king.<sup>3</sup>

Once within the context of *The Arabian Nights* the moral of the story is simple and direct enough: wit, intelligence and wisdom can outsmart strength and even the might of a demon. The Grimm version entitled "The Spirit in the Bottle" revolves around the activity of work, usually in the form of hard manual labour. It illustrates how parental attitudes induce a child to engage in fantasies about gaining powers which will make him superior to his father. The story's protagonist has had to leave school because of the family's poverty. He offers to help his poor woodcutter father with his work, but the father thinks little of his son's abilities and tells him "that is too hard for you; you are not accustomed to such strenuous labour; you cannot bear it". After they have been working all morning, the father suggests that they rest and eat their noon meal. The son says that he prefers to walk about in the forest and look for some birds' nests, at which the father exclaims: "Oh, you jackanapes, why do you want to run around? Afterwards you will be so tired you won't be able to lift your arm." Thus, the father belittles his son twice; first by doubting his ability to do hard work;

and even after the son has displaced his stamina, by contemptuously dismissing his ideas about how to spend the resting time. After such an experience, what normal pubertal boy would not embark on daydreams about showing his father to be wrong and proving that he is much better than his parent imagines?

The fairy tale makes this fantasy come true. As the son walks about looking for birds' nests, he hears a voice that says, "Let me out!" he follows the sound to discover that it comes out from a bottle and he as soon as he releases the spirit that has been locked inside the demon at first threatens to destroy the boy in retaliation for having been incarcerated for so long but the boy cleverly induces the spirit to re-enter into the bottle, much as the fisherman does in *The Arabian* Nights tale, and releases him only after being rewarded with a rag, one end of which heals all wounds, while the other changes everything rubbed by it into silver. By turning things into silver, the boy provides his father with a good living, and because "he could heal all wounds, he became the most famous physician in the whole world" (Bettelheim 28-35).

Crushing physical labour was a major component of the lives of the vast majority of adults and children in 19th c Germany. When Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm lived in Berlin in the 1840s, over 40% of all school age children worked in factories and mills (Bottigheimer 124). Unending labour forms a central motif in the Grimm's Tales and it also bears no measurable or logical relationship to any success that may follow. Wealth often rewards hard workers, but only after they accidentally but luckily encounter a magical being who recognizes their special qualities and confers heaps of gold. Sudden and unanticipated reward after ceaseless labour seems to represent a constant dream at least among Western labourers, probably among laboring people worldwide, a dream of eternal release from endless grinding toil Also the Grimm tales of sudden reversal in fortune share a European origin with medieval tales of the wheel of fortune, whose turns produce death and destruction as well as sudden affluence and esteem. However, the 19thc motivation for telling such tales differs. Whereas, The Arabian Nights and the mediaeval tales of reversal

stress the uncertain tenure of earthly goods and success, the Grimm tales grow out of the straightforward wish for improving one's own situation. This is evident in "The Spirit in the Bottle" which clearly indicates how heads of household work fruitlessly, when a woodcutter tries to insure his old age by investing what little he has earned in his son's education. The old man assumes that if his son learns an honest trade he will be able to support his aged father. But it is neither form his own work nor from his son's learning that money pours in, but from a chance encounter with a genie in a bottle whom the son ticks and eventually enslaves. In both the above versions the genie is a demon, he threatens to kill whoever lets him out, not only to be outwitted, but also becomes a slave to his new master and grants him all his wishes.

In Abdel-Tawab Youssef's Egyptian adaptation (1957), also carrying the original title of "The Fisherman and the Demon", the fisherman is a symbol of American Imperialism, and on the bottle, the slogan "Arab Nationalism" is inscribed. The fisherman hastens to open the bottle, too confident that it will be empty, because there is no such thing as Arab Nationalism. However, he is astounded when a fearsome demon comes out of the bottle with a loud resonating laugh. The Fisherman is terrified and in a shaking voice asks the demon how he got into that tiny bottle and that he thought that the bottle was empty:

The demon triumphantly replies: "That's what you think! I have always been present, I am an old, old spirit. I am a hundred years old. I was crushed and trampled upon and defeated for long dark centuries, but now I am free. I am out of my prison and out of my misery. There is no way of locking me up again. I am finally free.

This demon is not like the one in *The Arabian Nights*, he is shrewd and intelligent. He understood what the Fisherman had in store for him but was too clever to be tricked into going back into the bottle:

He looked at the Fisherman and said: 'Do you think you could outwit me and put me back into prison. Never! Never! I have

become a powerful and mighty force. I will destroy you and whoever threatens my life. I will live in peace and security and never will I hide again. Go away! And get out of my sight!' said the demon with a roaring laugh. The Fisherman retreated and got smaller and smaller. He has been totally vanguished.

The complete reversal in the plot and role playing in the Egyptian version is another example of the politicization of fairy tales. The story was written at the peak of Nasser's glory and the prime of Arab Nationalism. It could not be more fitting to the burning nationalistic feelings that were sweeping over the entire Arab World at the time. The privileging of a tale from *The Arabian Nights* over more realistic fiction to convey a political message is due to the popular glorification of fantasy and the "imagination" especially when addressing children. Also, within its positive view of *The Arabian Nights* framework which sees "the Orient [as] synonymous with stability and unchanging externality" (Said 240) which is totally negated by the Occident, but is in accordance with the author's emphasis on the new power of Arab Nationalism. It is significant to note here that Youssef's story had caricature illustrations which have further highlighted the political message in the miniature image of imperialism had a thin, old and haggard fisherman and Arab nationalism as a bigger than life image portraying it as a mighty and huge demon.

Most literature for the young is "didactic", and does in one way or another make a shift to inculcate values and prefer some things over others. The fairytale surface of "The Fisherman and the Genie" cannot obscure its virtue rewarded, vice punished "moral tale" substratum, nor does Youssef's modern version sit ill with the concluding moral flourish of announcing that Ara Nationalism is triumphant over the West's Imperialistic powers of suppression. Didacticism in modern dress, to appropriate John Townsend's phrase, (28) is usually cheerfully downed, for it is often what one already believes. Perceived as differences - as sexist, racist, feminist or just plain past - then "didacticism" sates Peter Hunt is darkness visible (42).the individual compliers cast the fairytale in the gar b of their time, and the tension between the inner form and the outer garb of the fairvtale

can be particularly charming for those with fastidious tastes. "In any event as Luthi rightly comments "we would not care to do without the elegance and incisiveness of Perrault, the sensitivity and refinement of the Grimm Brothers," (33) - (and if I may add) - the power and vitality of Abdel-Tawab Youssef.

Hence, a New Historicism of children's literature would integrate text and socio-historic context, demonstrating on the one hand hoe literary cultural formation shape literary discourse and on the other hoe literary practices are actions that make things happen – by shaping the psychic and moral consciousness of young readers but also by performing many more diverse kinds of cultural work, from satisfying authorial fantasies to legitimating or subverting dominant class and gender ideologies, from mediating social inequalities to propagandizing for causes, from popularizing new knowledge and discourse to addressing live issues like democracy and the importance of education and work in developing countries. Therefore, the most artless and orthodox work may conceal an oppositional or contestatory subtext. Particular cultural meanings are codified in particular aesthetic expressions and are not sealed from their social and historical matrix. Recognizing that human subjectivity itself, much less its literary expression, is culture-bound, we can then see the inherent and yet explicit connection between the historically/politically conditioned instruction with a pseudo-conditioned literary structure; here is no conception of reciprocity or interplay, just "vehicle" and extractable moral or lesson.

### **NOTES**

In France the development of those fairy tales were to form the genre for children of breeding, was initiated for the most part by Perrault, who had taken a special and active interest in the education of his own children. He was followed by such writers as Marie-Catherine D'Aulnoy, Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve and jean-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, who cultivated the tales largely into a moral vein.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to Saheir Al Qalamawi "Abdel-Tawab Youssef" in *Dirasat Fi Adab Al Toufulah*; Abdel-Tawab Youssef *Wa Adab Al-Tifl Al-Arabi* (Abdel Tawab Youssef and the Literature of Arab Children) ed. Hassan Abd Al Shafi (Cairo: Al-Hayah\_al Amma li-al-Kitab, 1993) in which she states that Abdel Tawab Youssef, the winner of King Faisal's Literary Award in 1991 and the Arab Educational Cultural Award in 1990, is a prolific writer who has been writing for children for over forty years and has enriched the literature of Arab Children with extensive works in poetry, children's plays, stories from the Qur'an and science fiction series. He also has a varied collection of lectures and papers delivered in conferences in Egypt and abroad. Furthermore, he has written over a hundred children stories for Radio Cairo.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by Ferial Ghazoul in *A Structural Approach to the Arabian Nights* (Cairo: GEBO,1980).

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## Subliminal Messages in Abdel-Tawab Youssef's Development of Intellectual and Creative Skills Series

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A pioneer in the field of children's literature and culture in Egypt and the Arab world and a believer in the value of education for children, Abdel-Tawab Youssef devoted his life to writing works of both fiction and non-fiction for children. Like Piaget, Youssef believed that critical thinking and creativity ought to be basic to education. Celebrating his notable contribution to Arabic children's literature generally and to Egyptian children's literature particularly, this paper will examine the Development of Intellectual and Creative Skills Series by the prominent Egyptian writer, Abdel-Tawab Youssef in order to determine how non-fiction books for children can be effective and inspiring. The series includes eight books that all use the interrogative question "How?" in the title in an attempt to attract the child's attention and to arouse his/her curiosity. These books are: 1. How to Use Your Head? 2. How to Take a Decision? 3. How to Express Yourself? 4. How to be Inventive? 5. How to Reconstruct? 6. How to Develop? 7. How to Evaluate? and 8. How to Manage? My contention is to show how Youssef throughout this series fosters the skills of critical thinking and problem solving in children. As Youssef highlights the crucial role and impact of nurturing the critical thinking skills in the child, it will be, therefore, appropriate to read this series in the light of theories of critical thinking and to discuss how the writer deals with fundamental skills children must acquire. These skills will train the child to be perceptive, analytical, inquisitive, eager to learn and to make use of this leaning to take part in developing the society.

In all eight books, Abdel-Tawab Youssef indirectly conveys two important subliminal messages not only to his young readers, but also to parents, teachers, librarians, and primary educational institutions in general. Youssef's first message is the value of a child who can grow up to be an independent individual who can express him/herself effectively, and second cherish the Arabic language. He poses questions, makes use of dialogue and comparisons, and offers suggestions in order to deliver these subliminal messages. The colourful illustrations by Safwat Qasim that accompany the texts in this series help in conveying these two subliminal messages. Before discussing these message, it will be important to indicate that the term "subliminal" was first introduced by the German philosopher and psychologist Johann Herbart in 1824. It comes from the Latin word

"limen," meaning the threshold level of consciousness. Originally the term was used to "describe situations in which weak stimuli were perceived without awareness" (Merikle 497). In other words, the concept of subliminal perception suggests that "peoples' thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by stimuli that are perceived without any awareness of perceiving" (Merikle 497). In other words, this is the process through which the mind is exposed to messages that are below its level of conscious awareness. Such subliminal messages, as psychologists suggest, can be introduced in many different forms: auditory, visual, gustatory, and olfactory. The effective function and results of using a subliminal message encourages scholars, merchants, commercial advertisement designers, film makers, writers, and teachers to use such messages in order to change peoples' thoughts, behaviours, and reactions without their conscious awareness. In this paper, Youssef represents and deploys his subliminal messages in order to help the youngsters build positive self-esteem, establish a bond with their mother tongue, increase their ability to concentrate, improve their memory, and foster their critical thinking skills.

Youssef's desire to instill in the children of Egypt and the Arab world in general a sense of independence is clear in encouraging children and young adults to express themselves and to eventually realize that it is not only their right, but their duty to participate in developing the society. This first subliminal message reflects Youssef's eagerness to have a generation capable of thinking, comparing, analyzing, judging and taking decisions. Youssef's second crucial message is the value of the Arabic language. With the growing interest in the English language as the language of global communication, parents and children are now eager to show how they value English rather than Arabic. Youssef's deep concern about instilling in the children the love of their mother tongue permeates many of the books of this series. In How to Reconstruct? How to Evaluate? and How to Manage? he deals with the roots, the denotations and connotations of words, and the semantics of selected verbs and sheds light on the relevant potential meanings, an exercise which reinforces the children's ties to their mother tongue.

### What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking community platforms state that the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates was the first to call for the critical thinking approach and to point out its importance in examining the different aspects of our lives. He believed that "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Jackson 12). Socrates built up a system based on the use of dialogue, known later as the Socratic Method, through which scholars and intellectuals re-examine the sources of their inherited knowledge and do not take information for granted. In this Socratic Method, the teacher asks a question to instigate his students who in turn ask questions to examine their underlying beliefs, views, and claims. In other words, it is a co-operative and dialectical method which involves a dialogue to stimulate critical thinking skills.

Following Socrates, many philosophers, theorists, and scholars introduce different definitions of critical thinking. They agree that critical thinking is an active cognitive process during which the individual develops skills leading to acceptable and appropriate judgments. Five prominent thinkers have dealt with critical thinking effectively. First, John Dewey, the American philosopher, regarded as the father of the modern critical thinking approach, believes that critical thinking is an active process that requires from its practitioners to think thoroughly, to raise questions, and to find relevant answers. This process helps the individual to reach an advanced level of independence and to have freedom of choice. Secondly, Edward M. Glaser presents a second possible definition of the critical thinking approach in which he asserts that the ability to think critically must involve three stages; namely, "1. to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences, 2. to have knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and 3. to have some skill in applying those methods" (Glaser 5). For Glaser, the process of critical thinking generally requires the ability to recognize problems and to find suitable workable means for solving those problems. It becomes also necessary for the critical thinker to understand and to handle different means of communication--that is of language--with accuracy and clarity. Thirdly, for Robert H. Ennis, critical thinking

is a "reasonable, reflective [mode of] thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis 1). He stresses the importance of decision making that is based on reason. The fourth and the most acknowledged definition of critical thinking is offered by Richard Paul who believes that critical thinking is "that mode of thinking-about any subject, content or problem--in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them" (Critical Thinking: Tools 19). In this definition, Paul draws attention to the only realistic way to develop one's own critical thinking skill and which takes place through "thinking about thinking, known as "metacognition." For Robert Fisher critical thinking is linked to metacognition, which

involves thinking about one's own thinking. Metacognition includes knowledge of oneself, for example of what one knows, what one has learnt, what one can and cannot do and ways to improve one's learning or achievement. Metacognition also involves skills of recognising problems, representing features of problems, planning what to do in trying to solve problems, monitoring progress and evaluating the outcomes of one's own thinking or problem-solving activity... Metacognition is promoted by helping pupils to reflect on their thinking and decision-making processes. ("Thinking Skills" 229).

In this quote, Robert Fisher highlights the important function of the "metacognition" process in developing the individual's self-knowledge. He deals with the value of both understanding one's shortcomings and coming up with decisions concerning how well-reasoned solutions can be achieved. In other words, using metacognition can be regarded as the process of applying the Socratic Method with oneself, that is the thinker starts to build up a cognitive dialogue with "self". S/he begins to think about his own decisions and the alternative possible resolutions within the frame of the critical thinking mode, or rather self-correcting thinking mode.

As for the psychologist Diane F. Halpern, she offers a fifth definition for what critical thinking is. She argues that:

Critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed... [It involves] solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions. (Halpern 8)

In this definition, Halpern calls for the positive utilization of one's own cognitive skills and encourages the act of thinking critically in order to reach sound and reasonable decisions in solving problems. This definition and the four that precede it show that the key role of critical thinking is to enhance the ability of the individual to take logical, informed and reasoned decisions which help the individual to lead a good life, but can also contribute to establishing a democracy. Ivan Hugh Walters in his book, Education and Cultural Politics: Interrogating Idiotic Education (2012) links the necessity of teaching critical thinking skills in educational institutions to democracy. He argues that "critical thinking is imperative for the survival of a democratic society" (238). This relation between the teaching of critical thinking skills and democracy is manifested in Youssef's series. He is inquisitive, examines different contexts, and offers the children the freedom to express their point of view and to choose the most appropriate choices/solutions in a way that trains them how to face and solve problems, analyse and identify priorities. Such training encourages the child to be aware of his/her thinking processes and make use of the metacognition method to reach the best solution. Acquiring the skill and courage to express one's point of view, provide evidence and support that is lead to logical and coherent decisions enables the child to become an independent citizen and to participate in developing his/her nation.

Richard Paul in his book, Critical Thinking: What Every Person Needs to Survive in a Rapidly Changing World (1993) comments on the vital role and positive consequences of critical thinking, saying, "you are thinking so as to make your thinking more clear, precise, accurate, relevant, consistent, and fair" (136). For Paul, the art of thinking critically is the ability to acquire the modes of behaviour

that can improve the use of our reason, "discipline and perfect it" (111). Such methods which can sharpen the child's critical thinking skills are suggested in Mary Lou Usery's essay, "Critical Thinking Through Children's Literature". She mentions briefly four sequential modes of behavior the child should go through during the critical thinking development phase. The first step is of "perceiving" or to become aware of the situation. The second step is to "analyze" the situation. Then, to "predict" the possible solutions and to "judge" the conclusions that lead to the modified behavior (116). Usery does not only display these behaviour modes of the critical thinking strategy, but also suggests applying them to children's literature. She argues that children's literature can be instrumental in training children how to think critically.

In his Arabic series, Development of Intellectual and Creative Skills, Abdel-Tawab Youssef does present similar behaviour modes of critical thinking: he depicts the steps of the development of the children's critical thinking skills in each book, starting from the process of thinking thoroughly till the stage of managing their lives. Being an educator and children's writer, Youssef, like many other educators, theorists and philosophers, this series shows that he believes in the urgent need for giving critical thinking theories due consideration in educational curriculums and producing literature for children that can equip them with critical thinking skills. This is why in this series he examines the different stages of the development of critical thinking to help in bringing up children who can become active and independent critical thinkers who can enrich their society. This development is in the form of progression, that Usery describes as one that "continues until one reaches a point at which he understands the intricacies of the problem so that he is able to use logical and creative thinking to make judgments and act in the light of those judgments" (116).

All eight books of Youssef's Arabic series Development of Intellectual and Creative Skills allude in one way or another to the skills mentioned in the five definitions quoted above. In this series, Youssef deals with how to think soundly and thoroughly, to raise questions, to acquire knowledge about the methods of logical inquiry

and reasoning, to have skills in applying those methods, to think about thoughts (metacognition), to express oneself, and to make the best decisions and choices. Youssef also warns children against "shoddy thinking that ends with shoddy results" (Wisdom 99). The reader can easily observe the connection and the consequential relation between the eight books of the series; and how Youssef organises them in a sequence that enables him to accompany his readers in their different critical thinking developmental phases.

Examining the series, it becomes clear that Youssef has made use of the Socratic Method of having a dialogue between two parties (the writer and his readers). He used the dialectal mode to have a discussion with his young readers, inviting them to assess matters, to raise questions, to find answers, and to think critically about their own thoughts and decisions. Naturally, introducing a series of questions instigates the mind to think and come up with answers. What is more important, though, is that the answer involves a process, and the reader is invited to examine various problems and to determine which is the best solution. Furthermore, Youssef considers the vital role of visual images in the learning process, believing in the fact that picture book texts "carry cultural, social and historical messages" (Arizpe 19).

Appropriately, Youssef starts the first book of this series with How to Use Your Head? Believing in the value of using one's head in general and the cognitive and critical development processes specifically, Youssef begins this book by referring to the use of the senses. He then moves on to dealing with the five main cognitive tasks of the head, namely, curiosity, discovery, reading, experiment, and memory. He states that these five tasks are crucial for the development of the child's critical thinking skills. Like the Socratic dialogue, he starts the book with a question, asking his young readers: "Why and how do you use your head?" Offering possible answers, he states that there are different ways that might be uncountable. On the very basic level, after initially asserting that the head has so many varied uses that might not be covered in one book, he attracts the attention of the child by using humour. He refers to someone attempting to quickly answer the main question of the book by claiming that "The most

important use of the head is in soccer, when a player scores a goal!"
(2). Knowing that such an exaggerated claim can only be valid for some soccer fans, Youssef starts a conversation with the child saying, "Of course this made you laugh" (2) and then proceeds to give a list: "We use the head to see with the eyes, to hear with the ears, to breath with the nose, to eat delicious food (which you might regard as most important) with the mouth, which is also used in talking" (2). Although this list is quite basic, it is comprehensive in referring to most of the senses. He inspires the illustrator of the book to draw a boy talking, two others playing football, a girl listening to music, another smelling a flower, a boy watching TV and another eating. He comments on this list by inferring that "These are all uses that sustain our existence on the earth" (2).

After this list of concrete details referring to using the head, Youssef moves to the brain in the head (3) to deal with abstractions. He tells his reader that "Being preoccupied with the senses could have led to forgetting an important use of the head, in fact a most significant usage of the head", namely "to understand, learn, act, think and also create, invent and ..." (3). He introduces what seems to be the title of the page that said: "The brain is in the head," which is followed by this open ended list in a column on the right hand side of the page. He produces another column on the left hand side of the page to start conveying his subliminal messages. In this second column, he is making a claim, giving an inference, asking a question and taking the reader on a journey. At the beginning of the column, without referring to the brain again or the mind, he declares that

This is the most sublime of God's creations for man, and God put this in the head, to be put to good use. This is not merely decorative, because it can be as valuable as life itself. Image life without it. Let us imagine the life of those who lose it: what would their life be like? Let us find out how to use our heads and our minds. (3)

Alluding to the benefit of observation and curiosity for the child, Youssef indirectly refers to how this leads to the stage of acquiring knowledge. The other important point that cannot be ignored about this quote is the reference to God. Pointing out that the brain/mind is a precious gift from God that must be appreciated and nurtured, especially since there are those who have been deprived of it, the child becomes aware that it is his duty to preserve this gift. The readers indirectly realize that their first task is to develop their mind by acquiring knowledge and critical thinking skills. Curiosity is a step that leads to discovery.

Like the brain which is invaluable, the illustrations here are functional. In a neatly designed page, the illustrator Safwat Qasim drew five illustrations that are effective: first, a girl who is horrified and the reader can easily guess that this is because she "forgot" something important; second, a classroom with students and a teacher with open books on their desks: the teacher is facing us while we can see the back of three students, one of who is a girl raising her hand to ask or answer a question; third, a boy building; another drawing; and finally, a girl reading. These illustrations are visual stimuli that convey subliminal messages about how to behave in class, how to keep oneself busy, and how to be creative. Such visuals can affect both the child's conscious and subconscious mind. In The Truth about Subliminal Messages (2015), Stephen Estrada explains that such subliminal messages "are said to be able to affect your behavior or actions. It is said that it can induce you to do something... and not knowing you are being influenced by the message (5).

After the first part of the book that identifies what is in the head, the book is divided into five sections: curiosity, exploration and discovery, reading, the experiment and memory. By blending the direct and indirect speech in all five sections, Youssef urges his young readers to develop their cognitive skills and to use the mind in thinking, assessing, comparing, memorizing, and innovating. He asks questions, and gives the children mathematical problems and puzzles (with the answers at the end of the book) that instigate the mind. Youssef, then, urges his youngsters to read, maintaining that "there is no doubt that reading is the most important source of information as books are the main tools of knowledge . . [you] can read about a certain game, try to examine it and to know it" (1: 14). Youssef also invites them to use their own memory and senses, to examine situations, and to find out the appropriate solutions on their own. He says, "whether discovery was through observation and monitoring, experiment and practice, reading and learning, this is a great source of pleasure because there is an excitement and joy in acquiring knowledge" (1: 16). Discovery through observation and experiment is emphasized as the child readers are encouraged to explore their own world. The use of illustrations that constitute visual stimuli through subliminal messages reflects Youssef's preference to address his children in a new way without giving orders. He concludes this book by stressing that "Since God has equipped us with the sense of curiosity and desire to learn, we have to study and practice, observe and be attentive, read and learn, and experiment and apply" (1: 22). Here, Youssef would like the youngsters to use the scientific method by experimenting, exploring, and asking questions in order to acquire more knowledge. This echoes the call of Socrates to examine and explore life.

Having trained the young reader to deal with problems, Youssef moves on to address the young critical thinker. He is now eager to take steps in training youngsters to make decisions after going through certain steps. Youssef, urges his readers to take decisions without offending others in his second book, How to Take a Decision? Going through the six steps of taking the right decision, Youssef offers a few options with each step to broaden the horizon of the reader. With step one the child needs to identify the problem or the issue that needs to be addressed: "Go to the puppet show which is on until the next day, or read the book that I borrowed and have to return to the library?" He adds that these are simple examples, but at times one can face serious situations. The second step involves knowing one's options; the third entails thinking about the positive and negative results of taking a certain decision; the fourth requires choosing the best option; the fifth necessitates being decisive and active about implementing the decision. What is interesting is that Youssef introduces step six in which the reader is guided to be critical about the decision in order to determine whether this decision was wise or not for future references

With these step, Youssef is training children to be goal-oriented,

to examine, revise, compare all the possible options and to reconsider the consequences of their actions. At this stage of teaching critical thinking, Youssef directs and encourages children to make use of their minds, to search for knowledge, to analyse, to imagine, to be openminded, and to make clear and reasonable decisions and judgments. He wants his children to be "willing to alter beliefs if there are sufficient reasons... [and to know] that being open-minded does not threaten their integrity but affirms their worth as human beings" (Robert Fisher Teaching Children 54-5). He does this in two ways, first by asking an interesting question: "If your friend faces a similar situation, will s/ he take the same decision? (13); and by making the reader aware that some decisions involve others, implying that the child should not be self-centered.

In his third book, How to Express Yourself? Youssef encourages his readers to express themselves freely, clearly and soundly. He alerts the readers that one is free to think (4), but has to be careful in conveying these thoughts because words can hurt others and by so doing we can hurt ourselves (20). Because we do not live alone in the world, we sometimes have to listen to the suggestions of others, analyse and assess them, and then reveal their own point of view politely and adequately. Additionally, Youssef shows how the word "express" as a verb can be used in different ways. He states how children can express their thoughts through facial and sign expressions (gesturing, nodding and other forms of body language), by drawing, dancing, singing, and writing. In their book, Human Rights in Children's Literature: Imagination and the Narrative of Law (2016) Jonathan Todres and Sarah Higinbotham explain how it is important to give children the chance to express themselves. They mention the twelfth article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that points out the child's "distinct right to be heard. . . [and] to participate in decisions that affect his or her life. . . [Society] shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters" (35). This right to express one's own view is echoed in Youssef's advice to his readers to apply and practice the freedom of expression and to get acquainted with it as one form of their daily social behaviour. Youssef's concern to point out the child's right to have a voice/an opinion parallels the views of Todres and Higinbotha on how it is "important to understand the messages that are conveyed to children about the value of their participation. [and that it is the role of] children's literature [to] convey a range of ideas about the child's right to a voice" (Todres 37).

Youssef speaks to his readers, inviting them to express themselves freely and properly. He says:

sometimes you cannot find the right words that reflect your opinion. In this case, you shall lose a lot;... you can lose the opportunity to express yourself freely.... You might have a point of view about one of the topics, ... one that can be useful and helpful to others. But, it will not be of great use if you keep it to yourself, and refuse to share it with your peers. You have to communicate your point of view to others... Your rights as a human being do guarantee you the freedom to express yourself within the limits of law, mores, and traditions (3: 3-5).

Once the children as thinkers start to handle their own thoughts and have the ability to express them, they will be able to reveal their desires, aspirations, and dreams. These will reflect the child's ability to imagine and to create a world where fantasy and reality are intertwined. Youssef, like other educators and practitioners, does not only praise the value of the use of the imagination, but also encourages his readers to practice it and to talk about their fantasy world with other peers. This desire of empowering the child to use the imagination is clear in Youssef's fourth book, How to be Inventive?

In this book, Youssef highlights that the child's talents ought to be nurtured and that these talents are directly related to the imagination, curiosity and thinking. He states how most of the world's inventors have created their own space from imagination and allowed their thoughts, curiosity, and experiments to become factual. He gives models like Issac Newton who discovered the law of gravity and Thomas Edison who introduced electricity to the world. Youssef examines the various connotations of the verb "inventive" and describes how the verb

"invent" can be related to thinking, experiments, personal talents, and intellectual capacities. What Youssef calls for, to release the limits for imagination, is clear in Robert Fisher's Teaching Children to Think (1990). Fisher mentions how creativity is related to the imagination and how there is a value in "mental leaps," quoting what Albert Einstein states about the imagination and that it is "more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world" (24). That is to say, Youssef tends to prove to his youngsters how imagination can embrace the entire world, saying that "there is no creative person who is similar to a peer. The one issue they agree about: is that each one of them introduces something new, something special that no one has ever reached or discovered before; something that people admire and acknowledge its benefit" (4: 3). Creativity for Youssef is about the malleability of the child's mind to new ideas, possibilities, and solutions. It is a process that requires exploration, planning, brainstorming, activity, and originality. Psychologist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky in his article "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" identifies the meaning and benefits of imagination, labeling it as a "creative activity." He says:

This creative activity, based on the ability of our brain to combine elements, is called imagination or fantasy in psychology... In everyday life, fantasy or imagination refer to what is not actually true, what does not correspond to reality, and what, thus, could not have any serious practical significance. But in actuality, imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike. In this sense, absolutely everything around us that was created by the hand of man, the entire world of human culture, as distinct from the world of nature, all this is the product of human imagination and of creation based on this imagination. (9-10)

Because creativity is a main component of critical thinking, Youssef fosters his readers' curiosity for learning and acquiring knowledge through inviting them to release their imagination because this is a creative activity that they should practice. In other words, he is eager to

have a new generation of both critical thinkers and creative inventors. In addition, Youssef introduces to his readers new words/expressions that may encourage them in their journey towards learning, such as thinking, talents, intellectual capacities and psychic power, and skills. He addresses his readers, saying "you should be thinking in a way that must be different from your peers. You must have talents which they do not have. And for sure you must possess special qualifications that might be even unusual. You might have all these characteristics, but you are unaware of them" (4: 5). This reflects Youssef's belief in the capabilities of children, that the skills they acquire is a matter of training and that it is the role of educators/teachers to know how to cultivate the minds of youngsters in order to have new generation of critical and creative thinkers.

Able to reach this level of creative activity, the children will transfer their dreams from the realm of fantasy to the realm of reality. It is not surprising, therefore, that Youssef's fifth book, How to Reconstruct? refers to the phase where the children start to recognise their rights and progress to build their own real world. This progression towards the development of the child's cognitive and creative skills is dealt with in the sixth book, How to Develop? In this book, Youssef explains to children the various meanings and connotations of the verb "to develop" and how it indicates a process of change that leads to the development of one's own personality, dreams, inspirations, attitudes, and thoughts. He shares his memories and experiences with children by describing how the body is initially small, but then

it grows, changes and develops from what it was to what it becomes. In my childhood, I was not able to read or write. But I have learned a great deal that is useful for me in my life. So, why can I not learn more and increase my knowledge and work on changing myself? And of course this change has to be to the better...I would like to be a creative person so that my name can be well-known. I ask myself, what is it that has changed and developed within me? The answer is: my thoughts which in turn have changed my modes of behaviour, and then my entire life. These thoughts are not constant, but do change and develop

from one phase to another. In time, I will excel and most of my dreams, aspirations, and wishes shall become true (6:14).

This development and progression that Youssef has referred to does not only involve change in one's body and personality towards maturity, but also involves the whole cycle of life (from an embryo to an infant, then to a mature human being; from primitiveness to modernity). The cosmos too involves change and development (the newly discovered continents), the weather changes and the four seasons, and the developmental stages of the insects and animals.

As the children proceeds in reading the books of the series, they will notice the second and vital subliminal message that reflects Youssef's concern with the Arabic language. In a delightful way, Youssef tends to attract his readers towards linguistics by examining with them the roots, the connotations, and the semantics of selected verbs and their related potential meanings. In this, Youssef unravels his desire to strengthen the ties between his readers and their native Arabic language. In three of his books, namely, How to Reconstruct? How to Evaluate? and How to Manage?, Youssef invites the children readers to examine their knowledge of the different meanings of the selected Arabic words, verbs, and nouns in delightful exercises. Moreover, he urges his readers to use the Arabic Dictionary and to explore the list of the numerous meanings, synonyms, and antonyms for any verb they need to know about. Youssef concentrates on the importance of specifically using the Arabic Dictionary Al-Mouja'm Al-Wa'jez in exploring the different meanings of the Arabic words (المعجم الوجيز) and verbs. In his fifth book, How to Reconstruct?, he explores with his readers the root of the verb "reconstruct" and mentions its richness in offering different meanings. He recounts his acquaintance with the verb reconstruct نَعمَر - تعمير and its colloquial usage in refilling the gazlamp with kerosene in order to have light or the rifle with powder. He also points out its connotations in the following words: Colonisation (الأستعمار), Architecture (فن العِمّارة), Building (الأستعمار), Al-Mamoura in Alexandria (المعمورة), a person who has a long life (مُعمّر), performing Umra in Makka (أداء العمرة بمكة), and the name Umar, like the well-لسم) known follower of Prophet Muhammad, Umar Ibn Elkhatab

عمر - كعمر ابن الخطاب). Youssef goes on to review the different possible meanings of the word "evaluate" in book seven, How to Evaluate? As usual, he asks his readers to consult the dictionary for the root of the verb, exchanging with them its connotations. To evaluate, he states, is to estimate the thing (قدّر الشيء) or to appraise someone (قدّر فلاناً). It also has a religious connotation, that is, the "The All Powerful", one of God's ninety-nine names in Islam (الله الحسنى) This word may also refer to physical power and energy (القدرة البدنية والطاقة). Youssef moreover explicates that to account for or/and discuss the magnitude of things and measure is related to the verb "evaluate." He addresses his readers to make sure that they are aware of their urgent need to develop their senses through which they "can evaluate and estimate distances, spaces, dimensions, and weights." He adds, "as you grow up you will be able to "evaluate" things, situations, people, and gradually you will have a point of view of your own" (7:16, 18). In his eighth book, How to Manage? Youssef reviews with his readers the meanings of the verb "manage" and that it refers to the person who manages and thinks thoroughly of his own matters (دبّر/تّدبّر الأمر : ساسة The verb "manage," according to (ونظر في عاقبته، أمعن في التفكير وتعمّق فيه Youssef can also be used in referring to housekeeping (التدبير المنزلي). This is an enlightening point to allude to what mothers do at home as an activity that should be respected.

At this point, it is not difficult to infer that through the books this series Abdel-Tawab Youssef is using non-fiction as a way of entertainment (through the usage of colourful illustrations), education (through examples and lively portraits from life), and regeneration (through the different steps that would help the child to be a critical thinker). This series does encourage and inspire other children's literature writers to deal with various topics in non-fiction contexts. It also urges those who work in the field of pedagogy to consider and use such works that deal with the concepts of critical and creative thinking. Youssef's series draws the attention not only of children, but of parents, educators, librarian and readers in general to the importance of using and developing the cognitive and creative skills of children, helping them to examine the richness of their Arabic language on the

one hand and in "solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions" on the other (Halpern 8). Such chronological cognitive development phases which Youssef display through the titles and the contents of his books highlights the crucial role of critical thinking approach and how it should be applied and taught in the educational systems. In Minds and Behaviors at Work (2016), Wendy Cunningham et al. comment on the role of the teacher in providing students with modes of active learning that can help them in improving their critical thinking skills. The writers argue that:

The role of the teachers in the classroom needs to change. Teachers need to shift from being transmitters of information to being facilitators, to guiding children of all ages in acquiring knowledge... [P]edagogical methods should put more emphasis on students' exploration and attitudes... [provide] techniques that boost memory... [and] engage students in the metacognitive process of evaluating their own work and incentivize them to think about their thinking. (56-7)

From this series it becomes clearly that although Abdel-Tawab Youssef does not teach in a classroom, he believes that the role of the children's writer is comparable to that of the teacher in providing children with guide lines that can develop their critical thinking and creative skills. For him, critical thinking is a skill and a privilege that every child should take advantage of. It is, as Richard Paul puts it, "the art of analysing and evaluating thinking" and the process in which the child thinks about his/her thinking (The Miniature Guide 4). This is how Youssef depicts, through the chosen titles of his books in the series, the processes by which "the child develops into an individual who can reason and think using hypotheses" (Manichander 43). In other words, he wants his readers to be able to make use of their reason, offer possibilities, to predict, to imagine, and to think of new possible solutions. Critical thinking, for Youssef as well as for theorists, is the result of biological maturation, environmental and educational experience as the child starts to configure the surrounded world and to develop his/her own individual critical thinking. The role of children's literature does also help in configuring the child's experiences because

it stands as "a vehicle through which children can freely form their own thoughts and ideas about both the literary world and the world in which they live" (Todres 121). Hence, Youssef's series can be listed as one of the effective non-fiction works for children as it aids them to acquire knowledge of how to think critically, to comment, and to make sound judgments. The series has shown Youssef's success in correlating aspects of dialogue and illustrations in order to enhance and improve critical and creative thinking skills. He offers his child readers the space where they can practice, experiment, assess, discover, and create their own individuality. Eventually, when children become critical thinkers, they can know their rights, understand the value of democracy and be able to apply it for the benefit of their society.

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## My Father: An Egyptian Teacher

## Aziza Sami

Aziza Sami bears witness to the late writer Abdel-Tawab Youssef's homage to his own father, an unforgettable teacher during Egypt's liberal first half of the 20th century

My Father: An Egyptian Teacher. Abdel-Tawab Youssef. Translated by Loubna Youssef. Edited by Mohamed Enani. 112pages. Al Dar Al-Masriah Al-Lubnaniah. 2nd Edition. 2014.

The opening scene of Abdel-Tawab Youssef's biography of his father Sheikh Youssef Ahmed Youssef is of their visit to the clinic of a renowned physician who later reveals that he was one of the venerable Sheikh's many hundreds of students. Here as elsewhere the narrative is typically sparing in its description of people or places. Nevertheless, it powerfully evokes the image of Sheikh Youssef, now ailing, who wearily leans on his son's arm as he proceeds slowly into the doctor's office. Youssef subtly conveys his father's mood as well as his own. Their trepidation as they await the doctor's prognosis is transformed into unexpected surprise when, after a lengthy time is undertaken examining Sheikh Youssef, the doctor thanks his patient. He then firmly returns the fee to the son.

"I do not think you remember me," the physician tells Sheikh Youssef, "but I have never forgotten you. I am one of your sons - one of your students from Beni Swaif".

This encounter would be replicated dozens of times during the later years of Sheikh Youssef's life, charting a career in which he made his impact on generations as a singular and unforgettable teacher.

The 112 page biography was first published in 1976 by Dar El Maaref, and has in a second edition been translated into English by the author's daughter Loubna Youssef, a professor of English literature at Cairo University.

The years of Sheikh Youssef's life, 1900 (or 1898-1950), are often described in scholarly writings on Egypt as epitomising its 'liberal age' or 'era of enlightenment'. It was during these decades that a generation evolved for whom the quest for academic learning was intertwined with a nationalist fervour fuelled by the struggle against the British occupation of Egypt.

Sheikh Youssef was typical of his generation. He hailed from a modest rural background, and formal education was his pathway to mobility. Born in the Upper Egyptian village of Shenra in Beni Swaif, Youssef studied at a traditional kuttab and then went on to obtain a religious education at the Teacher's College affiliated with the University of Al-Azhar. In this, he followed the course pursued by members of his generation. Many prominent protagonists of Egypt's liberal age were originally of Azharite (traditional religious) education. They etched their way into public life and office, reaching the highest echelons of society. It was a course that culminated in the towering figure of Saad Pasha Zaghloul, himself of fellahin, rural stock, ultimately becoming the leader of the Egyptian fight for national independence. Saad Zaghloul went on to become Egypt's Minister of Education, Minister of Justice and head of parliament. He would lead the negotiations for Egypt's independence from the British and become prime minister. Zaghloul would inspire and spark the revolution of 1919, which, as Abdel-Tawab Youssef writes, would also inspire Gandhi and Nehru.

During his career as a teacher in many schools in Beni Swaif, Sheikh Youssef was never too far removed from the struggle for independence. He mobilised the people in the villages surrounding Beni Swaif to sign petitions authorising Saad Zaghloul and his fellownationalist leaders to represent Egypt in negotiations for independence. With his students he sang the patriotic and popular songs of Sayed Darwish. He paid the price of his involvement by being removed from his position as a teacher and deported to his home village for a while.

But Sheikh Youssef, a competent teacher, was soon re-instituted in his position as a teacher and ultimately a headmaster. He was a man whose heart went to teaching, forging bonds of humanity and comradeship with his students, many of whom were poor, and many of them orphans, as he also taught in orphanages. He would experiment and improvise methods in which interaction and proactivity were paramount, utilising music and other concepts far in advance of the rigid methods of schooling then prevalent.

When his heath failed him, until the very last, Sheikh Youssef would still go to the school and continue to teach. With singular empathy, Abdel-Tawab Youssef writes of his father the teacher, as if they were one and the same person. Perhaps the son's capacity for simulation is propelled by his own talent as a writer, or by the deep influence that his father's life wielded.

The biography of Sheikh Youssef closes with a moving passage describing his funeral held at his home village of Shenra in 1950. The occasion was attended by hundreds of his students, whom he had taught in both the villages of Upper Egypt and in Bani Swaif. His coffin was adorned with flowers that he himself had helped plant when, as headmaster, he completely overhauled the garden of a decrepit orphanage in Beni Swaif.

To us the readers as to his students, Sheikh Youssef is the memorable teacher who leaves his indelible mark long after the years have passed. The music was played by the orphanage's band, one that Sheikh Youssef had brought to life, music lesson by music lesson, having one neglected instrument fixed after another. Of the day he bade his father farewell, Abdel-Tawab Youssef writes:

It was unusual, but I was the only member of his family in this procession. I was lost amidst thousands of his other sons, for I had become an orphan like them. No one noticed me, and no one shook my hands to offer his condolences.

The final pages of the biography are adorned with a photograph of Sheikh Youssef in traditional Azharite garb. The gaze is that of a kindly man with a forthright look in his eyes.

The value of this small, vibrant and moving book is that it brings to life an era and a man who, in the words of his son "was a simple man

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like other men - a hero". To us the readers as to his students, Sheikh Youssef is the memorable teacher who leaves his indelible mark long after the years have passed.

http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/15335.aspx

# As if all this isn't enough Obituary: Abdel-Tawwab Youssef (1928-2015) Youssef Rakha

Al-Ahram Weekly, Issue No. 1265. 8-14 October, 2015.

http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/13405/23/-Obituary--Abdel-Tawwab-Youssef-----aspx

The Arabic children's literature pioneer Abdel-Tawwab Youssef passed away this week at the age of 87, leaving behind over 950 books including 40 for adults. On 10 January 2002, under the title "An older child", Al-Ahram Weekly published this profile of the great writer, illuminating his life and achievement and capturing a sense of what he was like.

"Unbelievable!" The little, unassuming man at the door gestures wildly, expressing genuine incredulity. "A journalist on time? I never thought it possible." Easygoing and always with open arms, so to speak, he is also remarkably abrupt; and for a while it is hard to believe that this is the sedate, almost universally acknowledged authority on children's literature I have come to meet. He has greying hair and a slightly plodding gait, and is the very image of insouciance as he ushers me into this typical middle-class household. "I won't accept it," he goes on humourously. "Journalists are not supposed to be on time".

Abdel-Tawwab Youssef thus introduces me to his daughter, a professor of English literature who, he says, persuaded him of the significance of Al-Ahram Weekly's Profile page "when she saw I wasn't too eager about it." There is nothing remotely apologetic about his tone as he says this. "Of course, I have given over 200 interviews in the past two decades alone. So you can be as provocative as you want. Ask anything, suggest whatever; chances are I've already encountered something like it." And suddenly, so early on in our conversation, Youssef's most outstanding trait becomes apparent: here is a man who

is utterly without guile, a perfectly unselfconscious man ready to talk about himself. "It is strange, you know, this business of interviews. Around Christmas time a journalist from the US came all the way to Cairo to conduct an interview with me, a very important personage, I am told. When she arrived, unfortunately, I was in Bogota, Colombia, receiving an award. By the time I returned, understandably enough, she had left the country"...

Abdel-Tawwab Youssef is a widely celebrated name — a statement to which headlines from the local and regional press will readily bear testimony: "Prince Sultan Bin Abdel-Aziz presents the King Faisal prize to Abdel-Tawwab Youssef;" "Bologna international book fair gives award to Abdel-Tawwab Youssef;" "America reads Abdel-Tawwab Youssef's Dar Al-Shaab stories for children." A small sample, this: the magnitude of the praise this writer has received is astounding; so is the number of books he has written. At the entrance to his apartment, moreover, there is large cabinet full of medals and trophies, stored haphazardly in their velvet cases. "I have been elected to the board of the Writers Union for eight consecutive years," Youssef is eager to point out. "I was honoured with the State Incentive Award in 1975, the State Award for Children's Culture in 1981 and the award of the International Council for Children's books in 2000. Everywhere I go," he huffs, "they want to give me an award. Some time ago," Youssef effortlessly reverts to story-telling mode, "while receiving the King Faisal Award in Saudi Arabia [in 1990], they wanted to give me another award as well." He blinks, smiling. "Fortunately I managed to escape in time." Carelessly, Youssef touches the glass of the cabinet. "As if all this isn't enough," he declaims again. But the gleam of pride that now illuminates his eyes is unmistakable. "Let me tell you that I won't stop writing however many awards they give me." He sounds impatient. "Awards, awards..." For Youssef as much as society, however, these honours clearly remain indicative of his achievement. For a "poor man's son," as he puts it, they can only be a vindication.

In itself, Youssef's achievement, independently assessed, is vindication enough. Since his initial association with Baba Sharo, the children's radio show after which the well-known radio presenter Mohamed Mahmoud Shaaban — Youssef's gateway into the realm of children's writing—was named, the "godfather of children's literature" has written countless stories, plays, "children's novels," theme-oriented "serials" and literary studies. He suitably finds inspiration in the most basic topics: religious life, national consciousness and current affairs: subjects that his experience with children allows him effectively to "simplify and elucidate." Two days after 11 September, for example, he had already supplied the radio with two scripts dealing with the event; and one of his most recent works centres on the Toshka project. He has produced poetic selections for children from the works of Ahmed Shawqi, Kamel Kilani, Ma'rouf Al- Rasafi as well as the lesser known Mohamed El-Harrawi. And works like Arab Pioneers and Western Scientists in a Strange Encounter bear testimony to the extensive research he undertakes: "I've always read very widely. Other than my everyday reading for pleasure, there is always reading associated with the project at hand. Atlases, dictionaries and encyclopaedias are all consulted in the hope of gleaning knowledge." The aforementioned book, for example, comprises a series of fairy-tale meetings between the major figures of Arab learning and their counterparts in the West: Al-Hassan Ibn Al-Haytham and Isaac Newton, Galileo Galilei and Ibn Younes Al- Misri, Abbas Ibn Fernas and the Wright Brothers... Through their conversations and interactions, a wealth of scientific knowledge is revealed in language accessible to children. Nationally inspired radio scripts by Youssef, too, have developed a reputation for being "stained with the tears of the child actors," who are so deeply moved by them.

Youssef's "Islamic methodology of children's writing" exemplifies a pattern into which most of his work will fit. "In our house, while I was growing up, there were only religious books. Although I read them all, my passion for reading having developed early on, I didn't tackle religious topics until a decade after I started writing for children, largely for fear of blundering into something that might offend the sensibility of the religious authorities." He had been asked to write a story about the Prophet's mulid: reading through Mohamed

Hussein Heikal's famous Hayat Mohamed, he stopped at the episode of Abraha's elephant. "And I thought of recounting the Prophet's birth from the viewpoint of the elephant [who arrived in Mecca in the same year]. It worked. In the same way other, similarly far- fetched versions of the Prophet's birth emerged; they were collected in [Youssef's own] Hayat Mohamed. And despite my fear of offending the authorities," he concludes happily, "the book became part of the national curriculum and seven million copies were printed. I had discovered a mode of operation, and unlike the religious writing for children that preceded my books, which was merely abridged history of Islam, mine involved genuine storytelling. In confirming the children's faith and their love of the Qur'an, one has to be inventive, to identify the simplest and most interesting facts and tales, reworking them effectively." One of a series of books entitled "Pinnacles and values," dealing with major Islamic figures and the values they represent, for example, the Imam Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, in his childhood, demonstrates "what courage really is" through a simple act of selfless love with which any child can readily identify: by occupying the Prophet's sleeping quarters, he helps the Prophet escape an assassination attempt in disguise.

That he begins our conversation with an account of his children's careers is a telling sign; little people are paramount, though the ones in question are no longer little. "Lubna here," Youssef begins, "is a professor of literature at Cairo University. Hisham is a diplomat. Essam, the eldest, also a Faculty of Arts graduate, is a businessman." He expands, I let the conversation flow in the direction of his choice and, sure enough, next comes his own childhood: "I was born in a village at the edge of the Western desert, near Beni Suef: Shenra. A very Western name, isn't it? My father was a schoolmaster, my mother an illiterate housewife. I was her firstborn. She left for Beni Suef only 40 days after I was born, and gave birth to three daughters in the following years." As a schoolboy, Youssef had his first encounter with children's books in the figure of Mustafa Mohamed Ibrahim, a local writer associated with the school Youssef attended: "He wrote a story every week, and the stories were published at the Bookshop of 'Amm Girgis, where I would make the transaction silently every week... I played everything at school, excelled at all the extracurricular activities." During a period dominated chiefly by chess, Youssef saw an older rival "writing down the game," and he thus discovered that "there is nothing, not even chess, that doesn't have a book to go with it." He began to write journalism, in Rose El-Youssef and eventually in daily papers, as a political science student at Cairo University: "My only aim was to earn a degree so that I could get a well-paid job, but as soon as I graduated my father died and it was a terrible blow. From then on I had to provide single-handedly for my mother and sisters".

Back at the village, his uncles insisted that the female members of the family should stay home, but Youssef was equally stubborn. "They moved in with me here and I began to work hard, independently. I provided for the family until my two sisters were married, then I got married in 1956. My wife, then a university student, was working part-time as an editorial secretary, then managing editor and finally editor-in-chief of Samir [the popular children's magazine]; she too would receive the State Incentive Award in 1978... So I worked in journalism until one day Saleh Gawdat said to me, 'You can't go on doing this, you must join us at the radio.' And he put me in contact with Baba Sharo, who, on seeing my first attempt at a script for children, made me rewrite it seven or eight times before he finally accepted it; my second attempt, though, went through without the slightest modification. I wrote intensively for the radio, exclusively until Anis Mansour launched a campaign against me in the papers claiming that, with no books to my name, I couldn't justifiably call myself a writer. And I published my first book, with the help of Soheir El-Qalamawi, in response. In 1968 I founded the Children's Culture Association, though I didn't really specialise in children's writing until 1975." How, and why, specialise? Youssef was among a group of writers who called themselves the Egyptian Literary Association; the group included, among others, poet Salah Abdel-Sabour ("Egypt's Eliot") and critic Ezzeddin Ismail. "We all experimented with various forms until each found his calling. Salah, you'll be surprised to know, started off with a book for children; before he passed away he told me that book brought in more money than all of his poetry books combined. We were serious young men: every member of this group, without exception, lived to receive a state award".

As for the "why," it seems to have been a matter of self-realisation. "We were searching for ourselves and, in specialising, we achieved a sense of contentment. Only in retrospect does it become clear that I must have loved children very deeply, so much so that before I had any of my own I would borrow the neighbours' children for Eid. And the child in me," here Youssef, unselfconscious as ever, is touching on the most fundamental aspect of his character, his childlike nonchalance, "has never died. I throw tantrums in public just like any child," he digresses. "As a child, moreover, I read a lot of children's books. And though I spent only my summer vacations there, the village shaped my character far more than Beni Suef or Cairo: its purity and innocence. I am still friends with my children's friends, and my grandchildren, now 10 and 12, have taught me everything all over again, just by observing them grow up. Though I have never taught at schools I've met with children in schools, camps, cultural palaces. I speak to them, I ask them questions, they ask me things like 'Does the monkey know it's a monkey?' and we undertake various forms of interaction. I know them well. And they invariably teach me at least as much as I can teach them."

# Abdel-Tawab Youssef: An Inspiration

# Ahmed Youssef Project Manager of Editorial Team of Al-'Abagera Game Show (Ibda'a Production)

During the Writing Children's Literature Capstone Course at the American University in Cairo (AUC), I was one of the lucky students who attended an introductory lecture about Children's Literature by Abdel-Tawab Youssef. He was truly an inspiration. On introducing him in class in 2010, our teacher told us that this was his third lecture at AUC: the first was entitled "Children's Literature: A Rich Field of Knowledge", the second was on "Children's Literature in Egypt and the World" which were both held on the AUC campus, but ours was at the Talaat Harb Cultural Center for Children and it was on "My Journey in the Field of Children's Literature."

Sharing the details of his journey, Youssef inspired us all by asking questions and telling stories that are captivating and intriguing. He first asked if we think a writer for children can afford to bring up his children, buy a car, and visit the world. He was indirectly teaching us that with enough devotion, one can develop a talent that can lead not only to local success, but to global recognition. Telling us about his rural background and humble upbringing, he explained how his father taught him the value of ethics rather than money, and the importance of knowledge. These values are the ones he attempted and succeeded to pass on to future generations through his writing for children. His writing promotes the use of talent and imagination. He also encourages the use of abstraction.

Youssef divided his journey into three stages. The first was when he discovered the gap in the field of children's literature and culture in Egypt. He argued that children's literature is important because it teaches and shapes the minds of the next generations, those who will become the future leaders. With this belief, he started working on creating an awareness that children's culture involves not only an interest in writing works of literature to fill this gap, but having performances for children, TV programs, films, magazines with works of fiction and non-fiction, school and public libraries, and works that address morals and the rights of children. He explained that because there are no critics, writers do not improve. He surprised us, however, that there are many genres and themes in children literature, namely religious stories, travel writing, science fiction, works about nature and the environment, etc. published in Egypt and the Arab world. He discussed the reasoning behind the importance of each theme or genre, and how he dealt with them in his own unique way. Youssef expressed his sorrow, though, that this field and writers for children are not taken seriously in Egypt. He conveyed his delight that a writing/research course about children's literature at AUC is a step in the right direction.

The second stage in his journey is one in which he decided that he found his purpose in life and became dedicated to devote his life to the future generations. In order to carry out his mission, he immersed himself within child's culture and understood their environment and thinking. He spent time with children in order to understand them because they will be his audience. He realized that there is a difference between writing for children, writing about children and writing for adults, and that children are not easy to please. It is true they have a sense of imagination, but when it comes to issues about faith, for instance, they ask endless questions and require concrete, tangible answers that are not available. This is why the writer needs to be skilled in dealing with sensitive issues, knowing that children develop their knowledge at a young age and that is the perfect time to teach them. He put himself in the children's shoes, and started working on writings that teach important concepts in society. He made sure he produced the proper material that would enrich their young minds and inspire their imagination, while being entertaining for all social classes and all Arabic readers. He alerted us that "We are in charge of them now, but they will be in charge of us tomorrow." Hiding the

moral inside the story, and letting the child discover it for himself instead of preaching and ordering, proved to be the best strategy. He said, "Never underestimate the child's intelligence."

During the third stage, Youssef made an effort to define success: is it simply writing more and more radio and TV programs and stories for children? Is it organizing and/or taking part in local, regional and international conferences? Is it winning more and more awards and earning money? At this stage, he abandoned conventional means of assessing success through fame and fortune. He did not want money, more awards or more fame, but wanted his message to go far and wide. Youssef derived his happiness from inspiring others, both creatively and academically. He explained that good writing requires reading, time and hard work. He gave lectures, recorded radio and television interviews and he successfully affected millions of lives through his work. He was eager to get his message across that children need and deserve our undivided attention.

Youssef's talk provided evidence that he was a born storyteller. He always has anecdotes linked to the idea he focuses on. When he talked about his travel experiences, he referred to the importance of translation and his pride in being Egyptian. He stressed that the children of Egypt should read stories that interest the children of the world and non-Egyptians have to read Egyptian stories. He told us how every time he leaves Egypt, he finds Egypt waiting for him in the British Museum, in the Louvre, and in the Metropolitan Museum. When Youssef shed light on his philosophy in writing religious books, he criticized the fact that writers focus on the history of religion. He, however, wanted the child to appreciate both the beauty of the language of the Qur'an and the stories therein. In A Life of the Prophet Muhammad in Twenty Tales (Enani's English translation is published in this volume), he resorts to talking animals and objects to captivate the child and he did. This book is known to have sold seven million copies.

As a class, we all agreed that Youssef has a way with words, a vivid sense of imagination, a sense of humor and an amazing ability to both educate and entertain those he engaged with in written or spoken

form. He is an inspiring person who had a happy life because he knew he affects millions: those he met and those who will continue to read his works

#### **Creative Pieces**

This lecture was inspirational. As a class requirement, we wrote creative pieces. We worked both in teams and as a class: we read our creative pieces aloud to give one another feedback. This is why I would like to acknowledge our class list: Mohamed Abdelbary, Maohamed Abdellatif, Nada Ali, Hanya Elazzouni, Mariam Elbatran, Soha Elsirgany, Salwa Eltambouly, Shams Essam, Sally Guirgus, Nermine Ismail, Noha Kabbani, Nada Lamei, Marwa Moussa, Hanin Omari. Wioletta Uluszczak and me. We also discussed how and/or when we can publish them. I chose the pieces that were somehow inspired by Abdel-Tawab Youssef's talk. May you enjoy them and may he rest in peace.

Ahmed Youssef RHET 342 Writing Children's Literature October 13, 2010 Dr. Loubna A. Youssef **Creative Writing** 

## I am a Library: How Can I Survive?

Nothing was heard but the sound of the wind blowing through the curtains of this huge six story building, five of which contained colorful cupboards stacked with all the children's books imaginable. There was no one inside. It was completely empty! "Where are all the children?" the Library wondered, "They were all here yesterday."

In the middle of the sixth floor, inside a tall display case, there was a single book on a red velvet pillow. The Library's favorite book was old but in very good condition. Thinking of this rare copy brought the Library much joy, but the Library was still immensely gloomy because the children could not benefit from all the available knowledge. Where are they? The Library wants them back! It did not matter how.

In a nearby building, on one of the walls of a dark room, bigger than an Olympic swimming pool and taller than the sails of a pirate ship, an enormous screen hung. A cat was speeding after a mouse, and just as it was about to grab it, the mouse reached a hole in the wall and BOOM the cat dives headfirst into the wall. At this point, thunderous laughter arose in the room: the children were all watching a cartoon. The Cinema had just opened: a place where children can watch cartoons and movies all day.

Sad because no children are visiting, the Library saw a small boy, who looks familiar, passing in front of the door. In the past, this boy often visited the Library, like all the children who did. The Library loved them all. "Where are you going little boy? Come in and read a nice book", said the Library. "I'm going to the Cinema," the boy answered. "The Cinema? What's that?" the Library asked. He replied, "This is a really fun place where kids watch cartoons." The Library thought, "I need to find a way to get them back! What can I do?"

The Library had a few ideas, and tried one of them every day. First, the Library organized a party and offered delicious food from all over the world: fresh croissants, sandwiches, juicy burgers, pizzas, pastas ... everything they could ever dream of. If that was not attractive enough, the desert table had cakes, ice cream, pies, and all sorts of mouthwatering fruits. The bowls of popcorn, sweets and chocolates were quite huge. There were cotton candy machines and all sorts of drinks. In the past the children could never resist such a great buffet, but they still did not come.

The Library had a second idea: to change the set up for games and sports. Now, there are different rooms, each has a purpose. There is one for board games, another for cards, yet another for puzzles.

Its biggest room is now full of ball games from different sports. In the garden, there were swings, slides, see-saws, bumper cars, water guns ... "This should be heavenly for children," the Library thought. "What else could they want?" They still did not come.

The Library, that used to watch the boys and girls turn the pages of books, sit to listen to stories and observing the information creeping into their brain, was now depressed. The Library realized that this is a battle for survival. This is why the new plan was to invite celebrities to read to the children. Seven stars arrived to entertain the children: the famous German painter Scribble Diddle, the celebrated children's writer Penny Mark, the renowned movie star Cameron Filmer, the Korean astronaut who just came back from visiting a distant planet Go Tu Sun, the talented singer Chantal, the professional tennis player Rumpus Servus and the incredibly hilarious comedian Chuck L. Gag. The Library eagerly waited, but the children did not come.

Desperate, the Library decided to talk to the Cinema that might listen to reason. "Hello Cinema", the Library said with an air of arrogance, "you have to give me the children back, I'm very important for their future. Reading is more fun than watching cartoons." With pride, the Cinema replied, "Then, why are they here? They're mine now!" The Library felt less confident, and asked for half of the children, but the Cinema did not cooperate. The Library decided to go and give the Cinema a book to read

Busy, the Cinema did not read the book immediately. Feeling a little curious a day later, the Cinema started skimming the pages of the book and could not put it down. Realizing how much fun reading is, and how interesting the book is, the Cinema decided to give the Library a chance. Taking a day off, the Cinema announced to the children that films will be shown on the following day, thinking that most of them will come back.

The next day, the Cinema was empty. The large screen was playing in front of a sea of chairs. No more were little eyes staring at it. They were engulfed in books. The children were no longer under the spell of cartoons and movies, they could finally think for themselves and it showed on their faces: the wide eyes absorbing the information in their hands, their ears captivated by the stories and their mouths smiling. They were happy and so was the Library. Later that day, after the children went home, the Library went to give the Cinema another gift: another beautiful book. The Library said: "Thank you for reminding our children how great reading is."

At sunrise the next day, the Library woke up with a satisfied smile. The cooperation between the Library and the Cinema was fruitful. Months later, two buildings on the street, both three times bigger than the Library put up signs that read "Video Games" and "Internet". Angry, the Library said: "Oh no! Not Again!"

#### Mohamed Sherif AbdelLatif

Extract from: 50 Lessons I Learned from my Childhood Movies that make me a Better Entrepreneur Now

I learned...

that even an elephant can fly.

If an elephant can fly,

Why can't I?

I can be whoever I want to become,

Whatever I want to become.

If I want to be a flying elephant,

Or a multi-millionaire,

Or do any crazy idea that is up in the air,

I can, I can, I can.

I will.

If an elephant can fly,

Why can't I?

Inspired by Walt Disney's movie, 'Dumbo'.

### **Soha Elsirgany**

#### The Cactus

Nora's mother gave her a plant for her birthday.

Nora liked her plant so much. It was a cactus, one that did not have spikes that could hurt her. It was pretty, with thick, smooth, green leaves. A small red flower was growing between the leaves.

"Mama, how does the plant eat? "Nora asked.

"It eats from the soil that it sits in," her mama answered.

Nora giggled, "plants sit in their food! That's funny!"

Her mother laughed, and said, "Don't forget that plants need to drink too "

Nora thought, "If I give my cactus a lot of water it would grow faster!"

Nora watered her cactus water every time she remembered.

A week later, the petals of the small red flower fell and the thick green leaves withered

Nora was quite sad. She asked her mama, "I don't understand, why is it dying? I gave it water all the time.

"Nora, what happens when you put too much food in your mouth, dear?" her mama asked

"I will not be able to eat it," Nora said, "because my mouth will be too full"

"Your plant felt the same way when you gave it too much water," her mama explained.

Nora understood and asked, "Can we save my cactus?"

"Yes, Nora, we can try to help it grow again."

Together they cut off the stem with the healthy green leaf. Then, they dug a hole in the soil and planted the stem in it.

A week later, Nora's cactus started growing again. A new red flower blossomed from between the leaves

## Salwa Eltambouly

There was a little girl called Alice May,

Who walked to school almost every day.

She loved her books and did not care about her looks.

She wore big glasses and stood out in all her classes.

Real life never bothered her,

Because it was boring and full of strife.

Her books gave her life and hope.

This is how she managed to cope.

So, when life took a turn for the worse,

Alice May did not lose hope, or think that life was a curse.

With her books in hand, her big glasses on,

She was ready to conquer the world.

#### Nermine Ismail

## A Day with no Maths

"What if there were no maths?"

Karim wondered one night.

"No need to subtract, multiply, or add"

Karim smiled in delight.

This just might be the best thought ever,

If maths ceases to exist

Wouldn't that be the best thing ever?

It's certainly something he will not miss.

Never!

"Please Dear God," Karim did pray.

"Maths no more, I pray"



And indeed the next day,

His wish was granted.

It was late, but Karim did not wake up.

Not because he was lazy,

But there were no numbers on the clock!

"Quickly!" Sarah shouted, "You've missed the bus."

They ran downstairs to grab their lunch,

But he entered the kitchen to find a fight.

How many sandwiches will each get?

His siblings could not tell.

Chaos broke out--and a deadly mess!

They had to walk to school for they missed the bus.

Should they walk or run, they could not tell.

What time is it?

How far is school?

At what speed should he go?

No clue

On foot, they arrived late,

To a very cross principal indeed.

And come the time of the break,

The poor fellows had nothing to eat,

Let's play football, right?

Some fun after a long day.

And so they gathered up.

But how can they divide the teams?

Nine? Three?

It was one very unpleasant day.

After walking home, and again missing the bus, Karim closed his eyes and prayed.

#### Wioletta Uluszczak

#### A Rainbow After the Storm

Anastasia was a little girl living with her parents in a small modest house in one of the suburbs. She had blue eyes and shoulder long brown hair that made her resemble her mother. Although Anastasia was very attached to her mum, she did not spend as much time with her as she wished. Both her parents were very busy with work duties to support the family. Anastasia was only seven, but understood what her parents were doing, and understood why she did not have as many toys as the other children in class.

At the time of Anastasia's birthday, an incredible surprise awaited her. Her parents gave her a present, a beautiful doll that has just appeared in the stores, one she did not dare to dream of. Over joyed, she said:

Mummy, Daddy, thank you so much! This is a great surprise. But how? I feel uncomfortable with such a present. Why did you spend so money on something that has no practical value?

The mother replied:

Nothing is more important than the happiness of our child. Do not

worry, we can afford it because we have been saving money. But remember, the most permanent gift is our love for you, not this doll.

Anastasia said:

Oh, thank you Mummy and Daddy, I love you too!

Since that day the doll became Anastasia's favorite companion. She talked to her, dressed her up, combed her hair and took her to school to join other girls who played with dolls during breaks. One day, Priscilla, one of her classmates, started to bully her. In doing so she destroyed her beloved doll. Anastasia could not believe what she saw and tears filled her eyes. Although it wasn't her fault, she was afraid to go home and tell her parents what had happened. She felt disappointed in herself because she could not take good care of such a special gift.

Anastasia's parents came late from work and did not realize that something was wrong with their child. Before dinner, when her mother went to her daughter's room, Anastasia broke down and told her about the bad day. The mother hugged her daughter and said:

My girl, I understand your sadness, but what happened is not your fault. Even if you make a mistake, you should discuss it with us without fear. Whenever you have a problem we are always willing to listen and do our best to help vou. Remember, we will never abandon you. Do you know why?

Anastasia asked:

- Why?

The mother answered:

- Because we love you! We wish we could cheer you up with a new doll, but unfortunately we cannot afford one now. Hopefully, our love will help you in overcoming this bad experience.

Anastasia replied:

- Oh mother! Trust me, this is enough for me.

Time passed but Anastasia could not forget about the unfortunate

school event. So, she would cry on her pillow every night. One day, on her way back from school, she saw a wounded puppy beside the pavement. His leg was injured. Anastasia took him back home with her, hoping that her parents would not get angry. To her surprise, her parents allowed her to keep the dog until he recovers. She called him Spicy. Taking care of Spicy and playing with him, helped her to forget about the bad day.

Two weeks later Anastasia saw a note on a tree near her house This note said that a lady was searching for her lost puppy. The attached picture looked exactly like Spicy. She realized that she had to give up Spicy. He should return home to his owner who might feel heartbroken for the loss of her puppy. Although she felt a bond with this puppy, she knew that the right decision is to give him back to the lady. Her mother called the lady and gave her the address. She went to Anastasia's home, met her parents, and walked towards her. She hugged her and thanked her for rescuing the puppy whose real name turned out to be Pasho. She explained that he belongs to her son who cried day and night when he lost Pasho. She also said that nothing she can do would be enough to reward Anastasia for her care and warmth. However, she produced a beautiful doll from her bag. Anastasia could not believe her eyes. At first, she did not want to accept the reward because she felt loving the puppy was rewarding enough. The lady insisted and gave her no choice. After the lady left with her puppy, Anastasia's mother said.

- Remember, dear, after the worst storm, the sun or even a rainbow appears.

#### Noha Kabbani

# My Picture Book My Sister

I'm going to have a sister in nine months.

Mummy says it takes that long because my sister is busy in her tummy getting big and strong.

When she is here we can play all day.

I will share my toys with her and we will stay up all night making noise.

I will be her older sister, so she will have nothing to fear. I will protect her from anything far or near.

Oh! How much fun it will be when she finally gets here!

#### Mariam El Batran

## When I grow up, what do I want to be?

I certainly do not want to be an engineer,

Nor a doctor,

Nor a teacher,

Nor a policeman,

Nor a ballerina.

Nor a sportsman,

Nor a fireman.

I want to be something bigger and bigger;

I want to be the "Kindness" of my mum's heart;

I want to be the "Chivalry" of my father;

I want to be the "Love" of a sibling;

I want to be the "Forgiveness" of a friend;

I want to be the "Blessings" of a newborn;

I want to be the "Righteousness" of a policeman;

I want to be the "Bravery" of a fireman;

I want to be the "Tolerance" of God's creatures;

I want to be the "**Dedication**" of a doctor;

I want to be the "Generosity" of a teacher;

And next time, someone asks me:

When you grow up, what do you want to be?

I will look up to them and say; I want to be the "Good" in life.

#### Marwa Moussa

## Little Laila and The Galabya

Little Laila loves Egypt, Even though she lives in London.

She always wants to visit Egypt,
And know all about Egypt, except one thing.

She went up to her mother and asked a question, One that is so cute, it made her mother laugh.

"Mummy, mummy, Why do men in Egypt wear dresses?"

Asked little Laila in the cutest of way.

"They look very strange with mustaches and dresses, don't they?"

Her mother laughed, "These are not dresses sweet little Laila.

They are called Galabeyas"

"Galabeya, Gayalabya... never heard this word before!"

Little Laila smiled and said:

"Galabeya, Gayalabya... never heard this word before!"

Her mother explained, "Galabeyas are costumes Egyptian farmers wear. On hot sunny days, Galabeyas keep them cool"

"They'd often gather them to the side" Her mother explains,

"To prevent the Galabeyas from getting wet or dirty."

"Clever Egyptian farmers" laughed little Laila.

"Can I wear a Galabeya too?"

"Galabeya, Galabeya... never heard this word before!"

#### Hanin Omari

#### Do You Have Fears?

I hear this voice in my head.

I get goose bumps and I get scared,

"Are you scared of a cat?" my little sister asks.

"Yes." I answer as I hold her hand.

A cat might be fluffy, its eyes as blue as a sea,

But when she looks at me, sea storms blow my world with fear.

"Meow, meow," she follows me.

"I want some food" may simply be what she means.

But to my ears, it's like a tiger's growl.

I feel so sad, when people make fun of me,

I know it's a cat but please understand me.

I am not stupid or spoiled,

But the sight of a cat turns my world into a dark wood.

I don't want to hurt her, or see her hungry,

But the more we're apart, the more I'm happy.

"Do you know Alexander the Great?

The Greek warrior who fought on land and sea?

Yes.. He feared cats, just like me!"

When someone laughs at me,

I look at them and say:

"I am a human being, and I have fears,

My fear is called "ailurophobia"

What's the name of your fear?"

#### Mohamed Sherif AbdelLatif

## My Cairo Picture Book

## Page 1:

My name is Amr. I live in Cairo and I am the maestro of my world.

## Page 2:

As I walk down the streets of my city, I see the performers of my orchestra everywhere.

## Page 3:

Going down the stairs of my home, as my feet hit the ground, the sound of the percussion starts my song.

Every step is an instrument in my orchestra.

### Page 4:

In the streets of Cairo, I hear cars honking like trumpets.

Every car driver is a professional trumpeter.

#### Page 5:

I hear birds twittering in the early morning.

Every bird produces a sweet sound like music from a harmonica.

## Page 6:

Every car accident produces a cadence, a stop, in my beautiful song.

### Page 7:

People laughing, children crying, men and women shouting are the lead vocals

Every sound they produce is an opera piece; a rhythmic sound.

## Page 8:

Alone, each of these sounds may mean nothing.

But in my head, they make up the beautiful orchestra of my world.

## Hanya Azzouni

## **Family History**

This is a simple picture: it is one of Ghalia and her grandfather. The composition is simple: a small chubby figure and a much larger stout figure. The comparison is obvious, but the resemblance is clear. Roles are reversed: Ghalia is sitting on her grandfather's chair, drowning in it. He is standing right behind her, as he always has been; protective and supportive. Though he towers over the little figure, it is more like a big hug; a hug that she will always remember.

Ghalia is a small one, amazed by the all the objects on his desk. She stares at the phone with a focused gaze. Her grandfather is holding a similar gaze, in the same direction, yet it is not focused on the phone. His gaze is focused on Ghalia. It was the gaze of a grandfather gives his granddaughter. They always had that connection, that mutual and secret understanding of what their relationship means to each of them.

She always enjoys going into her grandfather's office; it is a treasure trove. She knows the objects on his desk by heart, and has favorites.

Ghalia spends a lot of time studying these objects, paintings, photographs, certificates and more. Each is treasure for a tiny person. Her grandfather enjoys the time she spends in his office. The time they shared is part of the quiet friendship they have, and the basis of their future relationship. They do not necessarily have to talk, but they spend this time in his office, in each other's company.

#### Nadine Nour el Din

#### I Am

I am not dumb,
But that's what people assume.
I am not alone,
But I live in a vacuum.

I am not blind,
But there are things I cannot see.
I am not deaf,
But some things sound different to me.

I don't know my place, In this world so grand.

Your hand on mine, Lets me know where I stand.

I don't know of a cure

For my mother's tears.

They're a leaky faucet,

That hasn't been fixed for years.

I wait for a miracle,

I wait every day.

I need my miracle,

And for that miracle, I pray.

I am autistic.

That label is my voice.

I am autistic.

In that matter, I have no choice.

I am not tragic,

Don't cry for me.

I am a miracle waiting to happen.

Still a caterpillar, that doesn't know what it'll be.

## The Spirit of the Place

# The Abdel-Tawab Youssef Center for Children's Culture

# Enjy Mito, Hend Elhady, Iman Hassan, Mona Abdelrahman, Najwa Ibrahim and Yassmine Abdel-Moniem

With a spectacular view of the River Nile, the three Pyramids at a distance in the background, and the lush green spot known as the Island of Gold in the foreground, the apartment that was flooded with boxes of books is slowly but surely emerging into what will soon become the Abdel-Tawab Youssef Center for Children's Culture. We, Enjy Mito, Hend Elhady, Iman Hassan, Mona Abdelrahman, Najwa Ibrahim and Yassmine Abdel-Moniem are graduates of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University who joined forces with Professor Loubna Youssef to unpack hundreds of boxes from the home of the late writer and intellectual Abdel-Tawab Youssef and his late wife Notaila Rashed (Mama Loubna), the editor-in-chief of Samir magazine for children for more than four decades. Although we never met Youssef in person, he has been inspiring in more ways than one and the process of classifying his books has been most enriching. Starting in July 2016 during the summer holiday, we met on a weekly basis, but when we started teaching, we met once or twice a month. Because we start the journey to the Center at 3:00 pm, we share a meal as soon as we arrive. This is always a good time to share our own stories that are both personal and academic. For us, this has also been a chance to rejoice about the number of boxes that have been unpacked and the number of books in the excel sheet that constitutes Youssef's bibliography.

As a team, without much planning, we became two groups working on two treasure troves: one on the boxes of books by Abdel-Tawab Youssef himself, and the other on his private collection of Arabic and English books for both children and adults. Hundreds of thousands. How and when did he write all these books and how and when did he accumulate this library? It became clear to us that Abdel-Tawab Youssef was not only a creative writer but a researcher as well. His manuscripts are endless: these are still in boxes, untouched. Hend and Yassmine unpacked boxes that had books by Youssef, and Mona sat at the computer, diligently producing an excel sheet of the books he wrote. This list grew every time a new box was unpacked. Alrawa'a, Yassmine would scream out: "OH! Another box!" And everyone الروائع would laugh.

Najwa acquired a passion for classifying the books of Youssef's library and Enjy and Iman joined her. The shelves that were physically empty are now overflowing with books: stories for children of all ages and from all over the world. There are short stories, novellas, plays, poetry, folktales, picture books. A treasure trove. There is a special section for books on theory, encyclopedias, books on pedagogy and culture, and translated books.

The Abdel-Tawab Youssef Research Center has brought us together. For us, this Center is not simply a library, but a home and a place to have fun. During these meetings we have established a bond: we laugh, eat, listen to music, pray (and Mona leads the prayers), sing, take selfies and share them on our Wts App Group, celebrate birthdays, Valentine and engagements. We now have a log book for borrowing books and a map of the library. The Center is growing and we are growing with it.

Abdel-Tawab Youssef left behind many treasures: books and a beautiful family of children and grandchildren. His work and this loving family is growing to become an even bigger family that remembers him and is hoping that his legacy will inspire others as it has been inspiring us. It is true we have the same academic background, but this experience has been affecting each of us in a different way. Energized, but each in her own way would go home with her own set of stories to tell. We have been learning from this experience and acquiring different skills. These are our individual reflections:

## **Engy Mito**

Demonstrator at the British University in Cairo (BUE).

Title of MA Thesis: Cultural Memory as Form of Resistance in Selected Works by Naomi Shihab and Amin Haddad.

Taking part in the Abdel-Tawab Youssef project that will be a Cultural Center for Children soon, hopefully, has made me visualize the truly incredible world of Abdel-Tawab Youssef. On first arriving to this Center, I admit I was partially ignorant of his inspiring world. I had been struggling to find time to finish my thesis until I found my way to this place. Astonished to see the amount of boxes waiting eagerly to be unleashed, I instantly realized how trapped my imagination was. With every box we unpacked, something inexplicable was growing inside of us. At first I thought I was coming to help, but now admit this is not the case. The truth is what we have been experiencing is much greater. I realized that I was learning rather than helping.

Abdel-Tawab Youssef is a man of boundless imagination. Every book he wrote is a journey on its own. The limitless amalgam of cultures within his books is astonishing. As I observed this rich empire of books, I could not help but wonder about the kind of person he was. Abdel-Tawab Youssef was a true manifestation of resistance. He completely freed his imagination and disregarded any geographical or cultural limitation, and decided to unite the world through his work. Hope, faith, hard work and an exceptional sense of imagination were the secret ingredients of his success.

His work is an inspiration not only in content, but in the way he wrote them. Luck played no role in it, but only perseverance. We sometimes heard the stories behind writing some of his books. He surly faced obstacles, but he managed: "it was hard work," Dr. Loubna said. His private collection of creative writing is a wealth on its own. As for his private book collection, he has books on every subject including parenting, pedagogy, children psychology, sociology, folklore, international literature, religion, history, geography, media, and many more. My conclusion is that it takes more than just talent to write books and to have such a library.

With every visit, we, as members of a team, grew more and more attached to one another and to the place. Mona, Hend, Najwa, Iman, Yassmin and I do our best to make our visits as regular as we can. This space has become our own small secret haven; and Abdel-Tawab Youssef himself proved to be a tale of faith, love, determination, and most of all creativity and hard work. To him we are grateful for this truly inspiring experience.

### Hend Khaled ElHadv

Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Languages, Modern Sciences and Arts University.

## Title of MA Thesis: The Journey and Bakhtine's Chronotope in L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time and Selected Arabic Stories for Children

Because we are all M.A. candidates, the experience in this Research Center has an academic and a social dimension. For me, because I am working on children's literature, the unpacking of the books in this field was most inspiring. Arranging and sorting them out, has been directly helpful not only in the research process, but has also been motivational. The number of book about child psychology, what children's literature is, what children's rights are, and how to teach children is amazing. In addition to all these books on theory, there are countless books for children: short stories, picture books, plays, novellas and novels that are written by the pillars of children literature in the East and West. There are books by Kamel Kilany, Hans Christian Anderson, C. S. Lewis, Ted Hughes and many, many others. There is also a huge variety of books in many languages, in Arabic, English, French and German. There are even books for children that are written in Asian symbols that we could not decipher.

As I was writing one of my chapters, I suffered from a writing block. During one of our meetings, I opened a box and was faced with Youssef's book "سيف الوقت" (The Sword of Time). I opened it and read out loud the first few lines about a girl named Israa who is wasting her time. For me, what was alarming was that Israa, the name of the girl, directly refers to the focus of my thesis which is about Prophet Muhammad's *alisrā' wa almi'rāj* journey. This story reappeared seven or eight times on that day. Every time it appeared to one of us, we laughed: "this is a message from God to you, Hend." One copy of the book that haunted me became my own, and I treasure it. This experience helped me in overcoming my mental block.

For me, and I dare say for us as a team, the Center is now a place that is filled with memories. There was a time when it was an empty space. Before the refrigerator arrived, the air conditioner helped in cooling the soft drinks. We rejoiced the day the refrigerator worked. This excitement is felt with every change that takes place: the day the chandeliers were installed was a day to remember since for a while, all we had was one night stand. We also used the night stand to make animal shadows on the walls with our hands in the evening. Emptying the boxes and seeing the book shelves overflowing with books, is wonderful, but it leads Najwa to reclassify the books. These are all feelings and memories of a sense of accomplishment.

Sometimes this place helped me in alleviating moments of tension. After my engagement, Mohamed, my fiancé was informed that his request to get a UK visa to go to start his Ph.D. was rejected. We heard this piece of news on the very day Mohamed was going to join me to meet the team at the Center about which he had heard a great deal. Beside himself, he gave me a lift and started driving home. Reaching the Center and discovering that there was a celebration in our honour, I rang him up on his mobile phone to let him know. Pleased to hear this, he decided to join us. Meeting the members of the team and two other members of the Youssef family, he received support that eventually led to writing a petition that enabled him to go on his journey. For both of us, this was a day to remember.

#### Iman Abdel-Gawad

# Title of MA Thesis: (Im)politeness in the Dramatic Dialogue of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) by Lorraine Hansberry

The idea of working with the team that is taking part in organizing the Abdel-Tawab Youssef library has been delightful. This experience gave us insight into the life of a prominent Egyptian writer who has surprised us with an amazing number of books with fascinating stories. We opened and classified endless boxes of books: a sea with no end. From his bibliography we realize that there was a time when he was able to produce a book every week. The themes he dealt with are also varied and diverse: he left no stone unturned. He is such an inspiration, a source of power and pride, and a model of ingenuity. Although I only met him once (and I am happy I did), this experience in his library makes me feel I know him well. A self-made man, Youssef has enriched the world of Egyptian children with countless stories, and in return he received innumerable awards.

Working in this Center confirms Dr. Loubna Youssef's motto that "Life is a struggle." The accomplishments of Abdel-Tawab Youssef provide evidence that he made a strenuous effort to leave such a legacy. The shelves of the library that were once empty, are now decorated with books, knowledge, science, literature and hope. To me it all looks like a colorful portrait, with the beauty of the overflowing Nile, greenery and the three Pyramids in the background rendering the scene sublime. We sing, eat, talk, listen to music, pray, read, learn, work and celebrate the life of a great man.

#### Mona Abdelrahman

Demonstrator, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University

## Title of MA Thesis: An Archetypal Reading of Mysticism in **Selected Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins**

Since I started taking part in unpacking the books of Abdel-Tawab Youssef Research Center for Children in July 2016, I started writing a diary. I did this to emulate my professors in the Department of English who often talk nostalgically about their achievements and their rich past. In writing my diary, I have been recording landmarks in the history of my life, documenting the details of days that I cherish, and memories I will yearn for when I grow older. In time, I felt the enthusiasm of taking part in the dream of launching the Center running through my

veins. As a young scholar, I feel honoured to be contributing to making the immeasurable journey of Abdel-Tawab Youssef available to the world. Hend and I have been responsible for recording the list of his books on an excel sheet on the computer. Working on this excel sheet to compile his bibliography has been thrilling. With every new series we recorded, we felt the rewarding taste of progress. He produced more than one thousand books. Alarming!

As we worked on organizing the library, a wonderful feeling started growing in me. With every new box we opened, there was a sense of discovery. I was fascinated by his precious collection of books about children's literature, psychology, history, theory, growth and development, and many other fields. There is a sense of sharing and merriment in everything we do: when we open a new box, listen to music, pray together, eat, and discuss our academic and personal lives. There is warmth in team work, joy in the simplicity with which we act, and determination in fulfilling a cause.

With every meeting, I start recording the very many possible research papers that can be produced to explore Abdel-Tawab Youssef's intellectual development and the enlightening effect that his books can have on children's literature as a field of knowledge and on the children who read his works. One of the remarkable characteristics of his books is that they carry messages conveyed in exquisitely simple ways. When I attended the ceremony organized by the Unit of Children's Culture that he established in the Supreme Council of Culture (30th January 2016) to pay tribute to his contributions, I left with a sense of regret that I never met this man. The feelings of love, appreciation, gratitude and respect towards him were overwhelming. The result is "El-Ehsān", a key concept in Islam, is the one term that reverberated in my heart on my way home and continues to echo in my mind until now when I step into the Center. This is not an easy word to translate into English through one equivalent; but it means magnanimity, benevolence and doing good deeds. All the members of the team, who worked at the research center, at some point wondered about and discussed the possible motives that led him to diligently write all these books. We were told that there was a time in his life when

he was determined to produce a new book every day. For someone in Egypt to be able to do this single handedly is a miracle. From my point of view, his main motive in leaving such a treasure is the quality that became associated with his name, namely "El-Ehsān". Because I became familiar with most of his writings in the past months, this quality became linked with another, namely "El-Etqān", another key concept in Islam which refers to diligence and meticulousness. His books show that Youssef was a conscientious perfectionist. May he rest in peace and may God bless his soul for "Truly, Allah loves Al-Muhsinun (those who do good)" (The Qur'an, Al Bagarah 2:195).

## Najwa Ibrahim

Demonstrator, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University

Title of MA Thesis: Revisiting Myth and Folklore during Irish and Egyptian National Crises: A Study of Selected Plays by W.B. Yeats and Naguib Sorour

The thought of writing about the experience of participating in the first steps of launching Abdel-Tawab Youssef Center for Children's Culture is intimidating. The confusion stems from a myriad of warm memories and flashes related to this place. I can only think of it as a "Warm Haven". It is a place which renders experiences and memories enriching and illuminating on the academic and personal levels. Academically, being a Center for "Children's Culture", it comprises hundreds of literary, religious, historical, scientific, and reference books. This soon to be research institution proved to be our rich academic source of books: we borrow books that help us with our theses and enrich our lives.

When I think of this place, I regard it as a bee-hive: we work together, have fun and are productive in the process. On the personal level, this experience taught me a great deal. It helped me to discover certain traits about myself. Being part of a team that comprises such beautiful young ladies, I discovered that I can be "bossy" at times and meticulous about classification and organization. Opening the endless stacks of boxes, we often did not know what to expect. I chose to take part in classifying books and putting them on the shelves. In time, I realized that the classification process was imperfect and the books needed re-classification. Now, I am reclassifying what I have already reclassified. This process has become never ending and this is now a common joke.

Working in the Centre also taught me that simplicity and patience are crucial in any building process. It taught me to accept a refrigerator in the middle of the reception area and that an air conditioner can temporarily be used as a refrigerator. Such memories will always be engraved in my mind because they concretize the idea that growth and development require time. This is an enriching place, and I think that each and every member of our team leaves a part of herself in the place.

#### **Yassmin Ahmed**

## English Instructor, Graduate Student in the English Translation Diploma, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University

In this experience, I have delved deep into hundreds and hundreds of books written by Abdel-Tawab Youssef. Being among these books makes me feel as if I am in a magical world. In time, it became clear to me that although the main interests of Abdel-Tawab Youssef are Children's Literature and Islamic Studies, he integrates many other areas of knowledge as well. To deliver his message, he deals with politics, psychology, sociology, science and technology, and more. I was overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of his intellect, his love of life, his sense of humor and the magic of the world he created for children.

My task in the Center has been to classify his books. Initially, thinking that this should be easy, experience taught me that with the diversity of what Youssef left behind, the classification took several phases until we opened all the boxes that included copies of his books. After classifying the books of several boxes, we opened more and more. Whenever I open a box, I find different books in the series of the Masterpieces. In time, my nickname became Yassmin

Rawa'a روائع. He wrote works of fiction and non-fiction; he produced creative works and translations; and within each of these, there is even more room for classification. He wrote novels, novellas and short stories, plays, picture books, how to... books, encyclopedias about the environment and the Arabic language. The list goes on and on.

On the personal level, I enjoy working with the members of the team: we have been enjoying unforgettable moments. Although we are different, there is a bond between us now. My motto in life now follows this quote "Good friends and good books: this is the ideal life." The time we spend together gives me a sense of relief: I temporarily escape from worries and anxieties, and become better equipped to face them. It is like a safe haven or a comfort zone. We learn and share knowledge. We sing, laugh, pray, share food, work and have a good time. We talk and share our experiences: our joys and sorrows. To sum it up, we share moments that will last forever.



# On Children's Literature



### Redeeming the Medusa:

# An Archetypal Examination of Hughes' *The Iron Woman*Eman El-Nouhy

# Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University

The myth of the Medusa tells the story of a beautiful woman who faced adversities, was metamorphosed into a monstrous figure and beheaded; but with this beheading other mythical figures that represent beauty emerged from her body. Miriam Dexter gives a more detailed account. According to her, the myth of the Medusa relates that a beautiful, golden-haired Gorgon promises to dedicate her life to priesthood and chastity (26-32). In most versions of the myth, including that related by Dexter, Medusa is raped by Poseidon, the sea-god, and therefore her virginity is compromised. Medusa is subsequently reprimanded for this carnal sin by the war-goddess, Athena, who transforms her exquisite golden locks of hair into poisonous snakes (ibid.). Despite the disparity in the different adaptations of the myth as to whether or not Medusa was willing to be seduced/raped, all the versions seem to agree that Athena never blamed the male offender (who is also Zeus's brother and, therefore, Athena's uncle); rather, she casts her abrasive castigation on the female temptress/victim. In Dexter's account, Medusa's seductive eyes are transformed into blood-shot, fierce globes that terrify those who see her. Her enchanting rosy-white complexion takes on a gruesome green tinge. When she saw her own reflection, Medusa ran away to Africa, and never came back. She was finally emancipated from this eternal living hell when Perseus, the son of Zeus, put an end to her misery by cutting off her head in order to win his promised prize from Athena—Andromeda's hand in marriage. From Medusa's blood, sprang Pegasus and Chrysaor, the children she was supposed to have born after being impregnated by Poseidon (ibid.).

For decades, feminists have tried to dismantle and argue against

the myth of the horrid Medusa. Dexter is a critic who believes that the Medusa "should be viewed in all her complexity, through a nonpatriarchal lens" (29). This paper claims that the celebrated British author and poet Ted Hughes in *The Iron Woman*, his novella for children, did precisely that: he redeemed the Medusa and presented her in a new light that revealed her as a victim, a healer, and a generator of lives. The Iron Woman, which was written as a seguel to The Iron Man, is also an eco-fable that aims at creating environmental awareness amongst teenagers and adults alike. Reading the work of Ted Hughes reveals that he is a staunch believer in the necessity of shocking his readers into truly fathoming the dangers of a deteriorating Mother Nature. In commenting on Hughes's aversion towards the impact of technological progress on the environment, Keith Sagar notes,

The history of Western civilization has been the history of man's increasingly devastating crimes against Nature, Nature defined not only as the earth and its life forms, powers and processes, but also as the female in all its manifestations, and as the 'natural man' within the individual psyche. It is the story of man's mutilation of Nature in his attempt to make it conform to the Procrustean bed of his own patriarchal, anthropocentric and rectilinear thinking. In his review of Max Nicholson's *The* Environmental Revolution, Hughes firmly linked the ecological crisis to the role of the poet and to the myth which subsumes all other myths, the myth of the quest (1-2).

Hughes fuses the Medusa myth into his eco-fable to facilitate an archetypal awakening that might reach his readers' unconsciousness and hence force them to recognize the atrocities they have committed against Nature, who is also "the female in all its manifestations." The Iron Woman is a story that attempts to redeem the sacrilege of Nature as well as the desecration of woman. The myth of the Medusa, therefore, becomes a metaphor in the novella for all that is feminine, including Mother Nature.

The name "Medusa" is never mentioned or even hinted at in *The Iron* Woman. In fact, the novella's title invites the reader to an interpretation that is quite remote from anything ancient or mythological, since an Iron Woman is obviously a product of a technologically-advanced age (within which a mythical Medusa is not likely to dwell). Yet, the enormous figure of the Iron Woman on the cover of the 1993 Faber and Faber edition, with her snake-like hair and ugly green complexion, cannot but recall the image of the Medusa, to those who know her. Despite the invitation from the artwork on the cover, the casual teenage reader may not notice the relationship between the myth of the Medusa and the story of *The Iron Woman*. This novella is a fable with a simple story line about an iron giantess who emerges from a marsh after having endured the suffering caused by toxic waste being thrown into the river. Enraged, the Iron Woman is intent on destroying all the men who worked in the Waste Factory. She is first discovered by Lucy, a young girl who is petrified that the Iron Woman will kill her father since he is one of the men who works at the Waste Factory. Lucy solicits the help of two male figures, a young boy named Hogarth and the Iron Man. At first, the Iron Woman casts a spell on everyone by making them all hear horrible screeching screams as soon as they touch each other. She hopes that this punishment will force them to stop polluting the river for two reasons: either because they simply will not tolerate the punishment, or because they hear the screams of the creatures they are destroying, and hence empathize with them. However, this punishment proves futile in its attempt to get everybody to stop throwing pollutants into the river. Losing her patience, the Iron Woman decides that the time has come to kill them all! The Iron Man convinces the Iron Woman not to destroy the men who work at the Waste Factory, but rather to try to change them. He then invests the Iron Woman with the super powers of his slave dragon, and with these powers she is able to transform all the men into sea creatures. They are thus forced to live in the very waters they polluted and to get a taste of their own poison. The men-turned-fish finally comprehend the damage they have incurred and express their regret, as evidenced by the bubbles that come out of their mouths. After these bubbles appear collectively, the Iron Woman is sure that the men have truly repented, and she transforms them back into their human form. However, she leaves each man with a token that will forever remind him of his transgression against the earth: irreversible white hair.

This paper will develop two arguments: one that concerns global environmental issues, while the second is related directly to the personal life of Ted Hughes. The first argument proposes that Hughes made extensive use of the myth of the Medusa in order to convey a universal message, and that is: Mother Earth cannot be redeemed from humanity's insistence on destroying her unless each and every human being is able to delve deep down into his psyche, stare fear in the face and subsequently own up to the fact that s/he is responsible for the decay that has come upon her. The Medusa here is a metaphor for every person's fear of encountering his own dark deeds. The second line of argument puts forward a theory that Ted Hughes the man is also implicated in this redemption process, which cannot take place unless he also stares fear in the face and acknowledges his responsibility for sparking the fuel behind his wife's suicide. In the second argument, the Medusa becomes a metaphor for a defiled, victimized woman—of Sylvia Plath, who committed suicide shortly after she discovered that Ted Hughes had committed adultery. In much the same manner that Hughes used to "drive through Sylvia's poems" as his poem "The City" reveals, this paper proposes that Hughes appears to have coauthored The Iron Woman with Plath by invoking her presence at every stop--that she was his Medusa, and that the Medusa was his muse for this particular novella. More than a muse, the Medusa was a magical healer for Hughes, who believed in the medicinal power of myths. In "Myth and Education", which is specifically addressed to children, teachers and parents, Hughes (1970) notes:

I think in fact you only invent the myths you need. I don't think it is possible to invent a story that your whole being doesn't need in this way of a myth that is trying to heal you. You get the story from the process of pulling yourself together again... You cannot invent a myth unless it's made in you in this way. You think of one myth rather than another because that myth is the one that belongs to you at that moment. You cannot create imaginatively anything that isn't made in healing yourself, otherwise it just isn't imaginative: it doesn't work on the hearer in an imaginative way...It's only when it comes out of a real

healing process that it works on the hearer as a healing process and he says, "That's it. That's imaginative. That's what I want." (68).

In fact, Hughes said the above lines almost a quarter of a century before he wrote *The Iron Woman* and seven years after Plath's suicide in 1963. In an oddly ominous way, his words express faithfully the plot pattern of *The Iron Woman* as a manifestation of a myth that describes the life of Hughes through the death of Plath. With hindsight, it becomes apparent that the myth of the Medusa was that magical healer that came out of Hughes's attempt to "pull himself together" as he wrote *The Iron Woman* twenty years after his wife's suicide.

A careful reading of *The Iron Woman* reveals five major parallelisms between the story of the Iron Woman and that of the Medusa: First, both women emerge from an "ultra" world that is symbolic of a womb. The Iron Woman emerges from a marsh, in sharp contrast to the Iron Man, whose first appearance is on a mountaintop. The implication is that this Iron creature is being born from a mother's womb. Similarly, Medusa had dwelled in Athena's temple before she was raped by Poseidon. Seelig has suggested that the temple of Athena is also suggestive of the womb: "Athena's temple represents her body. The rape of the virgin in the temple-body of the virgin goddess represents the deflowering of the daughter by her father. Athena's rage at the violation of her temple-body is displaced on Medusa" (898). Thus the parallelism between the defilement of Mother Earth's womb in The Iron Woman and the defilement of Athena's womb in the myth of the Medusa becomes evident. In both cases, men are responsible for the defilements.

Secondly, both the Iron Woman and the Medusa share an affinity with the waters: the Iron Woman emerges from a marsh on a mission to save the river, while the Medusa is linked to a jellyfish by virtue of her name ("Medusa" is a scientific name for a jellyfish). The Iron Woman has been defiled because of all the toxins that have been "ejaculated" into the waters, while Medusa is raped by the sea-god, Poseidon. This second parallelism, along with the first, sets forth the pattern of myth reversal. In the first parallelism, both women have

been desecrated somehow by the vile crimes of male perpetrators. In the second parallelism, the Iron Woman reacts against this defilement and emerges from Poseidon's territory (the water), ready to cast her revenge on all that is male.

Thirdly, both women physically transform men into an altered state: the Medusa turns men to stone while the Iron Woman turns men to sea creatures. Once again, a myth reversal is evident here: The Iron Woman, in effect, is doing what the male sea-god failed to do himself. It was Poseidon's business to protect the waters, but instead he defiled them, and now it is the Iron Woman who will rise up to the occasion to do it on his behalf. In a reversal of roles, the Iron Woman becomes a sea goddess and the sea god becomes an impotent defiler.

Fourthly, both female creatures share a similar appearance, especially insofar as their hair is concerned. This is the only physical feature that Hughes provides as a hint that the Iron Woman is a Medusa figure, describing it as "huge coils of wires in a complicated arrangement" (19). It is also the most significant feature, since the vipers on the Medusa's head were put there by Athena specifically to ward off the men who were previously attracted to her because of her beautiful golden locks. This punishment is reversed in *The Iron* Woman, and it is now the female heroine who casts a similar spell on all the men in the story by transforming their hair into an irreversible white hue. This paves the way to the fifth and final parallelism, which is that both the Medusa and the Iron Woman have somehow been harmed by men and, therefore, cast their vengeance exclusively on men. There are no known female victims of the Medusa (Silverman 117), just as there are no female victims in *The Iron Woman*. This is in line with the initial argument of this paper—that Hughes revived the myth of the Medusa to redeem all that she stands for, the feminine Mother Nature.

The Iron Woman appears to operate at two levels: the first is the clear-cut message to teenagers that they must take a stance against the polluting of the earth; and the other is at the esoteric, archetypal level which is directed towards adults, and is a statement against all male defilement of that which is female, an act which Hughes himself is guilty of committing. At the very start of the novella, the Iron Woman is making a gory penetration out of the earth "amid gurglings and sucklings, and with a groaning wail, the thing stood erect" (5). Up to this point in the story, the reader is not informed that this creature is a woman. The image here is quite clearly phallic to an adult reader, and the suggestion is that this is a male creature, not a female. Because the imagery is vicious rather than passionate, it can only be suggestive of rape, and in a nonsensical reversal of male-female roles, it appears as if it is this iron being that is about to rape someone. However, the imagery is suggestive so that only a close and conscientious adult interpretation would reveal the latent sexual connotations. The Iron Woman is being delivered from the underworld of the dead—as a resurrected Medusa—and her emergence is described as a dreadful delivery:

Already the head was out. It still didn't look much like a head—simply a gigantic black lump, crowned with reeds and streaming with mud. But the mouth was clear, and after that first wailing cry the lips moved slowly, like a crab's spitting out mud and roots. (6)

Again, although there is nothing in this birth process that implicates the Medusa directly, the head that is "crowned with reeds" is certainly suggestive of the vipers crowning Medusa's head. Here the reversal of mythic roles begins to become evident: Just as the Medusa was raped by Poseidon, the Iron Woman emerges ready to avenge her in an asinine reversal of roles, where the victim becomes the perpetrator.

This violently orgasmic mood of the story comes to an abrupt halt, a halt which at first might appear awkwardly placed, since it comes about introducing to the reader a seemingly irrelevant birdwatcher:

About half a mile away a birdwatcher was bent over a bittern's nest, holding a dead bittern and felling the old eggs on which the dead bird had been sitting. From his hide, only ten feet away, he had been watching this bird all day, waiting for the eggs to start hatching...He stared through his binoculars. Two big blowflies were inspecting the eye of the bittern on the nest. With a shock,

he realized the bird was dead. All day, and probably yesterday, too, he had been watching a dead bird. This was more important than any noises. So he had waded out, and lifted the dead mother from her eggs. He was horrified. She was quite stiff... (7-8)

The above excerpt includes the single most striking image in *The Iron* Woman that supports the argument that Hughes redeemed the Medusa in an attempt to heal his own wound after Plath's suicide. In this scene. the birdwatcher suddenly realizes that the bird he had been watching all day was dead. This recognition terrifies him much more than the strange howls that he hears all around him. He is not aware that an iron woman is being born right next to him, for he is too preoccupied with watching this dead bird. The birdwatcher is clueless, just as the reader is, as to why this bird is dead. The seemingly awkward halt that brings in a birdwatcher out of nowhere into the story is deliberate. It is meant to shock the reader into a mental standstill that in turn forces him to contemplate the role of this birdwatcher, who appears momentarily, disappears, then never appears again. The reader is forced to contemplate this bird's fatality through the birdwatcher's eyes and to absorb the enormity of his devastating disbelief. The image of a cold, dead bird sitting on her eggs is reminiscent of Plath, lying dead in the kitchen, while her two toddlers were crying in their bed, waiting to be nurtured by a dead mother who will never come back. Hughes, the father, had not been there for them either, as he had not been aware that their mother had, in fact, abandoned them for good. A similar picture is painted by Hughes in his poem "Life after Death", which he wrote specifically for Plath in *Birthday Letters*, many years after her suicide:

As my body sank into the folk-take Where the wolves are singing in the forest For two babes, who have turned, in their sleep, Into orphans Beside the corpse of their mother. (lines 46-50)

The episode of the birdwatcher thus describes Hughes's own terror, a terror that overcame him when he was told that the mother of his children had died, and the guilt he carried on his shoulders for not being able to apprehend what was right there under his nose: Sylvia Plath had been dead long before she committed suicide. She died the day her husband abandoned her for another woman. The birdwatcher is the quintessential expression of Ted Hughes the man, the father, and the poet.

The birdwatcher is a minor character who appears only once in the novella, but he is also the first male character to make an appearance in The Iron Woman. Yet, despite his transient presence, the birdwatcher is the raison d'être for The Iron Woman. The following statement in The Iron Woman explains why: "And when that second booming had come, he had just seen (my italics) something far more startling" (8). It is this single statement describing the birdwatcher that epitomizes exactly what it is that Hughes is trying to tell his audience about both the planet and his life: the function of the birdwatcher is just as his name implies—to watch birds, and this is usually done for recreational purposes. In *The Iron Woman*, the birdwatcher is also a professional photographer, so he captures snapshots of the birds he watches. The reader is therefore left in awe as to why this birdwatcher should really care whether this bird is dead or alive, since he will presumably get his snapshot anyway. In "Myth and Education" Hughes contends that "photography is a method of making a dead accurate image of the world without any act of imagination" (56). In fact, what Hughes is relating to both his child and adult audience in this scene of the birdwatcher is just that: a photographer captures sight, but has no insight. It is therefore that Hughes's birdwatcher attempts to capture a living accurate image of a bird, rather than an accurate dead one. What is captivating about this ephemeral scene is that the birdwatcher had been watching the birds all day, but he had not actually seen them. At one level, the child reader is being told that the birdwatcher has not actually seen the damage that had been done to this bird as the direct cause of man's pollution of the earth; at another level, Hughes is informing his adult audience that Hughes, the husband and the father, had not seen the damage that had been done to his own bird—Plath as the direct cause of his pollution of the marriage.

The birdwatcher is an expression of the tragic flaw of the entire

human race that reigns in the age of modernity: the cause for everything that has deteriorated in our world, both physically and morally. He is an archetypal image of everything human beings watch, but never see, due to their own deliberate detachment from nature and failure to connect with their fellow living creatures. This is exactly what the Iron Woman has come to transform men into: from *watchers* to *seers*. The sheer genius of Hughes's birdwatcher metaphor lies in his ability to link him to the Iron Woman who seeks to transform in just the same manner that the Medusa transformed her victims. The stiff bird recalls the stiffness of Medusa's victims, and foreshadows the events that are about to ensue. The reader is never informed why the bird died and became stiff, but a logical deduction is its death is due to environmental causes. It can also be deduced that the Iron Woman was not responsible for this bird's death since her appearance came post-the bird's death. It was not the Iron Woman who transformed this bird into stone. This bird died due to man's irresponsible and vile acts of pollution. Not possessing this insight was the birdwatcher's tragic flaw as he watched the bird, as it was Hughes's tragic flaw in relation to Plath. Similarly, it is humanity's tragic flaw in disregarding nature and the failure to protect one another. The Iron Woman, through her power to transform, is coming to empower humanity with the insight needed for whole and healthy existence.

But the bird is not the only living creature in *The Iron Woman* that becomes stiff as stone. The insistence of the factory workers on polluting the waters, and their refusal to see the suffering of other creatures, is evidence that the workers have transformed their very souls into stone. They know that they are killing other living creatures, but they deliberately choose to inhumanely ignore this fact in order to continue living in denial of the atrocities they are responsible for. This refusal to see is called *percepticide*, a term coined by trauma scholar Diana Taylor (119-138). Percepticide is the inclination to deliberately cast a blind eye in order to avoid seeing and recognizing the bloodshed that occurs all around us. Bright comments that

the *thing* we refuse to see and the *denial* of that thing by the eye that does not see are both violent acts which result in trauma to the psyche—ours and others. It is almost as if, through dissociation, we turn *ourselves* to stone in order *not* to see (2).

This practice of percepticide is one that Lucy recognizes in her own character, and Hughes describes perceptively in *The Iron Woman*. This is clear in the scene wherein Lucy accompanies the Iron Woman to the river so that the Iron Woman may clean herself up:

Whey they reached the canal, and stood on the bridge looking down, Lucy suddenly felt guilty. For some reason, it was almost empty of water, as she had never seen it before... Lucy felt she was seeing this place for the first time. (20)

Percepticide, therefore, may be the unwillingness of someone to recognize their darker side, or what Carl Jung has dubbed the *shadow*.

The shadow, according to Jung (1958), is recognized only when it moves from its initial state of unconsciousness to a state of consciousness. Jung asserts that the shadow is

a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge" (7).

This self-knowledge is a progressive step towards individuation, which Jung (1979) defines as "the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'whole'. It is generally assumed that consciousness is the whole of the psychological individual" (274). Therefore, the healing process, the striving towards Jung's individuation, starts with this act of recognition: facing the Medusa is a confrontation with one's own fear-fear of having to deal with the damage that one has inflicted upon oneself. Hughes the man and the poet is no exception: in writing the story of the Iron Woman, Hughes is also confronting his own fear of recognizing that, in failing to see the damage he had perpetrated on Plath by committing adultery, he was somehow accountable for her suicide. In being able to see the damage one has caused, one is also recognizing their dark side and coming to terms with it. Facing

the terrifying Medusa, staring fear in the face, and subsequently being transformed into stone is, in Bright's opinion, a liberating experience. This is because "it encourages surrender to all that is and it allows stillness and silence to create space in which to regard oneselfopening the door to the alchemical phase of *coagulatio*, grounding us and integrating our experience so new birth can occur"(8).

Hughes projects his own percepticide onto that of the Waste Factory workers: They are just as blind to the consequences of their polluting of the waters as he was to the consequences of his adultery. For the healing process to begin, the polluters in *The Iron Woman* must confront the Medusa so that they may liberate themselves from the percipticide that inhabits their psyches. However, this is not an easy task. The Iron Woman initially tries to get the polluters to stop their transgressions by casting a spell that makes them all hear horrible screams the minute one human touches another. These are the screams of the sea creatures. But despite the painful and contagious bout of screams that the Waste Factory workers are exposed to, they still cannot fathom that these are the screams of the sea creatures that are being tortured in the river. They do not apprehend that this is an impending warning from the Iron Woman and still continue to pollute the waters. The factory workers are still blinded by their tragic flaw. percepticide, and although they can hear the screams, they refuse to see them:

And some of them, some more vividly than others, saw things in the screams. As they heard that dreadful outcry, they saw tiny creatures with wide mouths and terrible eyes, clinging to grass or weed or pebbles. They glimpsed the massed faces of fish, as if they were seeing the streaming leaves of a lit-up tree in a big wind at night, with every leaf the face of a fish, trembling as it screamed. (56)

This scene is comparable to a scene from hell in Dante's *Inferno*. It is meant to shock both the child and the adult reader, not in its sheer horror, but rather in the sheer horror of recognizing that these polluters still fail to see and acknowledge the atrocities they have committed. The child reader will wonder why, after being exposed to this horrific torture, the factory workers will not simply raise a white flag, admit that they were wrong all along, and resign and repent on the spot. Most adult readers, however, will recognize their own percepticide: for they know only too well how many times they have been put in similar situations, where they refused to acknowledge their own shadows. In this sense, the entire theme of polluting the rivers becomes a metaphor for war or aggression, and man's nagging and irrational striving to kill or harm his fellow man. In refusing to connect with one another spiritually, the Waste Factory workers (symbolic of all mankind) in *The Iron Woman* have been cursed with a spell that will physically prevent them all from any kind of connection. Now they all have to be very careful *not* to touch each other or else they will be bombarded with those roaring screams.

However, this punishment does nothing to redeem the polluters and the Iron Woman is enraged by their stubbornness. Apparently, hearing the screams of their victims does nothing to shock them out of their percepticide, in much the same manner that hearing Plath's screams in "Lady Lazarus" did nothing to warn Hughes against his engagement in adultery:

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

**Beware** 

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air. ("Lady Lazarus" lines 79-84)

The Iron Woman, like Plath's protagonist in her poem "Lady Lazarus", decides that there can only be one solution: to kill them all! The Iron Woman reaches the peak of her madness right before the Iron Man is solicited by Lucy to intervene. Her chaotic dance is a Dionysian frenzy:

Ripping the boughs aside, her fists clenching and unclenching, her feet rising and falling, the Iron Woman had begun to dance... in front of the Iron Man whose eyes glowed bright gold. And she sang, in that deep, groaning, thundering voice of hers: "Destroy the ignorant ones. Nothing can change them. Destroy them." (65).

A striking resemblance between the Iron Woman and Plath's protagonist in "Lady Lazarus", as the above excerpts show, is the archetypal rise from the underworld, to destroy all men who have "polluted" the earth and the marriage, respectively. In writing "Lady Lazarus", Plath projects the anger she felt towards her husband onto the entirety of the male species, just like the Iron Woman decides to destroy all the men in the story. There is no logical explanation as to why the Iron Woman particularly opts to exclude women from her castigation (for surely they also had a role in polluting the river!) leading the reader more and more into realizing the thread of the Medusa myth that runs throughout the novella. For Hughes, at a more personal level, it also becomes more evident that the Iron Woman is a symbol for Plath. It is at this crucial moment in the novella—when the Iron Woman decides to destroy all the men--that Hughes prepares his audience for a direct confrontation with the Medusa. With this confrontation, the prospect of hope is heard in the rational voice of the Iron Man as he calms the Iron Woman down and convinces her to use an alternate plan:

"I have an idea." And he held up his arm.

The Iron Woman had stopped. Slowly, she lowered her arms, but her eyes, fixed on the Iron Man, glowed red as ever...

Listen to me now," said the Iron Man.

But instead of speaking he took the Iron Woman's hand and seemed to listen.

"Just as I thought," he said. "The scream is terrible. And yet it needs something extra."

...Then he took the Iron Woman's other hand with his other

hand, so he was holding both her hands in his... (65-6)

What the Iron Man is going to do now is that he will enable the Iron Woman to do exactly what the Medusas did: to transform men into an alter state. However, this time it is not a punishment. Rather, it is a grant that empowers her with that very same tool by which she may transform those who had initially transformed the Medusa into a vile creature.

The way in which the Iron Man passes his powers onto the Iron Woman are described in a scene that is, once again, abundantly sexual. However, the sexuality it is only suggested esoterically, so as to accommodate its child audience:

That spinning dark column of scales touched the Iron Woman with its drill point. It touched the top of her head.

Immediately her body seemed to begin to disappear. Actually it began to vibrate...As she vibrated, that whirling tower of darkness and scales was pouring into the Iron Woman. And as it poured into her she seemed to grow. (68)

This drilling scene of the Iron Man's "injecting" his slave dragon's power into the Iron's Woman's body is unmistakably erotic, and it mirrors the rape scene of the Medusa in reverse. Rather than being raped, the Iron Woman is lovingly impregnated by the Iron Man, and "seemed to grow" as his slave/baby is growing inside her. The Iron Woman is now both physically and spiritually stronger than the Iron Man. The physical growth she is experiencing implies that there is child growing within her. She has, thus, symbolically become a mother. The drill point going into the Iron Woman's head is yet another myth reversal. The Iron Man's "son" enters the Iron Woman's head in a mythical reverse of the myth of Athena, who was born from the head of Zeus. By investing her with his unlimited power, the Iron Man seems to have transformed the Iron Woman from an irrational animus-driven Medusa, to a rational anima-driven war heroine, an Athena who is "the ultra-conscious, intellectual rational sky goddess, her unconscious counterpart is the snaky-haired, sexually-charged 'monster' goddess of the underworld—her thwarted, wounded anima or soul" (Relke 5). After being impregnated with the Iron Man's power, the Iron Woman is no longer "terrifying" or "overwhelming", but rather a calm serenity takes over as she "laughed softly" (70). The Iron Woman, subsequently becomes the most revered of animas--the benign maternal archetype, who will use her powers to protect her shrine (the earth) and her children.

The Iron Woman thus reverses the myth of the Medusa, for she comes to redeem, and in this sense she herself is redeemed. The myth is also reversed when, rather than swallowing the dragon himself (the way Zeus mythically swallowed his consort Metis, for he feared the child rival she was pregnant with), the Iron Man allows his slave to enter the Iron Woman's body instead: "Now," he said, grinding his voice box, "now you have all the power of the Space-bat-Angel-Dragon, my might slave from the depth of the universe. It has packed itself inside you. It has become your power" (70). The Iron Man (who is an archetypal Zeus) has "impregnated" the Iron Woman with his slave, which clearly subverts the myth of Zeus and Athena. The Iron Man is not a coward, rather he is the archetype of masculine strength and his animus is at its highest point of recognition. He is not afraid of the power invested by him to the Iron Woman. He not only refuses to "swallow" her, but rather, he "impregnates" her with his omnipotent "son". If anything, this epitome of male sacrifice should have annihilated all the myths that have surrounded Hughes, accusing him of being a misogynist and an anti-feminist.

An empowered Medusa-Athena, the Iron Woman begins to exact her vengeance on the male species. The very first man that the Iron Woman chooses to transform to a sea creature is the Company Secretary: he is reduced to an eel (76), and is therefore deprived of all his organs, except his phallic one. He has become the embodiment of what he really is, a phallic-driven psyche that pollutes the Mother-Earth, and that very same phallus that polluted the Medusa. In this sense the Iron Woman symbolically destroys the man's physical frame and transforms him into an eel so that he can recognize his own shadowdriven desires. All the men have become sea creatures, and they will not become "human" again until they are able recognize themselves

for who they really are. To do that, they must enter Earth's womb and experience her pain. The Iron Woman will exact her violent revenge, but her purpose is not to extinguish, but rather to sustain. This healing role of Medusa's blood is described in Euripides' *Ion:* "Two drops of blood from the Gorgon...One [is] deadly; the other brings healing of diseases" (1421-23). This is also the healing role of myths.

Towards the end of *The Iron Woman* the readers are reminded of the scene immediately preceding that of the birdwatcher's appearance, when the Iron Woman is emerging from the earth in what has been described as ready-to-rape mode. The novella reaches its climactic end with a rape scene that was foreshadowed right from the start. The Iron Woman will indeed assume the role of rapist, but her role as rapist is a far cry from the role assumed by Poseidon. The Iron Woman's esoteric act of raping is not meant to destroy or to humiliate, but rather to redeem. The following scene from *The Iron Woman* shows that—against all mythical logic—the Medusa myth is reversed, so that the victim becomes the rapist, and the rapist becomes the victim:

The cloud seemed to be one gigantic head, a shapeless, ragged sort of head, like a jellyfish, or like an octopus—spreading out into a vast, knotted tangle of cloudy legs, covering the entire landscape. Or like an immense hairy spider, whose legs spread out across its even more immense web, that over the land.

As they watched, the mouth opened wider. The cloud was now sobbing like a giant baby, with wide-open mouth—a mouth that opened wider and wider, squeezing the eyes shut...

Its rows of eyes opened again and gazed woefully down at the two giants, and they heard: "Release me!" (96)

This is one of the most violent and erotically-charged scenes in *The Iron Woman*, although it is done with dexterity typical of Hughes—who is one of the few writers that is able to depict a rape scene in a child's book without any references to sex. The scene here describes

a jellyfish (a Medusa) crying out like a baby, asking to be released, as she is being raped, with her "legs spread out across its even more immense web". The agony of the Medusa as she is being raped is felt "as they watch, the mouth opened wider". Mythically, as the golden-haired Medusa was being deflowered, the masculine goddess Athena was watching, but she could not see the victim "sobbing like a giant baby, but wide-open mouth—a mouth that opened wider and wider, squeezing the eye shut..." This can also be regarded as the cry of Sylvia Plath, whose suicide was instigated not only by Hughes' adultery, but even more so by the fact that he, despite his shamanic insight as a poet, could not see the enormity of the damage he had caused. Hughes is the birdwatcher-photographer (whose business it was to watch), who had failed to see that the bird he was watching had turned to stone. It is the cry of the Medusa who was never seen as a victim of rape/seduction, and was sentenced to a living death for a crime she did not commit. In the meantime, her defiler is left to go free. She is the collective unconscious cry of every man, woman and child who has been subjected to the worst possible violence in the world, that one act of violence that the entire novella revolves around: the act of percepticide.

Dexter has raised the possibility of "seeing Medusa's gaping mouth of death as the vulva, the cave through which we reach the Underworld, which may be compared to the womb of the birthmother" (39). Dexter also notes that "the head as vulva can be terrifying to a male, evoking both the fear of decapitation and castration, and the fear of overpowering female sexuality" (ibid). It is a power that enables the gaping "vulva" to engulf the Iron Man:

To his amazement, Hogarth saw a long bluish tongue flash out of the spider-cloud's mouth, lash around the Iron Man like a whip, and vanish back into the mouth—taking the Iron Man with it... And in that next moment, the long tongue came flashing out again, empty, and whipped itself this time tightly around the Iron Woman...And sure enough the tongue stopped there sticking rigidly out full length. (98)

The rigid sticking out of the tongue is indisputably phallic, and when

it collides with the feminine, "it writhed, trying to free itself from the Iron Woman" (98). The suggestion is that the Iron Woman had aroused the cloud-spider, then, when it came to its fullness, she trapped him in her snare rather than allowing him to reach his anticipated delight:

The cloudy mouth gaped, with squirming lips. The eyes seemed to be climbing down over the great upper lip, to come to the help of the tongue. For the tongue was in trouble. It could free itself from the Iron Woman. Her fingers were buried in it, like dreadful pincers. The tongue tried to pull itself in through the tightly closed lips, to force her off the end of it, but she was actually climbing up it, hand over hand, dragging the tongue further out between the lips as she clawed her way up. (98)

One could argue, however, that this violent confrontation that the Iron Woman has with this giant spider perhaps goes to prove that the jellyfish-spider is not, after all, meant to be an expression of the Medusa archetype. However, nothing could be further from the truth. The protruding tongue has long been a despicable feature of the mythic Medusa (Silverman 116), and it is fitting that this tongue would be pivotal in this battle of redemption. The fact that the Iron Woman is somehow "outside herself" fighting her "other self", points to two possibilities: the first points to the archetypal psychomachia in which the Iron Woman seeks to control both her malevolent shadow and her male animus and come to terms with them, as evidenced by her desire to reinsert the phallic tongue back to where it belongs. The second possibility is probably the one Hughes intended, and that is that the Iron Woman has placed all the male species in the same boat as the Medusa, so that they are somehow getting a first-hand experience of what it is like to be a victim of rape by an almighty animus-driven god, in much the same manner that turning into sea creatures has forced them to get an immediate experience of what it feels like to inhabit a toxic river. The role has been reversed in imagery that is irrational and spontaneous, the way events proceed in a dream: the Medusa is exacting her revenge on Poseidon, the great god of the sea. The violence escalates as the Iron Woman insists on entering the cloud's "body", climbing her way up its phallic tongue, in an animus/ anima reversal of roles, for the Iron Woman has assumed the role of rapist:

The tongue stuck out, flailing this way and that. Lucy and Hogarth watched aghast. They could see the Iron Woman was now more than halfway up the tongue, climbing slowly towards the tonsils, deep inside the black gape of that mouth, which now stretched so wide it seemed to be trying to turn inside out. The sounds of retching were like incessant thunder, as the gigantic dark shape flopped about the landscape. They glimpsed the Iron Woman forcing her way over the root of the tongue into the cavern of the throat. Suddenly the mouth closed and the spidercloud slumped over the town, silent and motionless. (99)

The rape scene is complete, as indicated by the sudden anti-climax with which the scene ends. There is no delight, no passion, nothing to indicate that the spider-cloud enjoyed the ordeal in any way, as Athena had once presumed that Medusa had somehow enjoyed or instigated her own rape. The archetypal pattern in this violent scene does not end yet.

There is a reason why the Iron Man is swallowed and another reason for the Iron Woman going after him. The myth of Athena relates that Athena was born as a result of Zeus ingesting her mother, Metis. Athena never questioned or blamed him, just as she never questioned or blamed her Uncle Poseidon's rape of Medusa. According to myth, Poseidon himself was also swallowed by his father Cronus, and subsequently saved by his mother (Relke 4). The battle going on in this scene from The Iron Woman is that final battle between all that is good and all that is evil, and the final confrontation between the ego and its shadow. Once this concluding combat is won, individuation will be achieved, and the healing process will begin at so many levels. There is the healing that will be imparted at the archetypal level--one that is representative of the collective unconsciousness of all those who are reading the story of the Iron Woman, and consciously or unconsciously witnessing the redemption of the Medusa. In experiencing this, they are ridding themselves of their own pollution, in other words, their own percepticide.

There is also a personal healing process for Ted Hughes, who invoked the myth of the Medusa to release himself from his own percepticide, his inability to see the damage that he had incurred on his wife by defiling her through his act of adultery. For the healing process to come to its full course, the ultimate archetype of the anima had to be invoked, and this is the archetype of the mother:

"Confess who you are. Confess."

With each word came a thud, that shook the hill under their feet...

The Cloud-Spider's lips were opening wide, blubbery and squirming. Big tears squeezed out between the tightly closed eyelids, rolled down, and splashed through on the town beneath

"I am Mess. I am Mess," came the sobbing wail.

"And who will clean you up? Came the Iron Woman's voice, her words timed to her stamping dance-steps and the weird whanging boom that shook the hill.

"Mother," wailed the vast snail of a mouth... "Mother will clean me up." (100-1)

In this scene, the Iron Woman, who is a metaphor for the Medusa, is also the mother of Mess. In yet another illogical reversal of roles, the mother is now inside her child's body. The child has been impregnated by his mother and is, in fact, pregnant with his mother. This is the stuff of dreams, or rather of nightmares, and upon expression and integration, create healing effects. The child is now pregnant with the mother, in a reversal of the myth of Zeus who was "pregnant" with Athena after swallowing his consort, Metis. In fact, Zeus was "pregnant" with both Athena and Metis, in much the same manner that this spider-cloud is pregnant with both the Iron Man and the Iron Woman. In experiencing the trauma personally, one is able to see exactly what type of suffering one has inflicted upon his victim. Athena was herself a victim, being born a motherless child. She also had to undergo the trauma of knowing that her father had swallowed up her mother. But being a victim never stopped her from assaulting yet another victim:

Actually, Athena is guilty of assaulting two women--Medusa and Arachne. Because Arachne surpassed Athena in her creative weaving, Athena became jealous turned her into a spider (Seeling 900). There is the implication that the spider-cloud is Athena's own creation, a product of her shadow, her evil deeds, for it was Athena who turned Medusa into a woman with a snake-head, and it was also Athena who turned the beautiful Arachne into a spider.

The myth of Athena and Arachne is of central significance to this violent scene of the mother ingested by her child. In this scene, and by evoking this particular myth, Hughes also invokes another one of Plath's post-adultery poems, "Medusa". It is common knowledge that "Medusa" is a scientific name of a jellyfish, and the genus name of the moon jellyfish is Aurelia aulita. Aurelia was the name of Plath's mother, and this was something that both mother and daughter joked about (Tresca 2). Hence, the direct and obvious relationship between Medusa and Plath's mother becomes apparent. In Plath's autobiographical poem, "Medusa", the daughter is trying to break free from her mother's strangulation of her. "Plath's personal journals reveal that the poet always felt physically stymied by what she perceived as her mother's constant gaze of attention. She felt her mother within her (italics mine) as a physical presence even when speaking with her own voice" (Tresca 2). In placing the mother inside the child, Hughes seems to be impersonating Plath's own fears--fears which he may have instigated since Plath discovered that he was cheating on her while her mother had been staying with them in England. "Plath's feeling of emotional violation of being exposed (or rather, 'overexposed') in the presence of her mother soon exploded into a level of aggression against her mother the like of she had never experienced before." (Tresca 4)

Further evidence supporting this interpretation of the motheringesting child from *The Iron Woman* is Seelig's research into the possible archetypes that are relevant to the myth of Arachne and Athena. She proposes that one such archetype is that which illustrates a daughter's fear of competing with her mother's creativity (900). In Birthday Letters (1998), Hughes describes Plath's weaving of a rug and wonders, with hindsight, if this peaceful endeavor had not, in essence, been a weaving of a curse since it seemed like her emotions "bled into" that rug (135). With Plath, such a myth described her situation precisely, for "as much as Sylvia loved and respected her mother, she also felt a strong and keen desire to break free of her in order to establish her own (creative identity)" (Tresca 1). By evoking both the myths of Arachne and Medusa in *The Iron Woman*, Hughes invokes the shamanic presence of his dead wife's poetry, and hence attempts a posthumous healing process. The character of the Iron Woman is the medium by which Hughes symbolically situates Plath's mother inside Plath's body, in a reversal of roles, so that Plath may ultimately exorcise her—the way she expresses her desire to do so in her poem "Medusa"—without having to compromise her love for her.

In the end, the final exorcism in *The Iron Woman* sees the dragon "going back up" and "taking the horrible cloud with it" (101). By being inside the mother's womb, the dragon has now taken his embryonic twin, the Cloud-Spider, back to where it belongs, away from the mother, up in the sky, where it will be transformed into something beautiful, "a music of some kind" (101). The Cloud-Spider represents the evil animus that every male has to confront by staring at his own visage and accepting the violent damage he has inflicted upon himself and others. By transforming all men into sea creatures the Iron Woman has created her own "mini-Poseidons"; this reversal of myth is a mockery of the mighty god of the sea whose impotence is evidenced by his failure to protect his kingdom of water from the tainting toxins ejaculated into them by his own male kind. It is a statement that he who rapes the Medusa cannot be expected to stop his own phallic subordinates from raping the waters of the world. Ironically, it is the female victim who rises up to the occasion, becomes a goddess, and saves the world--not by raping or sabotaging or killing, as her animus-driven rapist had done, but through her feminine anima, her life-force, and her ability to make men see through the power of transformation. The men did not need to look at the Iron Woman to turn into sea creatures, they only needed to look within themselves, and that was enough to petrify them stiff. The Iron Woman sums up the entire moral behind the myth of the Medusa in the six words she utters to Lucy: "Big deep fright, big. Big, deep change" (109). The myth reversal continues as the Iron Woman leaves an imprint of her legacy upon every adult male and gives them a taste of their own poison: Their hair becomes irreversibly white. Just as Medusa was robbed of her beauty by having her beautiful locks turn into vipers, so the men are deprived of the symbol of their youth and virility. They are not, however, branded with the same ability of turning women into stone, but rather the white hair is there to remind them of their own black nature, their shadow-driven animus. The Iron Woman has a happy ending, where individuation is reached, peace is restored, the planet is cleaned, and hope is imminent.

To conclude, *The Iron Woman* implicates the myth of the Medusa as a medium by which the reader is guided into coming to terms with his/her own fear of his shadow. By facing the Medusa, becoming transformed, and experiencing the repercussions of one's own hostile actions, one is able to overcome one's percepticide. The result is a recognition of the damage one can incur upon oneself and upon others.

It was therefore essential for the factory workers to face the Medusa, to face their fear, to become transformed, and finally to undergo a resurrection that will secure the planet. While this moral operates in *The Iron Woman* at the thematic level, and is the one that will be recognized by many child and adult readers alike, there is another more personal moral that operates as a healing medicament for its author, who had, for years, remained silent regarding the tragic suicide of his wife after he cheated on her. Some scholars have contended that Plath's version of the Medusa was actually a depiction of her old. cuckolded self, which she attempted to burn down and resurrect from the ashes as her poem "Lady Lazarus" suggests (Seelig 11). Seelig is justified in assuming that, perhaps, if Plath had not terminated her own life, she would have resumed writing poems and "from the viewpoint of this new self, both of her parents would have undergone yet another transformation in her writing, one more positive and loving than the personas readers find with... 'Medusa'" (11).

This paper has shown that Ted Hughes did exactly that on Plath's behalf. By redeeming the Medusa, Hughes has redeemed the pathology of the mother-daughter relationship between Plath and her mother, and somehow, also cleaned up the "mess" that he himself was a possible cause of after he committed adultery. By evoking two of Plath's poems, "Lady Lazarus" and "Medusa", along with his own rendering of the Medusa myth, Hughes presents an account of a Medusa that was an amalgamation of his version and that of Plath in a harmonious co-authorship between the dead and the living. Using Plath as his muse and Medusa as his myth, Hughes was able to heal his wound by delving into the depth of his psyche, reaching to the profundity of the tomb where his dead wife lay, and resurrecting her in The Iron Woman. By invoking these mythical archetypes, Hughes has summoned Plath's presence as co-author and told the story she never lived to recount herself; in the last analysis, she may finally cast her vengeance and "eat men like air". The Iron Woman was a final tribute to Plath, and it was the crystal ball in which Ted Hughes the shaman wrote mystically and magically about Plath, for Plath, and with Plath.

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