

**Egyptian Arabic vs. MSA and Heritage Arabic:
A morphological approach with reference to
Western theories**

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Abstract:

Egyptian Arabic, or the vernacular, is the language spoken by the average Egyptian, educated or not. This language is not a corrupt or a vulgar version of MSA, not to mention heritage Arabic. This article uses a bottom-up textual analysis – lexical, syntactic and conceptual – which seems to support our initial intuition, namely that Egyptian Arabic is a type, not a level (socially conceived) of Arabic. It is the language of thought, of early and developing cognition, however much influenced by, and influencing, both MSA and heritage Arabic. Based on this intuition, the article explores major issues related to Egyptian Arabic - writing for the stage in Egyptian Arabic, language and cognition, the development of Arabic, MSA and Egyptian Arabic, survival of Egyptian Arabic, Standard Arabic morphology, the heritage effect, Wittgenstein’s family resemblances, the Coined Abstract Noun and coining by doubling. The central issue the article addresses is the binary concept of language in the case of Arabic which has been fully studied by modern linguists, but not adequately related to its English literary counterpart.

Keywords: Heritage Arabic– MSA– Egyptian Arabic–
development of Arabic - language and cognition

لغة أهل مصر مقابل العربية الفصحى الحديثة والتراثية: مقارنة صرفية بالإشارة إلى النظريات الغربية

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ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة لغة أهل مصر العامية كأحد أنواع اللغة العربية على عكس اعتقاد البعض بأنها إحدى مستويات اللغة العربية غير النحوية أو الصرفية، وفي هذا الإطار تم مناقشة الكتابة المسرحية كحاكاة للواقع في استخدام العامية بخصائصها وقواعدها المميزة. وتعد الدراسة التصاعدية من المعنى المعجمى حتى المعنى المفاهيمي مروراً بالصرف العربي القياسي وتأثير التراث في صياغة الكلمة العامية دراسة صرفية عميقة لإظهار التلازم بين اللغة والإدراك، فاللغة هي وسيلة نقل الأفكار والمسرح هو مرآة لعكس الواقع ولهذا فالكتابة العامية سواء عربية أو انجليزية في المسرح هي الأكثر قبولاً كما تشير الدراسة فهي ناتج لتطور اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة العربية الفصحى التراثية، اللغة العربية الفصحى التراثية، العامية المصرية، اللغة والإدراك، تتطور اللغة.

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I. Introduction

As Egyptian Arabic is the language of thought, critics have tended to read more meanings into its apparent simplicity, and approach it hermeneutically, in search of more profound truths about humanity. Some of them have cited Wordsworth's idea that a child is born with an insight that reveals to him certain abstruse truths about life and, if left to say things extemporaneously, just as they occur to his mind, may say things in which we are likely to detect the influence of Plato's ideals. When a poet pens these thoughts, as inly formed, we may perceive in them part of the invisible and ideal Platonic world. Most romantic poets of the early 19th century had anticipated Carl Gustav Jung's theory of dreaming. When the poet goes back to his impromptu writing and tries to write up his lines by consciously adding the more conventional embellishments of verse, as though to make his writing more logical, he will be indebted to Aristotle. The effect of both philosophers' systems is not as far-fetched as may appear at first glance.

The relation between writing Arabic drama in either heritage Arabic or MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) and writing it in the vernacular is philosophically the relation between two concepts of imitation – Aristotle's and Plato's. In writing drama, to begin with, the dramatist is imitating nature, according to Aristotle. If he or she is faithful to the original being imitated, their language should be as close as possible to the original language, namely the vernacular. However, to be regarded as "canon" literature, everything written in Arabic needed to be in MSA (or heritage Arabic) if it was to be blessed with the venerated rubric of

canonicity. In the novel, being a newly introduced genre in Arabic literature (just like drama), varieties of MSA dominated, and if a piece of dialogue in the narrative required the use of the vernacular, the writer's pen almost involuntarily translated it into MSA.

A remarkable attempt by Mustafa Musharrafa to write a novel in the vernacular was made in the 1950s but was left unfinished. In drama, however, the vernacular was used, from the late 19th century, in translating foreign texts side by side with heritage Arabic or MSA.

Defenders of the use of heritage Arabic or MSA in everyday conversation when such conversation occurs in prose or verse, invoke the work of the literary masters worldwide. Al-Aqqad, the canonical writer of heritage Arabic or MSA, shows how in Shakespeare one finds patches of grand style in ordinary situations. Naguib Mahfouz, the Nobel laureate, tries to suggest the tone of the vernacular even in a conversation conducted in classical Arabic within a work of prose fiction. However, contemporaneous drama and fiction writers, such as, Mahmoud Teymour, felt the incongruity of having uneducated dramatic characters speak heritage Arabic, or MSA. Halfway through his career, he adapted a foreign text for the theater, calling it *Al-'Ashara al-Tayyiba (The Trump Card)*, which was presented on the Cairene stage in the 1920s. It was totally in Egyptian Arabic and was an unqualified disaster. People wondered how a master of the short story in heritage Arabic or MSA could 'sink so low.' (The value-laden judgment echoes Ferguson's *diglossia*, 1959, where some varieties are High, while others are Low in many languages, including Arabic.) The trouble was that the foreign theme and characters could not be easily accommodated to Egyptian Arabic. Teymour learned the lesson: he went back to a short story he had written in the vernacular in 1890, called *Abou 'Ali 'Amel Artiste (Abou Ali Pretending to be an Artiste)*, and rewrote it in heritage Arabic, changing the vernacular title into *Abou Ali al-Fannan* (that is, the artist). Republished in 1954, then in 1973, critical reception never redeemed it.

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This article addresses a number of issues in Egyptian Arabic as related to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and heritage, or Classical, Arabic (CA). It establishes some important parallels between Arabic and English related to the High-Low distinction in the two languages. Based on many examples from popular lyrics and songs, the article explores some morphological word-formation processes in Egyptian Arabic, and argues that this variety is a type, not a token, of Arabic. Perfectly suited to literary expression. The following diagram shows the interrelations among different types of Arabic:

II. Writing for the Stage in Egyptian Arabic

The problem of writing for the stage in heritage Arabic while suggesting that it has the *register* of the vernacular seemed to have found a solution, even though controversial, in Tewfik Al-Hakim's "middle-of-the-road" language, or *al-lugha al-wusta*. This meant that the writer could use the basic constituents of the vernacular in an ostensibly MSA syntax, as though to allow a vernacular tone to dominate the text. A critic described the experiment as falling between two stools. The measure of any hoped-for success was acceptability on the stage. As nearly every play by Al-Hakim needed adaptation into Egyptian Arabic before staging, the middle-of-the-road language was declared a failure.

Behind such trafficking of views is Plato's concept of imitation. Not only does he regard poetry (being the generic name for literary language) as imitation of human life, as Aristotle does, but he regards human life itself as an imitation, however concrete and easily perceptible, of a world of ideas. Every human entity portrayed in poetry may, as Aristotle says, be an imitation of life, but Plato's philosophy shows that so-called human life is only a shadow reflected by the real world, or the world of ideas. It is deceptive to regard the life presented in poetry as an imitation of real things, when in fact those supposedly real things are shadows or imitations of the ideal world. Poetry creates an imaginary world which is in imitation of the original imitation. Twice removed from

the ideal world, poets are better removed from Plato's Ideal Republic. It is not an alien idea in Arabic classical thought. A far-famed dictum in Arabic says "poetry is sweetest when most removed from truth" (أعذب الشعر أكذبه). The Qur'an warns us not to believe poets, being mavericks and liars – (The Holy Quran, The Poets Chapter, Surat Al-Shu'raa', Verse 224). With the 1930s came the Apollo school in Arabic poetry, calling for liberation in many fields of human activity, including language.

By the early 1950s, drama written in the vernacular had found its way onto the Egyptian stage. The pioneers were all English graduates who loved the variety of the English theatre but forged their own moulds of Egyptian drama in the vernacular. They found Egyptian plays being put on the stage, in the vernacular, accepted and applauded. The urge to write for the stage was overwhelming, but experience of common life in Egypt determined the 'range' of the vernacular available to authors. The actors who performed Enani's *Meet Halawa* were not so familiar with what would be called "educated vernacular." The language of the play was regarded by some critics as distilled, meaning that it lacked the redundancies, as well as the touch of bawdy hints and insinuations of the language of the real Egyptian man-in-the-street. During the rehearsals, long but never tedious, the actors taught the playwright one or two things about the vernacular.

III. Language and Cognition

All this is based on the general assumption that all human language is acquired, and that the earliest source of meaningful speech for the 'babe in arms' is the mother. One may be familiar with the theory of cognitive development advanced by Jean Piaget and Inhelder (1966), which claims that intelligence changes as children grow. It assumes that cognitive development is not just about acquiring knowledge but that the child has to develop or construct a mental model of the world (McLeod, 2017). One may have reservations about Piaget and Inhelder's four-stage development pattern in the child, said to be universally applicable at all times. However, no serious scientific arguments have so far

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been able to call his general theory of cognitive development into question. Simplified, his theory says that, like knowledge, language is acquired by the newborn child through their innate capacity for communicating with the outside world. Such a capacity, which Piaget and Inhelder call ‘inborn abilities’, may be regarded as the factor determining the cognitive process. Linguists distinguish between cognitive and emotive languages in practice, but the psychological theory is holistic. The emphasis on the child’s innate power links this view with the Platonic concept of undifferentiated *ideas*. Much earlier, in the 19th century, Shelley had claimed that “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” in his *Defence of Poetry*, 1821. Commonly glossed in ethical terms, the statement in context is general enough to confirm Wordsworth’s view of what he calls “the progress of our being.” The Platonic influence is obvious here, in 1805, date of completing his 13-book version of *The Prelude*, as in 1806, date of writing the last nine stanzas of his *Immortality Ode*.

Wordsworth believes in the existence of a lofty spiritual world, an ideal original world, like Plato’s, which the poet regards as divine. The early development of the child’s combined cognitive-emotive processes, through physical and linguistic attachment to their mother, is further combined with the child’s innate powers, with the result that the language of the child is more genuinely “natural” than that of the later world of “getting and spending.” As the poet argues in the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), such “simple” language is to be heard among “simple” people, living in the country, close to nature. It is the unembellished language used in expression and communication in everyday life. The word simple is highlighted here, because it was a bone of contention in the early 19th century, following Francis Jeffrey’s attack on Wordsworth’s “simple” language. John Francis Danby’s book *The Simple Wordsworth: Studies in the Poems 1798-1807* (1960) shows that the apparent simplicity is deceptive, as it can be more profoundly philosophic than many artificially complex styles. At any rate, Wordsworth thought that there could

be no basic distinction between the language per se, of poetry and common everyday language which he, inaccurately, called prose.

This was in a way revolutionary in the 18th century, where a distinction was maintained between the language fit for poetry and that of everyday life. Above all, poets felt that they had to use metaphors for embellishment, not as a means of intuiting a given theme (Richards, 1965). Many of the so-called rhetorical figures in the 18th century are empty clichés, such as calling fish “the scaly crew” and birds “the feathered tribe.”

For all the varied biographies of Wordsworth, from the brilliant *La jeunesse de William Wordsworth* by Emile Legouis, 1929, to the tediously detailed ones by Mary Moorman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Mark Reed, little interest is shown in the main issue which preoccupied the poet during the so-called ‘great decade’ (1798-1807), namely the language of poetry. In the early 1790s, following his return from France, though having imbibed the spirit of the Revolution, his pen could not yet free itself from the 18th century literary traditions. His two long poems – *An Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches* – (1793-1794) clearly reveal the influence of the masters of the grand style – Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. But the French experience had left an indelible impression on his early faith in man and nature. In 1800, he said:

But ‘twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.
The Prelude, 1805 Bk VI, 311-13

In the 1850 revised version, line 311 above was changed into

But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy. (Bk VI
339-340)

The “improvement in phraseology” does not in de Selincourt’s opinion (1926-1950) change the poet’s position. Though he later criticized the French for being unfaithful to the principles of the Revolution by turning a liberation endeavor into a war of conquest, the poet still believed in those principles, especially the inseparable twins of liberty and equality. In the mid-1790s, the poet had long discussions with Coleridge, his close friend, on what the latter

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called the “democracy of the human spirit” (*Biographia Literaria*, vol. 12, p.313). Together, Wordsworth and Coleridge decided to publish a joint volume of verse in which to show that poetry could be written in the language spoken by people. Wordsworth would write about common life, but Coleridge would deal with the world of fancy. *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1798 before they left for France.

On returning to England, Wordsworth found to his dismay that, though the book had sold well, its critical reception was not favourable. Two major Scottish critics attacked what they called its “low” language. Francis Jeffrey, editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, began his attack with the memorable “This will never do”, calling the language of *Lyrical Ballads* unfit for poetry. It was puerile and naïve, in a pejorative sense. He accused the poet of having an obscure and supercilious philosophy. His most virulent attack was on the poem called *The Thorn*. He totally ignored the fact that the poem is a dramatic monologue, *avant le nom*, of which Browning was the accredited master. The Thorn is told by a retired sea captain, and Wordsworth, believing in the principle of linguistic verisimilitude, is eager to represent the speaker’s language. Jeffrey deliberately picks out two lines at the end of Stanza III, as representing the “silly” nature of the volume’s language:

I’ve measured it from side to side:
‘Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.

Incidentally, one remembers Byron’s poem, *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, in which he jeers at Jeffrey’s critical practice. But, in 1802, Wordsworth could not have been pleased with his Scottish criticism. Before leaving for France, back in 1798, he wrote *Tintern Abbey (Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye, during a tour in 1793)* in which he showed how deeply reconciled he was to his present métier as a poet with a combined aesthetic-moral mission, namely to establish his cult of feeling, especially love of nature and people, though often hearing the “still sad music of humanity”. One of his resources of power was his faith in childhood innocence, and the

fact that a few years after the harrowing French experience, he was now fully recovered and capable of resuming his self-assigned work. Apart from the so-called brief 'effusion' used in attacking 'simple' language, other poems justify the critics' displeasure with Wordsworth's language:

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

The last three lines are used as an epigraph for the poet's *Immortality Ode*, the first four stanzas of which were written at the time. According to Mark Reed's day-by-day biography of Wordsworth, the poem was written on 26 March 1802 and the *Immortality Ode* soon after, though only the first four stanzas, complete with the aforementioned epigraph and concluding with the famous question

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

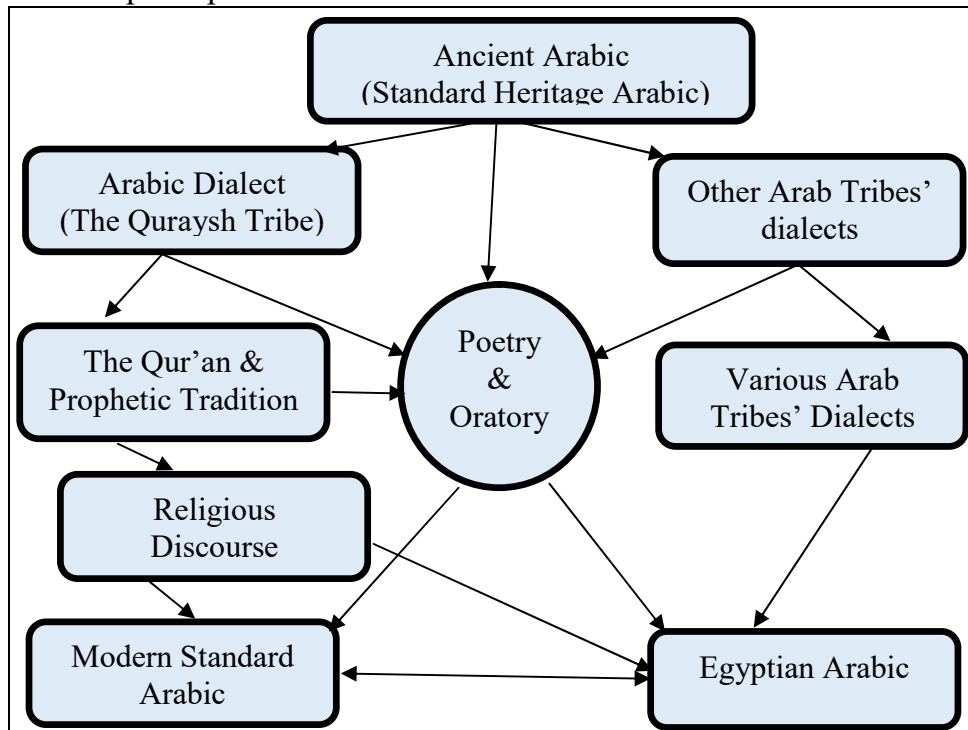
IV. The Development of Arabic

The eighteenth century in England is characterized by the distinction of the language of poetry as a higher language than that of everyday speech. Even those poets who seemed to use 'simple' language, presaging a change in poetic idiom, like William Blake (1757-1827), wrote a symbolic language and seemed to be impelled by a specific divine afflatus. The belief that there were two levels of language, high and low, was confirmed in the late 17th century by John Dryden (1631-1700) (cf. *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, 1668), then by Alexander Pope (*Essay on Criticism*, 1711) and Dr. Samuel Johnson (*Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 1779). Regarded as part of the classical heritage, the distinction

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between high and low types of language survived Wordsworth's attempts at denying its plausibility well into the 20th century. John Middleton Murray's *The Problem of Style*, 1922, and F.L. Lucas' *Style* (1938) insisted that there was a higher type of language, in "canon" poetry (and in canon literature), to be set apart from everyday speech. The idea that there were two, rather than one, type of language, pace Wordsworth, looks similar to the traditional Arabic principle of *decorum*.



By this chronological taxonomy, Enani intends to show that the "higher" levels are superior to the "lower". Although MSA and Egyptian Arabic are synchronic and the value judgement is suspended, both are clearly influenced by each. Down the centuries, Arabic critics have often maintained that a speaker or writer should take into account the "reception capacity" of the audience. Though the language used in heritage Arabic books sounds uniform to our present ears, whatever the speaker or the writer says, the fact is that such apparent uniformity can be

deceptive. As Arabic scholars have shown, Arabic developed as a result of the expansion of the Muslim world, so that non-Arabic native speakers constituted most members of the emerging class of State officials. Many scholars are tempted to stress the influence of foreign languages, such as Persian and Greek, during the expansion of the Muslim world, or that of certain Semitic and other languages before such expansion. There is no shortage of books which trace the origins of certain Arabic words in foreign languages, old and new (see References). What is missing in fact is a study like Fukk's (1950) (translated from German by A. Al-Naggar, and with a preface by Ahmad Amin). This book shows how Standard Arabic as it existed in the 7th century AD gradually changed as a result of the mixing of various ethnic groups who had their own languages but adopted Arabic as the official language. Fukk focuses on the effect of slaves, male and female, whose Arabic left much to be desired. Many foreign converts to Islam used adapted versions of Arabic, sometimes influenced by their native tongues in everyday life. In fear of any semantic distortion of "real" Arabic, that is, the language of the Noble Quran and the early 'genuine' Arabs, learned men, as early as the end of the 7th and 8th centuries, wrote grammars of 'real' Arabic. Most notable are Al-Khalil Ibn-Ahmad (who also formalized Arabic prosody) and Sibawayh.

In the following decades, rulers employed scribes who were well-versed in the newborn Arabic grammars and styles to write their official documents, including, apart from their decrees and decisions on controversial issues, their letters and public speeches. A scribe's job down the long history of Arabic writing was to transcribe all written material, from essays to full-length books. A scribe was called *nasikh* (ناسخ) and many were highly educated, having learnt the Quran by heart and the associated disciplines of exegesis and interpretation of the Prophet's Hadith. Eventually some scribes, who possessed adequate knowledge of politics and, especially, Arabic style, were promoted to the job of writer, *katib* (كاتب). The job of a writer was initially confined to formulating a ruler's judgment on appeals submitted to him, and signing his name. Poets and professional writers wrote their own works, but

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some poets employed reporters, *rowah* (رواة) who would put down on paper what the poet composed, then transmit the newly composed verse, either by word of mouth or in writing, to the literary community. It is notable that by the tenth century A.D., the power of the scribes-turned-reporters grew to such an unprecedented position that rich people could employ unscrupulous scribes and/or reporters to write literary works of whatever value and attribute them to their paymasters.

Their comments, supposedly presenting the ruler's own ideas, were called *Tewqi'at* (توقيعات), the singular being *Tewqi'* (توقيع), which soon developed into a literary genre. Early in the 9th century A.D., an incident took place which revealed the official status of the "writers." When Ahmad Ibn Toulon became governor, or *Wali* (والي) of Egypt, nominally appointed by the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, he chose a new, elderly writer. However, looking at his own *Tewqi'at* (ruler's comments), Ibn Toulon was not pleased. The writer was dismissed, and a young one appointed. It transpired that Ibn Toulon was ambitious, wanting to gain independence for Egypt, and to break his ties with the decrepit Caliph, but his plan was still unripe and he wanted his writer to be more of a confidential clerk, or a modern advisor-secretary. The newly-appointed one served his purpose well, though still called "writer".

Whatever their other functions, the main achievement of some reporters was to regularize what the potentates said, that is, *orally*, so that the style was raised from the common speech of daily life to the literary style of the reporter's choice. The result was the loss of a great deal of the common language of conversation in some countries of the Muslim world. This common language varied in accordance with the influence of the indigenous languages originally spoken before the Islamic conquest. As a result of the scribes' and reporters' eagerness to change many local dialects into standard 'heritage' Arabic, our Arabic tradition *seems* adequately uniform. The situation gradually changed when the Muslim state finally took shape and began to have its own schools of thought. Jurisprudence flourished and, under the influence of neighbouring

cultures, new original styles appeared, and genuine poets and prose writers multiplied. Meanwhile, the various local dialects continued to be spoken, with phonological variations often influencing (and being influenced by) standard or heritage Arabic. Too well known, there is no need to refer to the various languages that had been spoken in different parts of the Muslim world before the Arabian conquests in the early 7th century AD. Beginning with old Persia and Iraq, the Levant, then Egypt and North Africa, the Arabian victors used Arabic for a while, leaving the people to speak their own original languages. Not until Caliph al-Ma'moun (786-833) visited Egypt was all official business ordered to be conducted in Arabic.

Evidence of the predominance of the adapted forms of low Arabic among the populace, which, combined with the palimpsest of the original (indigenous) languages, is more easily found in verse than in prose. "Palimpsest" is used advisedly to indicate something written over something deleted but still legible. Foreign words are sometimes Arabized (written in Arabic characters) in more than one way, in accordance with their provenance, without one replacing another. The gear-box in a motorcar is *jarabox* in Sudan but *vitesse* in Egypt, which became *al-fitace* (الفتيس). The same feature occurs in common Arabic when the word (رايح) [going to] becomes (راح) and (ح) as well as (ه): [I am going to see him] → [هشوفه] → [حشوفه] → [راح اشوفه] → [رايح اشوفه]

Most Arabic songs in the vernacular are excellent examples of the use of adapted Arabic in local dialects. Egyptian Arabic is a type, not a level, of Arabic. It is not gauged by the kind of people who use it but by its own features and rules. Hilary Wise has shown in her *Transformational Grammar of Egyptian Arabic* (1977) that the so-called vernacular Arabic is a language unto itself, whatever its relations with MSA or with heritage Arabic may be. Better called transformational-generative grammar, it showed how different Egyptian Arabic is from all forms of classical Arabic (both MSA and the heritage variety). Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, 1957, is now an indispensable, though controversial,

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reading. Those who benefit most from his theory are of course writers and translators.

V. Back to Aristotle and Plato

Unravelling the complex relation between ‘classical’ and ‘Egyptian’ types of Arabic will take us back to the distinction between Aristotle’s and Plato’s concepts of imitation. To imitate something in nature, that is *a thing which is definitely there*, should produce a copy, but only one copy, to correspond to whatever is being imitated. There is no place for hermeneutics in Aristotle’s system. However, to imitate that thing which is a shadow of something existing elsewhere, according to Plato, is to try to have a copy of that shadow which is therefore *another shadow* – one of many, according to the viewpoint determined by the source of the fire [the ultimate idea]. Let us suppose that the thing in nature is knowledge, or lack of it. If one denies having any knowledge of something, one may say, grammatically:

- a- I know nothing about it.
- b- I don’t know anything about it.
- c- I have no idea about it.
- d- I have no knowledge of it.

Or the standard rejoinder by a defendant during an investigation:

- e- I don’t know what you’re talking about.

Now are these statements equal in semantic value, so that they can be used alternatively in the same sense? Ultimately they say the same thing, but if a defendant snaps during an investigation “I don’t know!” one is likely to read it as an emotional outburst, though purely verbal. In contrast, a scientist may deny any knowledge of the permutations of a certain virus by using the sentence C. But the Chomskian system includes considering other structures, as long as they are *grammatical*:

- f- About this I know nothing.
- g- This whole thing is unknown to me.
- h- This is news to me.

Our contention is that these variants are available because *they represent actual speech*, parts of a living conversation. If occurring in a play, the context should determine who would say which one, as well as the response to each. A linguistic analysis of the psychological processes during a conversation has been made by Norman Fairclough in his *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1998, and his *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), both of which Enani has translated into Arabic. The upshot of this is that the *form* of a question or a comment aired during a conversation can influence the response by a member of the group. A little earlier, Ray Jackendoff had argued in his *Semantics and Cognition*, 1983, that both conscious and unconscious factors account for the choice of a given form. Though his extensive analysis is linguistic and predominantly Chomskyan, it shows that not all responses to certain statements and questions literally correspond to them. This is observed in real life situations in which the vernacular is used. The choice of ‘statement forms’ and responses to them may be explained in terms of power (as Fairclough argues) or to the attempt by the dramatist to allow his characters to be true to themselves and so speak their own minds, as in Pinter. In Shakespeare, too, one may see that the interest shown in the nature of the character controls both speaker’s and interlocutor’s language.

This is what one finds in plays in the vernacular, as opposed to prose or verse dramas in MSA and heritage Arabic. A dramatist’s choice of Egyptian Arabic may be prompted by a similar interest in their fictional characters: plays are “fantasies,” and their language has to have “non-real” (rather than ‘unreal’) dimensions. They are shadows of other shadows. A play may be in prose, but it is created by flights of imagination capable of capturing part of the Platonic world of shadows. This is part of the legacy of Wordsworth, who composed poems in the open air, sometimes never changing their texts, with the exception of *The Prelude*. We know (from Mark Reed) that *Tintern Abbey* was composed in the open air while the poet travelled on foot from Bristol to London but penned the poem (or his sister did) only on arrival, changing nothing in the text.

VI. Wordsworth Consulted

It is the spontaneous nature of the words uttered that secures its genuine source. Insofar as the language of thinking is the language of speech, whatever the poet says should be what his inner voice says. In the Preamble to his *The Prelude*, Wordsworth says:

Thus, far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of my song,
Pour out that day my soul in measured strains
Even in the very words which I have here
Recorded:

(1805, Book I, 55-9)

Feeling that he has been “from yon city’s wall set free” (I.7), he considers where he should settle down in the rural landscape. The “measured strains” (the verse) into which his “soul was poured” represent his inner voice, that is, the structure of his thought, in his attempt to overcome what he calls “the sad incompetence of human speech” (1850, Bk VI, 592). Thus:

Now I am free, enfranchised and at large,
May fix my habitation where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what sweet stream
Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about.

(*The Prelude*, 1805, Book I, 9-17)

These words, poured forth *ex tempore*, should represent the inner voice, that is the *thought* that crossed his mind at the time they were spoken. However, the poet was not happy with the first two lines, and, as he set about revising his poem for publication (which was done posthumously in 1850) he replaced them with:

Now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.

(*The Prelude* 1850, Book I, 9-10)

Now as Platonic imitation of the shadow in the mind, the early version is more genuine because less disciplined, and the second line is infelicitous. Does the cliché “free as a bird” improve the line? Does it not belong to the poetic diction Wordsworth attacked? This is de Selincourt’s judgment in his variorum edition of both editions of *The Prelude* in 1950. What confirms the Platonic dimension in the poet’s mind is that he attributes his inner voice to a higher reality – ultimate ideas. It is what he calls nature, or the ‘incommunicable power’ that “lies hidden from the reach of words” (*The Prelude*, 1805, Book III, 184-188)

I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit.

(*The Prelude*, 1805, Book IV, 341-4)

Recognizing the difficulty of dealing with those ultimate ideas to which he aspires to communicate, Wordsworth adds a crucial phrase in his ‘encounter’ with the imagination (the second in this extract)

Imagination – here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech;
That awful power rose from the mind’s abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps
At once, some lonely traveller.

(*The Prelude*, 1850, Book VI, 591-6)

VII. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Egyptian Arabic

When Wordsworth uttered the lines quoted above from *The Prelude* 1805, as well as those quoted from the poem’s later version, (minus line VI 592) his words presumably corresponded to the inner voice heard in his mind at the moment of composition. This is why Wordsworth stresses the quality of being “spontaneous,” that is, trying to capture experience in its earliest linguistic form as though it were raw enough to be truthful, being the closest imitation of the shadows constituting our “being”, as the

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poet calls it. There was never any problem with regarding the raw linguistic material as prose or verse, insofar as the poet regards them both as equally poetic vehicles. Seeking the earliest (possibly raw) form of an idea or a feeling in an attempt to reach the truth or Plato's ultimate reality essentially implies belief in its existence which, for the first generation of Romantic poets, heightens the value of verbal arts.

Can this apply to Arabic literature? Can the spontaneous expression of an idea or a feeling be regarded as containing a higher truth value? If the poet as dramatist can capture the earliest possible verbal (i.e. linguistic) form of experience, there should be no problem. However, "there is the rub", as Hamlet says. For what is the language in which the average Egyptian (or any other Arab) thinks? "Average" is, of course, the problem; for surely one can distinguish educated Egyptian Arabic from any other type. One can safely assume, *ceteris paribus*, that *educated* Egyptian Arabic may conceptually correspond to modern foreign languages. It is the type that makes liberal use of MSA, and the latter has been formed by the need of journalists over the last two centuries to report on whatever happens in the world, using universal concepts in dealing with modern life and thought at home and abroad. While the press has been the major factor in establishing MSA, books began to be printed in both heritage Arabic and MSA. Al-Tahtawi and Al-Shidyaq were pioneers in adapting foreign words for use in the press (cf. On MSA in Enani's *On Translating Arabic*, 2000). Arabic-language academies were established in Syria and Egypt during the 20th century to adopt and popularize the neologisms translated, and Arabized, from other languages. Meanwhile, 'canon' Arabic literature began to be written in MSA side-by-side with heritage Arabic. By the end of World War II, MSA dominated both original fiction and translations from European languages.

VIII. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

Having been 'born and bred' in the press, MSA has been almost confined to what we today call the language of current affairs.

Insofar as the press was concerned with ‘foreign’ concepts freshly translated or Arabized, it carried few local items and opinion columns, reflecting foreign ideas. With the translation movement gaining strength in the post-war period, MSA became the language of translation *par excellence*. Translated books fulfilled the needs of the increasing number of students for scientific material as well as information about many disciplines. The use of heritage Arabic receded and was almost confined to the study of religious discourse and ancient Arabic poetry, some of which was still being studied and produced by a minority of the old guard and antiquarians.

Though widely used throughout the Arab world as the language of writing Arabic and translating into Arabic, MSA has rarely been a language of thought in any Arab country. It is used in formal speeches, in learned discussions by the elite, and by Muslim clerics who rely on heritage Arabic in their styles. Some of those who seek to impress their audiences as being capable of thinking in ‘correct’ MSA, and so speaking it extempore, resort to an old trick in the profession, that is, reciting verses of the Quran, followed by a species of exegesis that is also learned by heart, using the breaks in speech by reciting doxological expressions. Some of them find relief in breaking into Egyptian Arabic.

Egyptian Arabic (call it the vernacular if you will) is presumably the language of thought in Egypt, just as the local vernacular is the language of thinking elsewhere in the Arab world. The local dialect (Egyptian Arabic) has been studied *ad nauseam* by linguists everywhere. Practically every feature of it has been vetted for a quality or two leading to a mini-theory to be added to the plethora of theories already advanced. The analysis that follows focuses on the view of how Egyptian Arabic has absorbed concepts from heritage Arabic and MSA.

IX. Survival of Egyptian Arabic

Words and many idioms in Egyptian Arabic are covered by dictionaries, especially Al-Said Badawi’s *Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic*, 1986 (with Martin Hinds). Others are as remarkable. But Egyptian Arabic is a living language and has been developing for

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centuries, though few records of what people actually said in daily life have survived. In contrast, many songs, complete with their music, kept their place in the memories of generation after generation of average Egyptians. Some of these have survived intact, while many have had their words changed. An important factor was the rhyming slang tradition. As was the case in European ballads, as 16th-century common ballads were improved mainly in phraseology during the 18th century, as witnessed by the *Roxburghe Ballads*, by John Payne Collier, 1847 (reprinted 1961) and *The Common Muse*, by Vivian de Sola Pinto, 1965 (originally published in 1957). Some of the old tunes of these songs are very much alive today (note: Vivian is a man's name). In Egypt, one can mention a number of popular tunes associated with some lyrics in the vernacular. One of these is recorded, with the music notation, by Edward Lane in his *The Customs and Manners of the Modern Egyptians*, first published in 1828:

يا بَنَاتِ اسكندرية مشيكم ع البحر غيَّة
يا بَنَاتِ جُوَّةِ المدينة مشيكم ع الفُرش زينة

Another, dating from Mameluki times, with rhyming additions down the centuries, has an opening with a catchy tune, and goes like this:

هاالله هاللة يا بدوي جاب اليُسرة

And the absurdist rhyming tradition goes thus:

عندي حُمارة مديوبئة حَمَلْتَهَا بميتين طوبئة
زاجتْ تَحْتِشْ وَلَا جَنْشِي يا مطعم الكحك المَحْشِي

Another one, used in a foreign film about Egypt, and sung by Robert Taylor, is

يا عزيز عيني وانا نفسي اروخ بلدي
بلدي يا بلدي ياما نفسي اروخ بلدي

This last has inspired two music makers to produce two songs with different themes. The first, in the late 1917s, was by Sayed Darwish, supposed to be sung by Egyptian workers employed by the Allied forces during World War II, now demobilized. It is still very much alive, and its following transcription represents the way

the words are pronounced in the lyric which is chorally arranged, with the opening made into a melodious refrain:

سألَمة يا سألَمة
صَفْرُ يَأْ وَأَبُورُ وَا رُبُطُ عُنْدَكَ
بَلَا أَوْ رُوبًا بَلَا أَمِيرِكا
شُفْنَا الحَرْبِ وَشُفْنَا الصَّرْبِ وَشُفْنَا المَوْتَ بَعِينِنَا
سَلِّمْ تَسَلِّمْ كُلُّهُ مَكْسَبُ حَوْشِنَا وَانْغَنِينَا
رُحْنَا وَجِينَا بِالسَّلَامَةِ
نَزَّلْنِي أَوَامَ البَلَدِي
مَا فَيْشِي أَحْسَنُ مِنْ بَلَدِي

The next example was set to music by Riyad El-Sonbati, sung originally by an obscure singer called Abduh Al-Sorouji, in a film of Umm Kolthoum's. When the song proved an astounding success, the famous singer appropriated it in a separate disc. Ahmad Rami's words went:

عَلَى بَلَدِ المَحْبُوبِ وَدِينِي
يَا مَسَافِرِ عَلَى بَحْرِ النَيْلِ
زَادَ وَجُدِي وَالبُعْدِ كَاوِينِي
أَنَا لِيَا فِي مِصْرِ خَلِيلِ

Another even more popular tune is anonymous but revived and re-sung by Laila Murad:

سَلِّمْ عَلَيَّ
فَايْتَةُ العُرُوسَةِ عَلَى جَنِينَةٍ
لُونِ الخُدُودِ غَالِي عَلِينَا
لَمَّا قَابَلْنِي سَلِّمْ عَلَيَّ
الْوَرْدِ قَالِ لَهَا يَا زِينَةَ
وَحَابِيْبِي سَلِّمْ عَلَيَّ
وَلَدِي يَا وَلَدِي

One of these brevities has been revived and sung by Abdul-Halim Hafez and set to music by Baleegh Hamdi. The opening is:

عَلَى حِسْبِ وَدَادُ قَلْبِي
رَاحِ أَقُولُ لِلزَّيْنِ سَلَامَاتِ

Finally, two openings whose tunes have stood the test of time are worthy of a mention; one is

عَطْشَانِ يَا صَبَايَا دَلُونِي عَلَى السَّبِيلِ
عَطْشَانِ وَالمِيَةِ بِتَجْرِي فِي بَحْرِ النَيْلِ

The other is

يَا بَهِيَّةَ وَخَبْرِيْنِي يَا بُوِي عَنِ اللِّي قَتَلَ يَاسِيْنِ
قَتَلُوهُ السُّودَ عَنِيْهِ مِنْ فَوْقِ ضَهْرِ الهَجِيْنِ

X. What the Lyrics Tell Us

Cutting corners is not a good thing to do when it comes to critical investigations in literary or linguistic subjects, but in the above quotations one may find some of the main features of Egyptian Arabic.

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To begin with, there is the corruption (تحريف) of certain words. One is to change the morphology of ergative verbs (أفعال المطاوعة) often through metathesis (القلب) such as reversing the positions of the ergative letters, in both past and present forms of the verb, as changing

- يَغْنَى - غَنِي - < يَغْنَى - اِغْتَنَى (to become rich)

Into

- اِغْتَنَى - يَغْنَى (اتغنينا بدلاً من اغتنينا)

Secondly, there is a kind of metathesis in syntax which in traditional grammar one calls either doubling the subject or hyperbaton (inversion), or indeed apposition (البدل). Example (10) provides an instance of this

- قتلوه السود عنيه

- [They killed him,
the blue ones, my eyes]

(Blue replaces black in the original Arabic) Regularized, this literal, word for word rendering may produce [they killed him, my blue eyes] or:

- [He was killed by them – my blue eyes] or, freely:
- [He was killed by my blue eyes]

Difficult to enunciate properly, some singers thought the subject was *al-Sudaniyah* (السودانية) i.e. Sudanese soldiers, who constituted part of the army created by Muhammad Ali in the early 19th century. As in the case of classical Arabic, some reporters claimed that this was a likely reading and, in this case, *al-Hajine* (الهجين), which describes a *hybrid* camel, and therefore strong, should not refer to Bahiya's or to Yasmine's camels but to the Sudanese soldiers' camels. Their flimsy argument is that the word *Hajine* should refer to the Border Guard corps called *Hagganah* in Arabic. This has nothing to do, of course, with the Hebrew *hagana*, either in its original meaning or in its metaphorical Israeli sense. (These are reminders of the **mondegreen** phenomenon which comes from hearing "And laid him on the green" as if it were "Lady Mondegreen" – a perfect equivalent to the mishearing of *sa'dina*

biha – "our delight thereby" - as if it were the proper noun *Sa'd Nabeehah*)

XI. Standard Arabic Morphology

Before examining the variety of lexical types used in Egyptian Arabic, it may be useful to establish the canonical forms of verbs and nouns in MSA and heritage Arabic. Hans Wehr, in his *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, edited by J. Milton Cowan, 1961, gives nearly all the morphological forms (paradigms) of Arabic words. Most Egyptian Arabic words follow these forms but some may acquire new meanings, and some are coined from hypothetical roots. Here is what the Dictionary says:

For Arab users the corresponding stem forms are: II فعل *fa''ala*, III فاعل *fā'ala*, IV أفعل *af'ala*, V تفعل *tafa''ala*, VI تفاعل *tafā'ala*, VII انفعال *infa'ala*, VIII افتعل *ifta'ala*, IX افعال *if'alla*, X استفعال *istaf'ala*.
فَعْلٌ – فَاعِلٌ – أَفْعَلٌ – تَفَعَّلَ – تَفَاعَلَ – انْفَعَلَ – ائْتَعَلَ – ائْتَفَعَلَ – اسْتَفْعَلَ

4 frequent nominal types, such as:

- a) the verbal nouns (*masādir*) of the derived stems II and VII—X: تَفْعِيلٌ *taf'il*, اِنْفِعَالٌ *infi'āl*, اِفْتِعَالٌ *ifti'āl*, اِفْعَالٌ *if'ilāl*, اِسْتِفْعَالٌ *istif'āl*;
- b) the active and passive participles of the basic verb stem: فاعل *fā'il*, فاعلة *fā'ila*, and مفعول *maf'ūl*, مفعولة *maf'ūla*;
- c) the nominal types فاعل *fa'il*, فعيلة *fa'ila*, فعال *fi'āl*, and فعول *fu'ūl* (also) فعالة *fi'āla* and فعولة *fu'ūla* as well as افعال *af'al*;
- d) the plural forms افعال *af'āl*, افعاء *af'ilā'*, فعالل *fa'ālil*, افاعل *afā'il*, فاعائل *fa'a'il*, فاعائل *fa'a'il*, فعاليل *fa'ālil*, افاعيل *afā'il*, تفاعيل *tafā'il*, فعاللة *fa'ālila*.

The list looks impressive, no doubt, but it is hardly comprehensive. Even the emphatic forms of nouns are not included, such as, say, ("فَعَالٌ لَمَا يَرِيدُ") فعَالٌ and verbal nouns derived from quadrilateral verbs, such as (مُهَذَّبٌ) → (هَذَّبٌ). In the vernacular, we have (مَجْعَلُصْنٌ) from the hypothetical verb (يَجْعَلُصْنٌ) through the noun (جَعْلُوصْنٌ) is acceptable. Add a possible change of meaning and one or two problems somehow emerge. Verbs like the Egyptian *yetsahhab* (يَتَسَحَّبُ) and the classical *yansahib* (يَنْسَحِبُ) are

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ergative verbs, from the lemma (المادة) *sahaba* (سَحَبَ) which as both noun and verb means pull or withdraw. While *yansahib* (يَنْسَحِبُ) means "to withdraw", an ergative verb, the local *yetsahhab* (يَتَسَحَّبُ) means "to creep or crawl out of/into a place". Still, the vernacular has another coined variation, namely *yetsahlib* (يَتَسَحِّلِبُ) which is the emphatic form of *yetsahhab* (يَتَسَحَّبُ), though the addition of the letter 'l' produces a confusion with the classical form *yastahlib* (يَسْتَحْلِبُ) which means "to milk" or "surreptitiously milk", from the lemma *halaba* (حَلَبَ). The emphatic local form may be regarded as vernacular ergative.

The common verbal noun (المصدر الميمي) in Arabic, with the morphological forms *maf'al* (مَفْعَلٌ) and *muf'il* (مُفْعِلٌ) is further used to produce neologisms from common words in Egyptian Arabic. In both heritage Arabic and MSA, the common verbal noun (cvn) is widely used nominally and adjectivally. Everybody is familiar with words like *mu'min* (مُؤْمِنٌ) and *makhba'* (مَخْبَأٌ), and *mihwar* (مِخْوَرٌ) whose lemmas are, respectively, (ء ا م ن), (ء ا م ن), and (ء ا م ن). Note that the *Hamza* الهمزة (glottal stop) is different from the *Alif* (أ) (الألف) which is a vowel, so that the first noun contains a Hamza plus an alif, sometimes transcribed as (أ). Now look at the following Egyptian Arabic niceties: the poor quality of anything is expressed by the adjective *wehish* (وَحِشٌ) of unknown origin, from which the verb *yewahhash* (يُوَحِّشُ) is derived, while the opposite, *Kuwayyis*, (كُوَيِّسٌ) thought to be an archaic diminutive of the classical *Kayyis*, (كَيِّسٌ), that is, wise or astute, has no verbal version. For anything bad, metaphors are used, such as the noun *zeft*, (زَفْتٌ), i.e. tar, used adjectivally, and the verb *yezaffet* (يَزَفِّتُ) to make bad, or worse, to express displeasure in certain situations:

- هو بيزَفِّتُ إيه في البيت؟

- What the hell is he doing at home?

Similarly, there is the word *hebab*, (هَبَابٌ) i.e. soot or, loosely, 'grime'. The verb *yehabbeb* (يَهَبِّبُ) means to do something badly or illicitly.

- هو يهَبِّبُ إيه في المصنع؟

- What damn thing is he doing at the factory?

The synonym is *sukham* (سُخَام), and the verb is *yesakhama*:

- هو بيسخّم إيه في المكتبة؟

- What does he bloody do in the library?

The other synonym of *hebab*, namely *al-Sinag* (السِنَاج), is rarely used in Egyptian Arabic, perhaps because presumably classical, and it gives no verbs. Two common verbal nouns (مصادر ميمية) are available from *zift* and *hebab*, that is, *mezaffit* (مَزَقْتْ) "nasty/awful", and *mehabbib* (مَهَبَّبْ). A similar case is that of the noun *niilah* (نِيلَة), which means "indigo, a plant used for its blue dye". The verb *yenayyil* (يَنْيَلْ) means "to turn blue", as in tanning hide. As bruises produced by beating are blue and purple, this is thought to be the metaphorical origin of the adjective *menayyil* (مَنْيَلْ) and *menayyil 'ala 'einoh* (مَنْيَلْ عَلَى عَيْنِه), "having a black eye".

XII. The Heritage Effect

Egyptian Arabic is characterized by using the names of God and the Prophet not only in swearing (which is a common linguistic feature everywhere) but also in popular expressions in daily life, ostensibly unrelated to religious concepts. One may add the words *Salaam* and *Salaama* ("peace" and "safety", respectively) for special purposes. To begin with, the name of God, *Allah*, is used to express admiration. The word can be used as an exclamation, with the middle vowel prolonged, or it can be doubled. It can be used in a special tone to express astonishment. In compounds, containing various particles, the name of Allah keeps its original sense, such as in expressions of encouragement *Allah ma'ak* (الله معك) "God be with you" (Levantine) and the Egyptian equivalent *Rabbena ma'aak* (ربنا معاك), *Rabbena ye'eenak* (ربنا يعينك) or *Rabbena yewafa'ak* (ربنا يوفئك).

It is interesting that the verb 'to name' *yesammi* (يسمّي) itself, which also means "to mention the name of Allah", is used as meaning 'to carry'. Look at the following example. A mother asks a friend to carry her baby for a minute, saying

- ممكن تسمّي عليه دقيقة واحدة؟

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As a speech act, it can take on a compound form, such as (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ)
→ i.e. (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ) [in Allah's name] and is used as an invitation to share a meal:

- يَا لَئِلا! بِسْمَلِّهِ [بِسْمِ اللَّهِ]

Or the expression can be used in full before the start of any work, i.e. In the Name of Allah, the Ruthful and Merciful (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ). The expression (هَلَّا هَلَّا!) (Halla Halla!) means “how great, how wonderful!” Or an Egyptian may use the ideological formula *Ma Shaa' Allah* (مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ) “It's Allah's will” or the full formula needed to ward off the evil eye, or what English writers call “ill-wishing”, especially by old women playing the role of witches in rural areas. The other formula is *May the name of the Prophet guard him* (اسْمِ النَّبِيِّ حَارِسَهُ وَصَائِنَهُ) or *Allah's name be with him* (اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ).

References to God and the Prophet constitute a major feature of Egyptian Arabic which connects it with heritage Arabic rather than MSA. Perhaps a glance at sociolinguistics may explain why MSA fails to link the older heritage Arabic with the supposedly lower, pace Badawi's argument, vernacular. MSA is essentially used in the trafficking of knowledge, both in physical sciences and in the humanities. All classes use it, especially its apparently ‘profound’ ideas, when discussing so called ‘serious’ subjects whether drawn from translation or academic learning. Doxological expressions are almost confined to conversation. It may be odd to read a scientific report with a doxological reference, such as “It has been found that the earth, may Allah be exalted, turns about its axis once every day.” (اكتشف العلماء أن الأرض يا سبحان الله تدور حول محورها مرة في اليوم). Substitute “May Allah be thanked” for the inserted doxology (والحمد لله) and the result will be funny. Abou Hilal Al-‘Askari begins his discussion of rhetoric by saying:

- الكلام – أَيَدِكَ اللَّهُ – يحسن بسلاسته وسهولته ونصاعته

- i.e. “Good discourse is distinguished, may Allah support you, by being smoothly flowing, easy to follow, and never obscure.”

The courteous parenthesis is just that - a polite gesture tout court. On the other hand, when an Egyptian uses any religious expression suggestive of heritage Arabic, it can be either taken as an emphatic expletive, or having a phatic function. Consider the following:

- جاي لك في الكلام إن الله مع الصابرين !

- (Hear me out! Patience is a virtue!)

Which can mean “let me come to my conclusion, show a little patience!” or just “wait till I get to my point!” The Quranic verse, *The Cow* 153, is only meant to keep the addressee listening – which is the phatic function (according to Jacobson).

To the phatic category belong a great many doxological expressions in Egyptian Arabic as it is mainly the language of conversation. If interpreted as such, the expression may be ignored in translation. However, if the translator feels that it does constitute part of the meaning, he or she must render it. There are some expressions not strictly doxological but used phatically in bargaining, such as “Bless the Prophet!” to which the addressee should respond, “May Allah bless him!”

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The translator may render the exchange if they feel that the author is being ironic: for instance, if the seller is not really a believer, but is trying to cheat the potential buyer. The context of the exchange should help the translator in cases like these.

XIII. Wittgenstein’s Family Resemblances

Heritage Arabic does influence the vernacular in many ways. One is direct citation, another is creating a condition of what Wittgenstein calls “family resemblances”. What he means is that certain words seem to be related to each other in meaning if they have adequate phonetic similarity. In fact, the sound of one, implying a certain sense, can inspire another paradigm giving a related sense, as though belonging to the same family. This feature has been noted in classical Arabic only recently, that is, in 1962, when Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad published his book on Arabic, titled *The Poetic Language* (اللغة الشاعرة). Al-Aqqad observes that Arabic words beginning with the syllable N+F (with any vowel

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linking them) implied a sense of passing, or more precisely any kind of movement. Al-Aqqad refers, incidentally, to the principle of substitution in Arabic morphology, where you have one of the three letters of the lemma being replaced by another not necessarily of similar sound. This feature of heritage Arabic has always been noted but rarely given prominence. Here are some examples:

The Arabic stem *Dara* (دار), "to turn or revolve", may have an 'l' substituted for the 'r' to make *dala* (دال), which means to 'fall in turning'; now substitute the letter 'th' (ث) for the 'd' and you get *thara*, (ثار), which means "to turn against, or revolt"; if you substitute 'h' (حاء) for the 'd', you get *hara* (حار) and cognates, meaning "turning round"; going back to *dala*, you may replace the initial 'd' with 'z' (ز) and get *zala* (زال) which is a near synonym. Yet again, replace the 'z' with an 'z' (حاء) and you get *hala*, (حال) a verb which means "to change or turn pale", hence "a pale colour" (لون حائل).

Al-Aqqad puts together a number of Arabic words to show their family resemblances. Look at *nafara*, (نفر) ["to go or move away"]; *nafada* (نفد) ["to dry up"]; *nafadha* (نفذ) ["to go through"]; *nafa'a* (نَفَعَ) ["to be of use or accrue"]; *nafasa* (نَفَسَ) ["to breathe out or in"]; *nafaḍa* (نفض) ["to get rid of"]; *nafatha* (نفث) ["to blow"]; and *nafakha* (نفخ) ["to blow"].

The point is that the same principle works in Egyptian Arabic, generating new words which cannot be morphologically analysed according to classical rules. Take a word like *baqqal* (بقال) which means "a grocer". To generate an adjective, you may add the 'y' of attribution (ياء النسبة) that is (بقالي). Before Arabizing *paprika*, we used to call it *filfil ahmar baqqali* (فلفل أحمر بَقَالِي), that is, "grocer's red pepper". Now *baqqali* (بَقَالِي) has an accepted stem and cannot therefore be irregular. However, look at its family resemblances elsewhere: take the adjective *qatta'i* (قَطَّاعِي) which means "retail selling", as opposed to *jumla*, or "wholesale" (جملة). The supposed stem is *qatta'* (قَطَّاع) which is an emphatic version of *qati'* (قاطع), that is, "cutter", or, in the formula *qati' tareeq* (قاطع طريق), means "a highwayman or a brigand". Similarly, look at *tawwaali* (طَوَّالِي),

whose stem is *tawwaal* (طَوَّال), a nonexistent form, while the compound '*ala tool* (على طول) which can mean "forever" or "directly" or "straight ahead", we may call 'pure idiom'. Hans Wehr includes *mallaaki* (مَلَكي) in his dictionary, saying it means "private", but that is confined to use in car number plates, while the stem *mallaak* (مَلَكَ) should mean, if it existed, "a person addicted to owning property".

Other Egyptian Arabic words may be difficult to analyse. Take a word like *faradani* (فَرَدَانِي). It could mean "on an individual basis", or "on his or her own". The stem which doesn't exist is *fardan* (فَرْدَانُ) as though it is an adjective from *fard* (فرد) as *Matloub* argues in his book. Adjectives formed with *-aan*, such as '*atshan* (عَطشان) [thirsty]. The adjective from *fard* (فرد) is a simple *fardi* (فردِي) ["singular, individual"] as opposed to *gama'i* (جماعي) ["collective"].

XIV. The Coined Abstract Noun (المصدر الصناعي)

The morphological licence of adding *-aan* (ان) to produce an adjective from any stem has had its semantic benefits in Egyptian Arabic, even at a limited scale. Some new adjectives thus produced have different meanings from their classical counterparts. Take the adjective '*imyani* (عِمْيَانِي) which corresponds to the classical '*ashwa'i* (عَشَوَائِي) i.e. "random", or "haphazardly". The difference is noted and some writers use the vernacular word in MSA. Let us not omit to mention *mi'gibani* (مَعْجِبَانِي) ["conceited dandy"] as it opens the door for the notorious coined abstract noun, that is, المصدر الصناعي. The coined abstract noun is simply a noun indicating an abstract quality or a general condition. It is formed by attaching a Y called the "adjectival Y" or *yaa' al-nisba* (ياء النسبة) and a feminine ending (ة) so that we add (ة) to the adjective already ending with *yaa' al-nisba*, to mean the condition or quality of being a conceited dandy, even though the assumed stem *mi'giban* (مَعْجِبَان) does not in fact exist.

The coined abstract noun is supposed to be a recent invention, according to Ibrahim Ubadah's *Dictionary of Arabic Grammatical*

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and *Prosodic Terms*, 2003. In Ahmad Shawqi's elegy on the death of Mustafa Kamel, the patriotic public speaker, the poet says

. ١ . بكِ الوطنية اعتدلَّت وكانت
حديتاً من خرافة أو مناماً

and in a poem called *Damascus*, he says

٢ . وللحرية الحمراء بابٌ
بكلِّ يدٍ مضرجةٍ يدقُّ

(1. Patriotism in your hands stood aright/After being a fantasy or a dream)

(2.Red freedom has a door on which every blood-stained hand knocks)

While 'ashwa'i (عشوائي) is a regular adjective from 'ashwaa' (عشواء), the feminine form a'sha (أعشى) means "someone with poor eyesight"; 'omyan (عميان) by itself means "blind people", plural of a'ma (أعمى), though it can be pronounced differently, with an 'a' after the (ع), the initial letter, to mean "unobserving" or "with blinkers on the eyes". It is rare, but possible, while mi'giban (معجبان) is neither rarely heard nor possible. In MSA, the coined abstract noun is frequently used in translation to convey a quality or a condition, influenced, no doubt, by Arabized foreign nouns such as *democrateya* (ديموقراطية) and, *dictatoreya* (ديكتاتورية).

Such concepts are only used in educated Egyptian Arabic. In illiterate parlance, some ostensibly coined abstract nouns are used either instead of simple nouns or in lieu of other words with more precise meanings. A car mechanic will try to get a higher fee for repairing your engine by saying (أصل العملية جامدة) meaning that the repair work was complex and hard. If you say that he did it in practically no time, you may hear the rejoinder (موش دي التظريئة) meaning "that's not the point!" If you're not convinced, his explanation will be (أنت بتدفع للمعلمانية) that is, "you're paying for my expertise!" These are not malapropisms, that is, words used incorrectly: they are good, perhaps jargon (or slang) words among workers in real-life situations. The first of these words, *gamed* (جامد) meaning 'much', or 'good', is common enough in Egyptian Arabic:

- دا لعيب جامد

- He's a great player

The second and third are part of the linguistic machinery of the speakers. In the fourth one, (معلمانية), that belongs to the coined abstract noun with a doubtful stem.

XV. Coining by Doubling

There are in Egyptian Arabic words coined with certain meanings differently expressed, if they exist at all, in MSA and in heritage Arabic. These are formed by doubling syllables or parts of a word. The paradigm is common in MSA and heritage Arabic, but the formation method is extensively used in the vernacular. In classical Arabic we have *za'za'* (زَعَزَعُ), *'as'as* (عَسَعَسَ), *waswas* (وَسْوَسَ) and *damdam* (دَمَدَمَ), while in Egyptian Arabic there is a process of doubling syllables more than the doubling of letters. A classical word like *shabba* (شَبَّ) [to rise, to grow] has a doubled 'b' (شَبَّبَ) → (شَبَّبَبَ) → (شَبَّبَبَبَ) Shawqi says:

- شَبَّبَبَبُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِي الْفُطْرِ نَارًا عَلَى مُحْتَلِّهِ كَأَنَّكَ سَلَامًا

- (You have kindled an internecine fire in the country, turning into cool comfort for the occupation forces.)

In Egyptian Arabic, however, there is a doubling of *shabba* (شَبَّ) to produce *shabshab* (شَبَّبَشَبَّ). As a noun, pronounced *shibshib* (شَبَّبَشَبَّبَ), it means "slippers". The initial verb can only mean "to throw slippers at or hit with slippers" – a rare use indeed. Sometimes the doubling of a syllable produces an emphatic version of an originally meaningful stem, but with a different meaning. Examples are *fashfish* (فَشَفَشَنَ) that is "to smash into smithereens"; *fadfad* (فَضَفَضَنَ), "to get something off one's chest"; *'ad'ad* (عَضَنَعَضَنَ) "to bite ineffectively or playfully at something"; and *fasfas* (فَصَفَصَنَ) "to remove a shell from a grain". In Egypt we say (يَقْرُقِرْ لَبَّ) that is, "to get to the kernels of melon-seeds and eat them". In the Levant they say (يَفَصَفِصْ بَدْر) and in Iraq (يَاكُلْ حَب). We know that "coccyx" means *'as'uṣ* (عَصْعُوص) but does everybody know that *me'as'as* (مِعَصَعَصَنَ) means "emaciated"? But well known is *me'at'ata* (مِقَطَّقَطَّة) "a mignonette, petite fille"!

XVI. Conclusion

It has been shown that a certain type of linguistic duality as conceived by major English poets and critics is similar to the

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duality of Arabic; that is, the distinction between MSA and heritage Arabic on the one hand and Egyptian Arabic on the other. In the 18th century, English literary criticism, thought to have been born and bred by John Dryden (1631-1700) began a life of its own from Pope's *Essay on Criticism* to Dr Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Like traditional Arabic criticism, the assumption in both was that there were two types of language, the high and the low. Such a binary concept of language has been fully studied by modern linguists, but not adequately related to its English literary counterpart, as exhibited in Wordsworth's revolt against the artificial language of the early 18th century and his insistence on using the 'natural' language of everyday life. His practice shows how much influenced he was by Plato's ideas.

The examination of the morphology of Egyptian Arabic within this context has shown that Egyptian Arabic writing seeks to use Egyptian Arabic as an independent, 'natural' language of thought and, consequently, perfectly suited to dramatic production. Brief breaks into MSA or heritage Arabic, either to convey concepts that are 'intellectual' as discussed above, or else for the doxological or other phraseological reasons also mentioned in this paper, may occur in the dialogue of Egyptian Arabic drama, giving prominence to the tone of Egyptian Arabic which prevails throughout. This study may offer a vindication of the fitness for this language for all literary genres, including drama.

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