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'I WANT TO WRITE IN THE COLLOQUIAL': AN EXAMPLE OF THE LANGUAGE OF CONTEMPORARY EGYPTIAN PROSE

Introduction

Literary norms in Egypt have gradually changed during the twentieth century, especially in its second half, when writing drama in the colloquial became the prevailing norm,[1] and writing prose dialogues in this variety became largely accepted. During the last decade of the century, and more so in the first decade of the third millennium, Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (*ʿĀmmiyya*) completed a long process of becoming a second written[2] and literary[3] language in Egypt, in addition to the prestigious Modern Standard Arabic (*Fuṣḥā*). Consequently, diglossia in Egypt in its written manifestation has become a complicated situation, with many sub-varieties and mixed styles,[4] while the status of *ʿĀmmiyya* in many cases has become equal to that of *Fuṣḥā*.

While already in the mid-twentieth century it was acceptable to write dialogues in *ʿĀmmiyya*, using this variety for writing narration - and that meant also writing entire literary prose works in *ʿĀmmiyya* - was rejected by the cultural establishment and by most writers. Very few prose works entirely written in *ʿĀmmiyya* were published in Egypt before the 1990s, and those few were severely criticized merely for the use of a variety that was regarded inferior and unfit to serve as a vehicle for "serious" or "respectable" literature.[5]

Since the 1990s, and more so in the 2000s, many books written either entirely in *ʿĀmmiyya* or in a variety of mixed styles which include *Fuṣḥā*, *ʿĀmmiyya* and sometimes elements of English were published in Egypt. Writing *ʿĀmmiyya* in the internet has also become very common, and there are quite a few books which started in blogs and have been transformed into printed texts. A noticeable stylistic result of the new norms is the elimination of the borders between the language of narration and the language of dialogue. Writing narration in the colloquial or in mixed styles which contain Standard and Egyptian Arabic is definitely a revolutionary

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[1]See Rosenbaum 1995a.

[2]See Rosenbaum 2004a.

[3]See Rosenbaum (in print).

[4]Many studies have been written about code-switching and mixed styles in spoken Egyptian Arabic as well as other Arabic dialects, e.g. Eid 1988; Myers-Scotton et al. 1996; Wilmsen 1996. For two recent extensive studies see Bassiouney 2006; Mejdell 2006. On mixed styles and the use of dialects in written texts in Egypt see, e.g., Abboud-Haggar 2010; Davies 2006; Holes 2004: 373-382; Ibrahim 2010; Rosenbaum 2002; 2007; 2008.

[5]See, e.g., Rosenbaum (in print).

development in the history of modern Arabic literature,[6] which in the past knew fierce debates about the language of literature, debates which in Egypt have considerably weakened.[7]

In this short study I shall demonstrate some characteristics of the contemporary style of writing in Egypt which became possible due to the change of norms, taken from a novel recently published in Egypt.

ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz: From blog to best-seller

I have chosen to describe here some of the stylistic features in Ġāda ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's novel[8] *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz* ("I Want to Get Married"), as representative of the contemporary style of writing in Egypt. ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's novel, which deals with the problem of unmarried young women in Egypt and their difficulties in finding a groom, is not only the most successful book written in *ʿĀmmiyya* in Egypt in the first decade of the first millennium, but also became a model for imitation for other Egyptian writers, in both theme and style. Since the publication of ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's book and its tremendous success the issue of getting married has become a common motif in contemporary writing in Egypt, in chapters or in books dedicated to this issue. Some titles clearly allude to ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's book, for example: Fawzī 2010: *Itgawwizni.. šukran* ("Marry Me, Thank You");[9] Ḫālid 2010: *Miš ʿāyiz ʾatgawwiz* ("I Don't Want to Get Married"); Muʿawwaḍ 2010: *Barḍu hatgawwiz tāni* ("Still I'll Get Married Again"). Encouraged by the new norms of writing in contemporary Egypt, and by the model set by ʿAbd al-ʿĀl, all of the three writers mentioned here decided to use *ʿĀmmiyya* as the main language, for both narration and dialogue.

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[6]The only case so far of an Arabic dialect that became a written language is the vernacular of Malta, but it is written in Latin letters, it is not mixed with *Fuṣḥā*, and is not called "Arabic" but rather Maltese by both its users and Arabs, and as a matter of fact lost its connection to Arab culture. There are attempts to use local dialects in literature in other places in the Arabic speaking world (currently mainly in Morocco), but the scale of writing in *ʿĀmmiyya* is far from being near to that of Egypt, and so far nowhere else in the Arab world *ʿĀmmiyya* became a second written and literary language as in Egypt.

[7]On the changing nature of the linguistic debate in Egypt see Rosenbaum (in preparation-a).

[8]"I Want to Get Married" consists of short chapters and sections, and stands somewhere between fiction and non-fiction. In Egypt it is usually referred to as a *riwāya* ("novel"), and here I refer to it as such.

[9]The title also alludes to the advertisement *kallimni šukran* (see below).

Ġāda ʿAbd al-ʿĀl was born in al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā in 1978. She studied at the University of Ṭanṭa, where she graduated the department of pharmacology,[10] and after graduation began working as a pharmacist.

"I Want to Get Married" started as a blog entitled "wanna-b-a-bride", and became one of the most popular blogs in Egypt (ʿAbd al-ʿĀl 2010a). When al-Šurūq publishing house, one of the biggest in Egypt, decided to launch a new series of books started in blogs, ʿAbd al-ʿĀl was one of three young authors, all women, who received an offer to publish their texts in a book form.[11] The book, first published in 2008, became a smash hit and a best-seller in Egypt, and by the time this article was being prepared for print (September 2010), has seen its ninth edition.

ʿAbd al-ʿĀāl's novel has also attracted attention outside of Egypt, and so far has been or is being translated into Italian, German, English and Dutch.[12] Many surveys of ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's novel have been published in the Egyptian and foreign press, some of which also appeared in electronic versions on the internet;[13] other surveys and commentaries have appeared in various sites on the internet (see examples below).

The novel has also been adapted into a television series, with the same title "I Want to Get Married", the main role of "Bride" played by the young movie star Hind Ṣabrī. The television series, containing thirty parts, started to be broadcast on Egyptian television in Ramaḍān 2010 (August-September). The television version has also been written by ʿAbd al-ʿĀl, who had to add new characters and episodes in order to adjust the story to the thirty-chapter length expected of a Ramaḍān series.

The novel contains reflections on the problems of marriage and ten stories of the failures of ten marriage proposals received by "Bride" (*Brayd*), the protagonist. The novel is written in a style that combines humor, satire and social criticism, with many allusions to modern popular Egyptian culture. It belongs to the sub-genre which is called in Egypt *ʾadab sāḫir* ("satirical literature"), which is now flourishing in this country.

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[10]It is quite common in Egypt to refer to such graduates as "doctors"; this is also reflected in the novel, when the narrator is addressed as or refers to herself as *doktōra* (10, 40, 83, 84, 85, 95, 107, 134).

[11]The two other books were *Urz bil-laban lišaḥṣayn* (Bassām 2008) and *Ammā hāḏihi.. faraqṣatī ʾanā* (Maḥmūd 2008).

[12]The Italian (Abdel Aal 2009) and German (Abdelaal 2010) translations have already been published. English and Dutch translations are in preparation. The English translation (Abdel Aal [forthcoming]; see *Www.utexas* 2010) was not published when I prepared this paper for publication (September 2010), and so far I have not seen it; all of the translations from the novel which appear below are mine.

[13]See, e.g., al-ʿĀdilī 2008;

Ḫarsā 2008; Knickmeyer 2008; Soares 2008.

ʿĀmmiyya is more and more extensively used in this type of literature, either as the main language of an entire book or mixed with *Fuṣḥā*. It is important to note, however, that it is used extensively not only in *ʾadab sāḫir* but also in other types of prose as well, fiction and non-fiction.

The main language of the novel, in vocabulary, grammar and orthography, is *ʿĀmmiyya*. Since literature today may be overtly written in *ʿĀmmiyya*, without a need to camouflage its elements and make them look like *Fuṣḥā*,[14] there is no need to describe the language of the novel in order to prove that it is written in *ʿĀmmiyya*. I shall focus here, therefore, on the stylistic phenomenon of using elements of *Fuṣḥā* and English in a text written in *ʿĀmmiyya*, on linguistic awareness inside the text, and on allusions to popular Egyptian culture.

The text in the printed book is very similar to its original blog version, which went through light editing only, especially in technical matters like punctuation and division into paragraphs and sections. The printed version shows that the publisher has not attempted to convert the book's language or to bring it closer to *Fuṣḥā*. The fact that a major Egyptian publisher accepts a book written in *ʿĀmmiyya* as is, is another indication of the changing status of *ʿĀmmiyya* in Egypt as a written and a literary language.

The attitude towards the use of language in "I Want to Get Married"

The fierce debate about the use of language in written literature and the opposition to the use of *ʿĀmmiyya* in it have recently weakened in Egypt (Rosenbaum [in preparation]). Following the line of contemporary criticism, the use of *ʿĀmmiyya* in *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz* has hardly faced any opposition by critics, except for a few remarks. When the style or language used by ʿAbd al-ʿĀl are referred to, more often than not they are praised.

In an interview with ʿAbd al-ʿĀl published in *al-Dustūr*, some of the author's ideas about language choice in literature are quoted:

> اختياري للعامية في الكتابة جاء ربما لأنني أشعر أنها اللغة الأقرب إلى جيل الشباب.
> My choice of *ʿĀmmiyya* for writing was probably because I felt that it was the closest language to the young generation. (Al-ʿĀdilī 2008).

ʿAbd al-ʿĀl further expresses her ideas on using language varieties in literature:

[14]On camouflaged *ʿĀmmiyya* in Egyptian literature see Somekh 1993; Rosenbaum 2001.

> لا أعرف إذا ما كان مشروعي القادم سيكون مكتوباً باللغة العامية أو بالفصحى أو بلغة وسط بينهما. وأريد أيضا أن أوضح أنه ليس لدي مانع في أن أجرب جميع أشكال اللغة في الكتابة. كما أن ليس لدى أي تحفظ على الكتابة باللغة الفصحى.
>
> I do not know whether my next project will be written in *ʿĀmmiyya* or *Fuṣḥā* or in a middle language between both of them. I also want to make it clear that I have no objection to trying all forms of language in writing. I also do not have any reservations about writing in *Fuṣḥā*. (Al-ʿĀdilī 2008).

In a description posted in the internet that praises the novel as far as topic and contents are concerned, the use of *ʿĀmmiyya* is criticized in the vein of what I have called a "rear-guard battle [against the use of *ʿĀmmiyya*]" (Rosenbaum [in preparation]); the critic expresses his indignation at the choice of *ʿĀmmiyya* as the language of the novel and says that it would have been better to have used *Fuṣḥā* in this book as in literature in general:

> وبداية أعيب انتهاج الكتاب اللغة العامية الدارجة، وخاصة المصطلحات الحديثة بين الشباب في هذه الأيام. ذلك أنه مهما كانت اللغة المنطوقة لها رونقها، إلا أنها بعيدة تماما عن اللغة المكتوبة، أو التي يجب الكتابة بها. ويظل من الضروري على جميع الكتّاب ضرورة الالتزام بهذه اللغة، وعدم الانصياع لمحاولات وأدها باستخدام اللغة العامية كبديل عنها.
>
> First of all, I find a fault in the book's pursuing the colloquial language, especially the modern terminology (used) among the young ones these days. This is because whatever splendor the spoken language has, it is very far from the written language, or the language that should be used as the written one. It is still imperative that all writers must adhere to this language, and not yield to attempts at burying it alive by using *ʿĀmmiyya* as its substitute. (Yūsuf 2010).

In another description of the novel, also posted in the internet, the critic praises its language in typical general cliché terms often used in Egyptian literary criticism. The book's title, *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz*, is written, according to this critic, in *al-ʿāmmiyya al-miṣriyya al-salisa wal-gamīla* ("fluent and beautiful Egyptian *ʿĀmmiyya*"; ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm 2010). The book itself, says ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm, is also written in the same style; the reason given for the stylistic choice is similar to that of ʿAbd al-ʿĀal quoted above:

> فإن الكتاب مكتوب باللغة العامية المصرية أيضا مثله مثل العنوان. وهى محاولة جديدة ربما تهدف بالأساس لتقريب القضية للقراء ومحاولة الانتقال بها من التعقيد إلى التبسيط.

> The book is written in Egyptian *ʿĀmmiyya*, just the same as the title. This is a new experiment, probably aiming basically to bring the issue [of unmarried women] closer to the readers and by it to try to move from complexity to simplicity. (ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm 2010).

Another critic simply compliments the novel's language and style:

> أجمل ما فى الرواية "من وجهة نظرى طبعا" أنها كتبت باللغة العامية المصرية هذا غير اسلوبها الساخر الجميل وتعرضها لمشاكل إجتماعية باسلوب بسيط وجميل يفهمه الجميع.
>
> The most beautiful thing in this novel, according to my viewpoint, of course, is that it has been written in Egyptian *ʿĀmmiyya*. This is apart from its beautiful satirical style and its dealing with social problems in a simple and beautiful style that everybody can understand. (*Afkaarforum* 2009).

Direct address to the reader

A stylistic device often found in satirical literature is a direct address to the reader, by either the narrator or the actual writer; it creates an intimate feeling between the reader (or the implied reader) and the narrator or the writer, a feeling augmented when the address is done not in formal *Fuṣḥā* but rather in *ʿĀmmiyya*. This device is very common in Egyptian satirical writing, *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz* included. Such a direct address appears in the outset, in the first chapter:

> سموا كده وخليكوا معايا واحدة واحدة.. خلينا نتفق الأول إن موضوع الجواز والعرسان وتأخر الجواز ده موضوع حساس جدا.
>
> So say "in the name of Allah" and pay attention to what I have to say, step by step. Let's agree at first that the subject of marriage, brides and grooms, and the delay of marriage is a very sensitive subject. (5).[15]

The verb *samma* means "to say *bi-smi -l-lāhi al-raḥmāni al-raḥīm* [lit.: "in the name of Allah, the Merciful, the All-Merciful]"; it is usually said when one is about to start or to do something; the narrator addresses the readers as if they are an audience called to pay attention. This chapter also ends with another direct address to the reader:

> خليكوا معايا بقه هاحكيلكم على بلوة م البلاوي اللي اتقدمولي.. عشان تعرفوا إحنا بنستحمل أد ايه.

[15]References to quotation from *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz* appear with page numbers only.

> So pay attention to me and I shall tell you about one of the "disasters" who proposed to me, so that you understand to what extent we have to bear. (9).

In another case, the narrator not only asks the readers to "pay attention", she also asks them to be more active:

> من فضلكوا ياريت تقاطعوا الكلمة دي.
> Please, I wish that you boycott this word [*ʿānis*, "spinster"]. (145).

It should be pointed out that since the main language of this novel is *ʿĀmmiyya* the style of direct address here, as is also the case with dialogues in literature written in *ʿĀmmiyya*, does not differ from that of the narration.

Incorporating distinct elements of *Fuṣḥā*

While a writer who follows the older norms of writing in *Fuṣḥā* has to refrain from using *ʿĀmmiyya*, writers who decide to write in *ʿĀmmiyya* feel free to switch to *Fuṣḥā* or to mix *ʿĀmmiyya* with *Fuṣḥā* anywhere in the text. This gives writers in *ʿĀmmiyya* more stylistic options than those available for writers in *Fuṣḥā*.

Very often, *Fuṣḥā* is incorporated in texts written in *ʿĀmmiyya* in communicative situations in which *Fuṣḥā* is expected, for example, reading the news, citing newspapers, documents and letters, quoting dialogues held in court, citing the Quran, the *ḥadīṯ* and other sources written in *Fuṣḥā*, representing the speech of religious figures, and so on.[16] In contemporary Egyptian prose, in addition to the above, and in addition to employing *Fuṣḥāmmiyya*[17] and using *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿĀmmiyya* to change the point of view,[18] *Fuṣḥā*, or elements of *Fuṣḥā*, may be used also as a stylistic contrast to *ʿĀmmiyya*, sometimes to draw the reader's attention to the language itself, and sometimes to create the feeling of an elevated style. It is not rare, therefore, to see the *Fuṣḥā* demonstrative *hāḏa* ("this", masc.) or *hāḏihi* ("this", fem.) and other typical *Fuṣḥā* words in a text written in *ʿĀmmiyya*. Such words may appear also in oral communication, but in written literature inserting *Fuṣḥā* inside *ʿĀmmiyya* is carefully planned and completely intentional. In the following examples typical *Fuṣḥā* words appear in sentences written in *ʿĀmmiyya*:

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[16]See Rosenbaum 1995c.

[17]See Rosenbaum 2000.

[18]See Rosenbaum 2008.

a.

ولهذا فأنا "برايد" [...] قررت إني هاكتب في الموضوع.

Therefore (*walihāḏa*) I, "Bride", [...] have decided that I would write about this topic. (9).

b.

الأيام بتغير هذه الحالات الطارئة.

Time [lit.: "the days"] changes these (*hāḏihi*) emergency cases. (30).

In the following example, however, the word *hāḏa* should not be regarded as an element of *Fuṣḥā*, because the collocation *ʿalā hāḏa al-ʾasās* is now frequently used in *ʿĀmmiyya* and is no longer regarded by its users as a *Fuṣḥā* collocation. Still, the author chose to use this collocation and not its parallel that contains the *ʿĀmmiyya* demonstrative *da* (*ʿalā -l-ʾasās da*):

وفضلنا ماشيين الخمس سنين على هذا الأساس وعيشناهم في سلام وأمان.

And we kept going on this (*hāḏa*) basis for five years in which we lived in peace and security. (40).

Fuṣḥā expressions may be quoted as they are. The following *Fuṣḥā* greeting commonly appears at the bottom of wedding invitations, but is only rarely pronounced in oral communication (its parallel in *ʿĀmmiyya* is *ʿuʾbāl ʿandukum*); Egyptians would immediately identify this allusion to weddings, which here appears inside *ʿĀmmiyya*:

والعاقبة عندكم في المسرات.

May it be the same for you on merry occasions. (35).

The following sentence starts in *ʿĀmmiyya* and ends with a phrase in *Fuṣḥā*, in which the particle *ʾan* is followed by a passive form of a verb in the subjunctive (*tastaḥiqq ʾan turwā*), a form quite rare in *ʿĀmmiyya*:

هانفضل نشوف ونعيش ونقابل حكايات وحواديت كتيرة تستحق أن تروى.

We shall keep seeing, living and coming across stories and tales that deserve to be told. (175).

The *Fuṣḥā* collocation *kamā yanbaġī ʾan yakūn* also includes a verb in the subjunctive which is not used in *ʿĀmmiyya*:

عماد ده يبقى ابن الجيران كما ينبغي أن يكون.

This ʿImād is the neighbor's son, as he ought to be. (160).

The following section in *Fuṣḥā* is relatively long and creates a distinctive contrast with the rest of the text:

> دقات تهز وجداني وتزلزل كياني: فها قد أتى الميعاد.. ميعادي مع السعادة. هذا الميعاد الذي أخره القدر كثيرا. لكني صبرت وصبرت.. وها قد أثمر صبري وانتظاري [...].
> Beats shake my feeling and convulse my existence: And there came my appointment. My appointment with happiness, this appointment that destiny delayed for so long. But I waited and waited, and now my patience and waiting have borne fruit [...] (47).

One of the ways to incorporate elevated *Fuṣḥā* into a text written in *ʿĀmmiyya* is to quote from the Quran. While in most cases Quranic quotations create a feeling of an elevated style, some have become common expressions in *ʿĀmmiyya*, for example the following:

> طب نسيبنا من المرحلة دي.. ندخل على المرحلة اللي بعدها.. الثلاثين... وما أدراك ما الثلاثين.
> All right, let's forget about this stage; let's get to the next stage. Thirty. You don't have any idea what a big thing thirty is. (173).

The collocation *wamā ʾadrāka mā...* appears several times in the Quran, where it means "and what will make you know...". When used in *ʿĀmmiyya*, it refers to something that is bigger than one can imagine or to something that one does not know or grasp. Although many speakers no longer identify the Quranic origin of this expression, on some of them it still may leave the impression of a somewhat elevated style.

Language awareness

Using *Fuṣḥā* inside a text written in *ʿĀmmiyya* may sometimes involve meta-linguistic remarks by the narrator that reflect linguistic awareness and a desire to share it with the readers. In *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz* there are several meta-linguistic remarks which reflect the linguistic awareness of the author, through the comments of "Bride", the narrator (who, in this case, is to a large extent identified with the author, Ġāda ʿAbd al-ʿĀl). Most of the remarks refer to the use of *Fuṣḥā* inside the *ʿĀmmiyya*, but in a few cases also to the use of *ʿĀmmiyya* or English.

Language awareness: using *Fuṣḥā*

The mere use of another variety, be it *ʿĀmmiyya* inside *Fuṣḥā* or *Fuṣḥā* inside *Fuṣḥā*, is enough to draw the reader's attention. Referring to such use

increases the stylistic impact of using more than one language or variety in one text, and the author does this again and again by referring directly to the use of *Fuṣḥā* or its level and thus forcing the reader to think not only on the issues she has raised but also on the language she has used.

One method of referring to *Fuṣḥā* is to have the narrator use *Fuṣḥā* expressions and then pretend, between brackets, that she does not know their meanings:

a.

وارتعدت فرائصي (مش عارفة بالظبط فرائصي دي اللي هي إيه بس أهي ارتعدت وخلاص).

Violent excitement has seized me [lit.: "my shoulder muscles have trembled"] (I don't know exactly what are these shoulder muscles of mine, but in any case they trembled and that's it). (107).

The expression *ʾirtaʿadat farāʾiṣī* is a *Fuṣḥā* idiom, referred to here through its components' literal meanings. The same method is employed in the following example, too, with the expression *niyāṭ al-qulūb*:

b.

ماما حاضنة أم محروس والاتنين منخرطين في بكاء يقطع نياط القلوب (إيه نياط القلوب دي؟).

Mom has embraced Umm Maḥrūs and both of them broke into tears which could break the heart [lit.: "cut the heart arteries"] (what are these heart arteries?). (127).

In the following example the narrator claims that she might be asked about Ḥunayn, the character on which a famous *Fuṣḥā* idiom is based:

c.

وعملت جولة تانية للبحث عن الكتاب.. لكن بدون أدنى بارقة أمل. تقدروا تقولوا كده إني رجعت بخفي حنين (الناس المثقفة اللي بتبقى مستعدة كل مرة تسأل [كذا: أسأل] سؤال غبي زي ده يبقوا برضه يقولولي إيه موضوع الأخ حنين ده).

I made another tour in order to search for the book, but without the slightest glimmer of hope. You may say that I came back empty-handed [lit.: "with Ḥunayn's pair of shoes] (the educated people who are prepared each time to ask a stupid question like that also ask me what is the matter with this "brother" Ḥunayn). (117).

Rajaʿa biḫuffay Ḥunayn is a well known idiom in *Fuṣḥā*, based on an old story.

Another method is to have the narrator compliment herself for using *Fuṣḥā*:

a.

ثم جاءت الطامة الكبرى وانكسرت كل قلوبنا البريئة الفتية (حلوة مش كده؟).

Then came the great disaster and all of our innocent and juvenile hearts were broken (nice, isn't it?). (160-161).

This entire sentence is in *Fuṣḥā*; the reference to style here may be either to the whole sentence or to the last phrase (*kull qulūbinā al-barīʾa al-fatiyya*). The phrase *jāʾat al-ṭāmma al-kubrā* is taken from the Quran, 79:34 (*al-Nāziʿāt*, "Those who drag forth"). This phrase and its meaning are known only to educated people, who may also recognize it as an allusion to the Quran.

b.

بما إني فتاة ركيكة.. قصدي رقيقة رقيقة.. ومهيضة الجناح.. (ههه حلوة الجناح دي).

Since I am a thin (*rakīka*) girl, I mean delicate, delicate (*raqīqa*) and with broken wings (hey, it is beautiful these wings). (21).

In the beginning of this sentence, the narrator draws the reader's attention by alternating the consonants *kāf* and *qāf* in two *Fuṣḥā* words which are similar in sound but different in meaning. Then she compliments herself for using a *Fuṣḥā* expression. *Mahīḍ al-gināḥ* [lit.: "with a broken wing", here in the feminine], means someone who is helpless or powerless. This phrase, mostly because of using the word *mahīḍa*, is in elevated *Fuṣḥā* (its parallel in *ʿĀmmiyya* is *maksūr al-gināḥ*); the narrator refers here to the word *gināḥ* ("wing"), but apparently means the whole phrase.

c.

بس ماما حطت إيدها اليمين فوق دراعه الشمال فاتنهد تاني وأذعن للأمر الواقع (حلوة أذعن دي قووي).

But mom put her right arm on his [the father's] left arm, so he sighed again and yielded to the existing fact (it is very beautiful this yielded). (48).

The *Fuṣḥā* verb *ʾaḍʿan* ("yield") is regarded as so elevated that it is never used in *ʿĀmmiyya*, and again the narrator draws the reader's attention by complimenting herself for using an elevated *Fuṣḥā* word.

The narrator may also use a *Fuṣḥā* expression and then express her indignation for doing that, as if this happened against her will:

نفسي أنفجر فيها وفي الصيدلية وفي العريس لو شفته.. آه وعلى رأي المثل: على الباغي تدور الدوائر. منك لله يا نهى.. وكمان خلتيني أتكلم بالنحوي؟!!

I feel a desire to burst out on her and on the pharmacy and on the groom had I seen him, as the proverb says: Every dog will have his day. May God punish you, Nuha, and you also have made me speak Standard Arabic?!! (136).

The narrator uses the *Fuṣḥā* expression *ʿalā al-bāġī tadūr al-dawā'ir*, then immediately refers to this usage by expressing her "anger" for being in a situation in which she found herself using a *Fuṣḥā* expression.

The narrator refers to the existence of the two varieties, *Fuṣḥā* and *ʿĀmmiyya*, when she quotes two of her poems written in earlier stages in her life. The narrator says that the first one was written in her "*Fuṣḥā* stage" while the other one was written in the "*ʿĀmmiyya* stage":

الأول كانت مرحلة الفصحى وكانت أولى قصائدي قصيدة "قطرات المطر تتساقط".
القصيدة التانية بقه دي كانت في مرحلة العامية.

At first there was the stage of *Fuṣḥā* and my first poem was "rain drops are falling". (89).
As for the second poem, it was in the stage of *ʿĀmmiyya*. (91).

Language awareness: using *ʿĀmmiyya*

Since the main language in the novel is *ʿĀmmiyya*, most of the reader's attention is drawn to the use of *Fuṣḥā*, but in some cases the narrator also draws attention to *ʿĀmmiyya*, sometimes similarly to the way she draws attention to *Fuṣḥā*.

In the following extract the narrator compliments herself for using a metaphor in *ʿĀmmiyya*.

واقعد أسرح بالليل وانا فاتحة الشباك ونور القمر مدلدق على كل حاجة في الأوضة (حلوة مدلدق دي.. رومانسية مش كده؟).

Then I would stay contemplating at night after having opened the window, while the moonlight is being poured on everything in the room (it is beautiful this being poured, it is romantic, isn't it? (69).

Itdalda' or *'iddalda'* means to be poured (water or any liquid). Here the word *middalda'* is used poetically as a metaphor to describe the descending moonlight. The narrator here draws the reader's attention to this exceptional use of the *ʿĀmmiyya* word in a metaphor she has created.

While in the previous example the narrator draws attention to the use of a certain word in a metaphor, in the following example she refers to the use

of a certain type of metaphor created in *ʿĀmmiyya*, and also supplies the term ("implicit metaphor") for the stylistic device she has used:

> راحت كل واحدة فينا مطلعة من شنطتها الابتسامة اللي شايلاها للمناسبات اللي زي دي
> ? حلوة الحتة دي؟ مش دي الاستعارة المكنية بتاعة البلاغة زمان؟
> Each one of us started taking out of her bag the smile that she carries for such occasions. Isn't it nice, this piece? Isn't this the implicit metaphor of the old good style? (168).

The method of the narrator complimenting her own style is also employed in the following case in which she compliments her poetical use of *ʿĀmmiyya*, as she did in other cases when *Fuṣḥā* was used:

> عشان كده أول ما عرفنا إنه رجع من السفر ردت فينا الروح واخضرت من تاني شجرة الأمل اللي كانت فروعها نشفت جوا قلوبنا (هو أنا باجيب الكلام ده منين؟).
> Because of this, immediately when we knew that he had come back from his trip, our spirits came back to us and the tree of hope whose branches have dried inside our hearts became green (where do I bring these words from?). (161).

In one occasion the narrator also refers to a new *ʿĀmmiyya* word and gives a grammatical explanation for its form:

> خصوصا بعد جوزها ما اشترى 3 تكاتك شغالين ليل ونهار.. (تكاتك اللي هي جمع توك توك حضرتك).
> Especially after her husband bought three *takātik* which are working day and night (*takātik*, sir, is the plural of *tuk tuk*). (127).

The narrator explains that the word *takātik* is the [broken] plural form of *tuk tuk*, a word that entered Egyptian Arabic in the 2000s. The word in singular is not explained, since the narrator assumes that it is known to all (Egyptians).[19]

The representation of palatalization as a stylistic device

Palatalization, to quote one definition, is "the raising of the front upper surface of the tongue towards the hard palate at the top of the mouth"

[19] *Tuk tuk* is a small three-wheeled motor vehicle used as a kind of a taxi in popular neighborhoods in Egypt, but never in the city center.

(Richards et al. 2007);[20] in Egyptian Arabic it is a characteristic mostly typical of women. Egyptians I spoke with claim that palatalization usually marks women of lower strata of society, although also some upper class women may speak with it; sometimes men may be heard speaking with palatalization, too. However, it is generally agreed that palatalization is a characteristic of women.[21]

Palatalization may be heard in the performing arts, as in films, the theater and radio plays, but usually it is not represented in written texts. *ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz* is an exception in this respect, and palatalization is represented several times in the novel, through changes in the accepted orthography.

One character in the novel, Mrs. Sundus, consistently speaks with palatalization; for example:

مدام سندس واقفة جنبها وعمالة تطبطب عليها:
- ولا تزعلي نفسك يا حبيبتشي.

Mrs. Sundus is standing next to her and keeps patting her:
- Don't make yourself upset, my darling (*ḥabībtši*, as opposed to *ḥabībti*). (142).

Whenever Mrs. Sundus speaks, the reader may expect palatalization in her speech; the following is another example:

الراجل بصلي ياختشي شوية.

Oh boy (*ya-ḫtši*, as opposed to *ya-ḫti*), the man looked at me for a while. (68).

Occasionally, as happens in reality, some words in the speech of other characters are palatalized, too; this includes the speech of "Bride", the protagonist:

a.

نهى دي صاحبتشي وحبيبتشي.

This Nuha is my friend and darling (*ṣaḥbitši wiḥabībtši*, as opposed to *ṣaḥbiti wiḥabībti*). (66).

---

[20]Another definition: "Change, conditioned through assimilation, in the place of articulation of consonants and vowels towards the hard palate [...]. In consonants it usually involves dentals or velars with a neighboring front vowel (mostly *i, y*) [...]. In vowels, palatalization generally involves a fronting of back vowels [...]." (Bussman 1996: 345).

[21]For a description of palatalization in Egypt see Haeri 1991; 1997.

b.

أفلام زمان العاطشفية.

The romantic (*ʿāṭšifiyya*, as opposed to *ʿāṭifiyya*) films of old times. (69).

c.

هما الاتنين مرتبطشين.

These two are engaged in a relationship (*murtabiṭšīn*, as opposed to *murtabiṭīn*). (169).

By this method the author creates some intimacy with the readers and also shows that her protagonist is not different from some other female figures she writes about.

The use of English

There are many foreign words which are used in Arabic;[22] many of these find their way also to literary texts, most of which are written in or contain colloquial Arabic.[23] In recent years, the dominant foreign source for borrowing words and enriching the Egyptian vocabulary is English, which replaced French as an influential cultural language in Egypt.[24] "There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English" (Crystal 2009: 189); this statement also applies for Egypt, where both Standard and Colloquial Arabic contain an increasing vocabulary borrowed from English. A growing part of this vocabulary is also reflected in contemporary written literature.

Kowner and Rosenhouse (2008) presume that motives for adopting loan words are "associated with some reward, either to the borrowing language or (at least) to the person using the loan words" (12), and regard the three following motives as the most fundamental: Need to coin new terminology and concepts, tendency to emulate a dominant group, and tendency to create a special jargon in closed groups (Kowner and Rosenhouse 2008: 12-13).

The use of English in *ʿāʿyza ʾatgawwiz* reflects the actual usage of English in contemporary Egyptian Arabic. This usage may be divided to roughly two categories: Egyptianized English words and expressions, and distinct English words and expressions which as yet have not become part

[22]On foreign borrowings into Arabic see, e.g. Holes 2004: 305-309.

[23]On the use of foreign words and languages in literature written in Egypt until the end of the twentieth century, see Rosenbaum 2002.

[24]For some examples see Rosenbaum 2004c; for more examples from contemporary Egyptian literature see Rosenbaum (in preparation-b).

of Egyptian Arabic. In this novel the English words and expressions are almost always written in Arab letters, but in other literary texts one can find words, phrases and sections written in Latin letters.

Language awareness: using English

In one occasion the narrator has a meta-linguistic remark that refers to the protagonist's name. This remark reflects the perception of English among Egyptians, as a marker of education:

> ولهذا فأنا "برايد" (اللي هي عروسة بس بالإنجليزي عشان الناس تقول عليا مثقفة) قررت إني هاكتب في الموضوع.
>
> Therefore I, Brayd ["Bride"] (which means "bride", but in English, so that people will say about me that I am educated), have decided that I would write about this topic. (9).

Since "Brayd" (bride) is the name of the protagonist, her father is never addressed by his private name but is rather called "Abu Brayd" ("Bride's father).

On another occasion the narrator explains a word in Arabic by an English word which is not used in Egyptian Arabic, but does not explain why she is doing so:

> عبارة عن ٣٢ سنّة وطالعلهم بني آدم. سنة يعني تووث.
>
> He consists of 32 "*sinna*" [teeth] with a human being emerging out of them. A *sinna* means tooth. (48).

Egyptianized English elements

The number of English loan words and expressions in *ʿĀmmiyya* is constantly increasing; there are English loan words in *Fuṣḥā*, too, but *ʿĀmmiyya* absorbs a larger number of English words and more rapidly. A considerable number of these Egyptianized English words receive in *ʿĀmmiyya* a different form, influenced by the phonology of Egyptian Arabic. These Egyptianized words have already found their way into the contemporary Egyptian literature written in *ʿĀmmiyya* or in mixed styles. The following are some typical examples.

"Interview" (*entarviū*):

> هو احنا عاملين برنامج مواهب والا ده جاي يعمل إنترفيو في كباريه.
>
> Are we having a program for new talents or he came to have an interview in a cabaret? (15).

"Interview", in the Egyptian version *ʾentarvyū*, has become a term in Egyptian Arabic to denote a job interview.

"Pampers" (*bambarz*):

ومرتبها اللي كان ضايع كله ع البارفانات والمكياج بقى بيروح في ثلاث اتجاهات: بامبرز ثم بامبرز ثم بامبرز.

And her salary that was all wasted on perfumes and makeup started being spent in three directions: Pampers, then pampers, then pampers. (28).

The word *bambarz*, disposable diapers, is taken from the trade name "Pampers" that currently has become the only word for any disposable diapers.

"Full-option" (*ful ʾobšen/ʾobšan*):

عروسة فول أوبشن.
عريس فول أوبشان.

A full-option bride. (32).
A full-option groom. (105).

The phrase *ful ʾobšen* (or *ʾobšan*, from English "full option") is usually said in Egyptian Arabic on cars which are equipped with all modern luxury facilities. Here it comically refers to the bride and the groom.

"Sorry" (*sori*):

يبقى سوري ما فيش كلام بيننا!

Then I am sorry, there is nothing for us to talk about! (40).

Sori has become very common in Egyptian Arabic and has pushed away the phrase *la muʾāḫza*.

"Delete" (*delīt*):

وتحس إنه معفن وميت ع القرش وتعملوا ديليت من موبايلها ومن حياتها.

And she will notice that he is stingy and close-fisted, and will delete him from her mobile telephone and from her life. (69).

The word *delīt* (as well as the verb *dallit* derived from it) is one of communication and computer terms which became very common in Egyptian Arabic.[25]

"Missed call" (*misd-i kol*, pl. *misdāt*):

أمال المحمول ده يبقى إيه؟.. ده أنيل من العيل.. إشي اتصالات، وإشي رسايل، وإشي ميسدات.

[25]See Rosenbaum 2004c: 194).

> Then what is this mobile? It is worse than children. There are communications, and also messages, and also *misdāt* (missed calls). (153).

Misd-i kol ("missed call") has become a common phrase in Egyptian Arabic, which takes the Arab complete plural form *misdāt.*

"Please" (*blīz*)

فبليز بليز، بلاش تريقة.

> So *blīz* (please), please, don't mock me. (21).

The word *blīz* (from English "please") may be used in Egyptian Arabic, mainly by women.

Distinct English elements

There are Egyptians who tend to insert distinct English words and expressions which have not become part of Egyptian Arabic into their speech. For some it is a marker of social status, for others it is a device to show that they are well-educated.[26] Some terms are used by limited groups, as a part of a professional vocabulary. The following are some examples of the use of distinct English:

a.

م1:لأ، قصدي معاكي تشيلدرين إيه؟
م2: نو.. أنا لسه ماتجوزتش.
م1: أوه ماي جود.. هاااانيييي.

> Speaker 1: No, I mean what children do you have?
> Speaker 2: No, I did not get married yet.
> Speaker 1: Oh my God, Honeyyyyy. (19-20).

"Children", "Oh my God" and "honey" are not part of the vocabulary of Egyptian Arabic.

b.

انتي عارفة دي اتقدملها كام عريس؟
- مش المهم الكوانتتي المهم الكواليتي.

> Do you know how many grooms have proposed to her?
> - Quantity is not the important thing, it is quality that is important. (121).

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[26]Students and graduates of the American University in Cairo are known for their extensive mixing of English with Egyptian Arabic.

While "quality" may sometimes be used in Egyptian Arabic, mostly by educated people, "quantity" has not become part of its vocabulary.

c.

فضلت الشلة بتاعتنا "male free" زي ما كنا مسمينها.
الشلة دي هاتفضل طول عمرها "ميل فري".
Our group remained "male free" as we used to call it. (38).
This group will always remain "male free". (39).

The phrase "male free" appears here in two versions, one in Latin letters and the other in Arab letters; it is not a part of the Egyptian Arabic lexicon.

d.

سيكشان المايكروبيولوجي.
The microbiology section. (39).

"Section" (*sekšan* or *sekšen*, a parallel class), belongs to university terminology; it is widely used among students in all areas of study, but not outside of the university. The term *maykrobayoloji* ("microbiology") belongs to a limited professional terminology, and is used by people who are involved in this field.

e.

اتنين من الكابلز بتوع الكلية اتخطبوا.
Two of the *kabelz* (couples) from the Faculty got engaged to be married. (40).

"Couples" (*kabelz*) may be used by students or educated people with good knowledge of English, but as yet has not become a part of the Egyptian Arabic lexicon.

f.

حالة"panic attack".
A case of "panic attack". (88).

"Panic attack" is a professional word which may be used by doctors, but is not current in Egyptian Arabic.

Allusions to contemporary Egyptian culture

An allusion in a text is "a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage" (Abrams and Harpham 2009: 11). The use of allusions enriches

the literary text and forces the reader to be active while reading and connect the text he or she is reading with the text or other elements alluded to. In most cases, an author takes for granted that the readers have enough knowledge that will help in identifying and understanding such allusions.[27]

ʿĀayza ʾatgawwiz is replete with allusions to popular Egyptian culture. As is common in modern Egyptian literature, there are allusions to Egyptian songs,[28] movies and movie stars; Here I shall bring some examples of allusions to other aspects of modern Egyptian culture; it is obvious, in these examples, that the reader is expected to possess a knowledge of modern Egyptian society.

Advertisements and the world of communication

a.

باكل وباشرب وبانام وباخرج واتفسح واروح السينما واتفرج على روتانا وما باقدرش أغمض عينيا.. يبقى فين المشكلة؟؟

I eat, drink, sleep, go out, stroll around, go to the cinema, watch Rotana and cannot close my eyes. So where is the problem?? (10).

Rotana (pronounced *rutāna*) is a big Arab media company which has, among other things, television channels. A famous advertisement of Rotana in Egypt says: *ma tiʾdarš-i tiġammaḍ ʿenēk* ("you won't be able to close your eyes [while watching Rotana]". This phrase was also regularly said by broadcaster Hāla Sarḥān in a television show she had in one of Rotana channels. In this allusion, the narrator "obeys" this advertisement's statement.

b.

شوية كده وبيبو فرقع جيجي واداها وش خشب ما حصلش.

In a little while Bībo deserted Jīji and treated her badly in a way unheard of (90).

Bībo farʾaʿ Jīji is an allusion to a phrase said in a famous television advertisement of Vodafone, the cellular telephone company.[29]

c.

وعشان هو جلدة هاتكبر في دماغه ويقوم باعتلها "كلمني شكرا" عشان هي اللي تتدبس في المكالمة.

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[27]See, e.g., Abrams and Harpham 2009: 12.

[28]On this matter see Rosenbaum 1995a: 213-246; 1995b; 2004.

[29]This advertisement is available in the internet: *Youtube* 2007.

> And because he is stingy he will get this idea into his head and will send her the message "Please Call Me" so that she will be the one who will be landed with the conversation. (69).

Kallimni šukran ("talk with me, thank you") is a free message that may be sent in the Egyptian Vodafone network when one's credit is finished, so that people will call the sender's number, who thus will not have to pay for the conversation. The English equivalent to this message is "Pls Call Me" which may also appear on the screens of Egyptian mobiles.

d.

> وتعملوا ديليت من موبايلها ومن حياتها.. وتبقى دي قصة الحب التي أفسدها "نجيب ساويرس".
>
> And she will delete him from her mobile telephone and from her life, and this will become the love story spoiled by Nagīb Sawīras. (69).

Nagīb Sawīras is one of the biggest businessmen in Egypt, and the owner of the mobile-telephone company "Mobinil"; therefore, in a humorous way, he may be considered responsible to ending this love story by deleting a number from a mobile telephone that belongs to his network.

Egyptian administration

> الطلبة بتوع الجامعة بيضحكوا ع البنات ويتجوزوهم عرفي وبعدين يدوهم استمارة ستة.
>
> The university students are fooling the girls, marry them in a civil marriage and then give them "form six". (41).

"Form six" (*ʾistimāra sitta*) is a form filled and submitted at the National Security offices after one has retired or been fired from work. Therefore, in Egyptian Arabic, giving somebody "form six" means to send somebody away and get rid of him or her.

The education system: school marks

> بس واضح ان القصيدة عجبت الدكتور شمس لأنه اداني ض بس.. بدل ال ض. ج اللي أستحقها بجدارة.
>
> It is clear that the poem was liked by Dr. Šams since he gave me "W" only, instead of "VW" that I really deserved. (90).

In Egyptian schools *ḍg*, an acronym of *dāaʿīf giddan* ("very weak") is the worst mark; *ḍ* (ḍaʿīf, "weak") is the last but one worst mark.

Famous Egyptian figures

وانتوا عارفين الحالة إيه. يعني فرصتي في شرا الكتاب ده زي فرصة سعد الصغير في الحصول على جايزة نوبل.

You know what the situation is, that is my chances of buying this book are like the chances of Saʿd al-Ṣuġayyar to receive the Nobel Prize. (111).

Saʿd al-Ṣuġayyar is a contemporary singer popular among the younger generation. He is regarded by the older generation as a low-rate singer. It is clear to every Egyptian that the comparison between the chances to get the book and the chances of this singer to receive the Nobel Prize, in addition to its use as a comic effect, means that neither will ever happen.

Conclusion

ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's novel*ʿĀyza ʾatgawwiz*, first published in 2008 and written almost entirely in *ʿĀmmiyya*, has become the most successful novel in Egypt in the first decade of the third millennium and one of the most successful in the history of modern Egyptian literature. The book reflects the new norms of writing in Egypt. While in the mid-twentieth century the few writers who wanted to publish novels in *ʿĀmmiyya* could hardly find a publisher who would agree to do that, contemporary writers no longer face such difficulties. Since the middle of the last decade of the twentieth century the number of literary works written entirely in *ʿĀmmiyya* or in mixed styles is rapidly increasing, and by now (2010) writing and publishing books in *ʿĀmmiyya* or with *ʿĀmmiyya* has become an accepted norm in Egypt, in addition to the norm of writing and publishing in *Fuṣḥā*. According to the new norms, *ʿĀmmiyya* is no longer confined to the dialogue only, but may be used in the narration as well, and often alternates with *Fuṣḥā* in both narration and dialogue.

In this short study I have described some typical stylistic features of ʿAbd al-ʿĀl's novel, which has become a model for imitation by other writers, and was used here as a sample and representative text; these features are found in contemporary prose writing in general, fiction and non-fiction, including *ʾadab sāḫir*.

The new norms of writing make a rich variety of styles possible; while writers who follow the older norms of writing in *Fuṣḥā* only have to refrain from using *ʿĀmmiyya*, writers who decide to write in *ʿĀmmiyya* feel free to switch to *Fuṣḥā* or to mix *ʿĀmmiyya* with *Fuṣḥā* anywhere in the text. This gives writers in *ʿĀmmiyya* more stylistic options than those available for writers in *Fuṣḥā*. Also, the mere mixing of two varieties in one text draws attention to the language, which sometimes is augmented by linguistic awareness of the writer and overt references by the narrator to the language

used. Thus, such texts fulfill the "poetic function" suggested by Jakobson in his model of communication (1960: 356-377).

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