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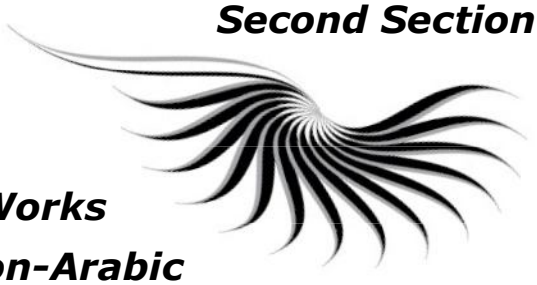

Works in Non-Arabic Languages

Time Traveling with the Egyptian Child: A Study of Two Plays for Children

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Abstract

Time and the change that is supposed to be coupled with temporal progression is the main topic of this study which investigates the development of children's theatre in Egypt by comparing one of the very early texts written for children in the 1960's by the renowned Egyptian poet, Salah Jahin, to a more recent text written by Shawky Hegab, a contemporary and equally prominent figure in the field of children's literature. The texts I propose to examine are :Salah Jahin's When Sahsah Awakes (1963) and Shawky Hegab's The Gazelle Lala (2007). The drastic changes that Egypt has gone through over the past fifty years would naturally be dovetailed by a correspondent ideological and structural development reflected in the selected texts. This study will not only focus on the differences between the authorial perspectives but most importantly on the re-routing and the changes that took place in the modes of addressing the child and specifically when considering that whereas Jahin's play was written during an age in which television was a novelty, Hegab writes his play, set against a highly mediatized and globalized age. The temporal span beween the two texts dictates another equally significant variance determined by cultural andsocio-political changes

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المسرحيه الثانيه فقد كتبت عام ٢٠٠٧ وقد استخلصت الباحثة ان الظروف المكانية و الزمانية التي احاطت بالمسرحيات اثرت بشكل ملحوظ في كيفيه ونوعيه الكتابه للطفل.

Tic toc a second passes, tic toc a second passes

Tic toc they turn into minutes

Tic toc they turn into days

Tic toc they turn into years

Tic toc they turn into dates

Separating Pyramids and spaceships[1].

When Salāḥ Jahin[2], the eminent Egyptian poet, wrote the above lines almost five decades ago he was as confident, as most of his generation, that he was contributing to the building of a new nation in the making and that within a few 'tic tocs' this national dream would be materialized. It was not until the defeat of the Egyptian

Generally, The basic question upon which this study is centered is: How do such changes determine and affect play writing for children?

ملخص البحث

يتصدي البحث لدراسه تطور مسرح الطفل في مصر منذ البدايات الآولي لهذا الفن وحتي الوقت الراهن. ويعد العامل الزمني الركيزه الآساسيه والمحور الرئسي- المتحكم في منهج وآشكاليه الدراسة فمرور نصف قرن من الزمان كفيل بآن يؤدي الي تغيرات في وسائل مخاطبة الطفل و خاصه اذا وضعنا في الآعتبار والثوره المعلوماتية التي تتميز بها العقود الآخيره من القرن العشرين والعقد الآول من القرن الحادي والعشرين هذا وتقوم الدراسه بفحص التطور الآيدلوجي والسيميائي لمسرح الطفل بعقد مقارنه بين مسرحيه صحصح لما ينجح لرائد من رواد مسرح الطفل في مصر و هو صلاح جاهين و بين مسرحية الغزاله لالا لشوقي حجاب تعد المسرحية الآولي من آول المسرحيات التي كتبت خصيصاً للطفل عام ١٩٦٤ اما

army in 1967 that this dream suffered a fatal blow, the repercussions of which have impacted the Egyptian scene ever since. The sense of disillusionment was temporarily alleviated after the victory of the Egyptian army in the 1973 war but was soon followed by social and economic problems that obstructed the resurgence of this dream.

It is precisely such tic tocs, manifested by the interplay between past and present, that has instigated this investigation of the development of children's theatre in Egypt by comparing one of the very early scripts written for children in the 1960's by the renowned Egyptian poet and cartoonist, Salāḥ Jahin, to a more recent script written by Shawqy Ḥegab, a contemporary and equally prominent figure in the field of children's literature and theatre.

The inaugaration of the Cairo Puppet theatre in 1959 heralded the emergence of children's theatre in Egypt which staged a collection of successful plays written specifically for children, a considerable number of which were written by the pioneer of children's theatre: Salāḥ Jahin. The most prominent of those plays were; *El-Shatir Ḥassan* (1959) followed by the master-piece of puppet theatre*, El-Leila El-Kabira* (1960)[3], *Shehab el-Din's Donkey* (1962), *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes* (1963) and *Nounou: the Talkative Elephant (1966).* According to the prominent critic and children's writer, Yaȧcūb el-Sharūni, the beginning of children's theatre in Egypt was highly promising. It marked the first attempts to attract children to the theatre. Although this was followed by the establishment of a children's

theatre center run by the ministry of culture in 1964 which led to various theatrical productions for children, el-Sharuny believes that children's theatre in Egypt has not developed into an influential institution(4).

Though not as eminent as Salāḥ Jahin, Shawqy Ḥegab (1946-) is among the recognized figures in the field of children's theatre. His affiliation with children started with the production of a famous television program for children in the 1960s entitled *Assafir el-Jennah* This was followed by writing and directing a number of children's plays, the most prominent of which are *The Cocoon, The Island of Love and Friendship, The Tail of the Mouse, and The Gazelle Lālā*

The texts I propose to examine are: Salāḥ Jahin's *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes* (1963) and Shawqy Ḥegab's *The Gazelle Lālā* (2007). Taking into consideration the socio-cultural variables governing the theatrical scene, the two plays succeeded in attracting an audience. Jahin's *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes* comes second to *El-Leila al-Kab¯ra* in the number of stage productions. It ran during the Cairo puppet theatre 1963/1964 to 1965/1966 seasons and then during the 1979/1980 season. (*Naẓra Tarikhiya aʿla Masraḥiyat elṭifl fi Miṣr*, 14) Although Ḥegab's play did not enjoy the exact success story of *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes*, it has managed to sustain an audience for a whole season, which compared to the conditions of Children's theatre as well as other state-run theatres, should be considered a feat. (Interview with Faṭma al-Mʿadoul)

Bearing in mind that cultural identity is a matter of "becoming

as well as being", belonging to "the future as much as to the past" (Hall, 11), I will attempt to analyze the various affiliations between the two texts while, at the same time, testing Maurice Halbwachs' assumption that the past and the present follow a continuous sequence that makes society look "like a thread that is made from a series of animal or vegetable fibers intertwined at regular intervals…The sections of a cotton or silk fabric correspond to the end of a motif or design." (Halbwachs, 142)

The drastic changes that Egypt has gone through over the past fifty years are dovetailed by a correspondent ideological and structural development reflected in the selected texts that entail a difference in the authorial perspectives as well as a re-routing of the communicative paradigms of addressing the child in the course of the fifty years span. The importance of the time factor becomes even more obvious when considering that while Jahin had written his play in an age during which television was a novelty, Ḥegab has written his text, set against a highly mediatized and globalized culture. The temporal span stands as a juggernaut that dictates equally significant variances determined by both local and global developments. Enthused by this query, I will discuss how far such changes have impinged on play writing for children in Egypt through an assimilation of the various key concepts in cultural and communication studies in addition to a selection of some major writings on children's literature .

Having said this, it is important to add that an essential problem related to children's literature is

tied to its basic credentials as a specific type of literature leading a number of critics to disclaim such categorization altogether. The problem lies in the fact that this literature is, to a large extent, buttressed by its target audience, infusing it with a didactic and pedagogical aspect that qualifies and sometimes transforms the meanings of 'children' and 'literature', leading to an intricacy that " arises partly because the reading 'child' of children's is primarily discussed in terms of emotional responses and consciousness … family and childhood are ideas that function within cultural and social frameworks as carriers of changeable social, moral and ethical values and motives … and not an 'observable', 'objective', scientific' entity. "(Lesnick-Oberstein, 17). The discrepancies in modes of address are largely conditioned by cultural and ideological doctrines that are blatantly pronounced when adults address a child; an assumption that has led Jack Zipes to go as far as asserting that children's literature is written for the authors rather than the young learner (207).

It is precisely this cultural-bound nature of children's literature that makes it a suitable subject of cultural studies. Children and childhood studies constitute one of the sub-cultures and emerging academic fields that are frequently under the scrutiny of cultural studies' researchers by virtue of its position at the crossroads of the core theories of *hegemon*y and *agency*. Originally, Antonio Gramsci formulated the theory of hegemony in the 1920s in attempt to discover the means by which

the fascists were able to dominate the working masses. Accordingly, he underlined the importance of cultural domination as the main means of subjugating the subaltern. Later, major scholars, such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy and Scott Lash, developed this theory at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, UK(4). Eventually, the critical works of those writers facilitated the means of examining the resistance of the dominated groups, leading to a shift in focus from the concept of hegemony to agency. Guided by the theoretical framework offered by such scholars with special emphasis on Scott Lash's renegotiation of these theories in *post-hegemonic* society, this study will investigate his supposition that there has been "a shift in power from the hegemonic mode of 'power over' to an intensive notion of *power from within* … and power as a generative force" (Lash, 34). The critical approach according to which this hypothesis will be tested is based on a semiotic analysis of the communicative paradigms involved in children's theater.

In the main, the authorial voice in children's literature is characterized by an ambiguous position that keeps fluctuating between an overt child-addressee and a covert adult addressee, a stance that has to be taken into consideration in the course of examining the ideological variances between the two texts. As a matter of fact, the borderlines separating the two types of addressees is, to a great extent, blurry specially when considering the strenuous task of pinning down an exact definition of childhood. Thus, although the main

target audience is the child, the presence of the adult addressee (often an implicit authorial undertone) could be sensed. Indeed, it could be assumed that the communicative model in children's literature centers upon an 'asymmetrical communication which forms the 'code of children's fiction', but that there is an 'ideal of symmetrical communication' which implies true understanding between author and reader. (Lesnick-Oberstein 19) In other words, the author is aware of the patronizing and authoritative stance that contributes to an asymmetrical position *vis à vis* his audience but at the same time he frequently shifts from approaching his target audience to addressing the child in him and consequently constructing a symmetrical communication.

Similarly, the adult/ child communicative paradigm orbits around two essential constituents of children's literature i.e. to play and to instruct. It is obvious that "the stories we tell our children, the narratives we give them to make sense of cultural experience constitute a kind of mapping, maps of meaning that enable our children to make sense of the world" (Watkins 183), but the problem lies in how we instruct the child. The range of viewpoints and psychological theories related to this polemic is so wide that it extends from a rigid, almost puritanical, approach to a very liberal stance endorsed by the Romantic notion of "the child is father of the man"(Wordsworth, *The Rainbow)*. This problem could be simplified by rounding it up under the terms: instruction and

play. Both involve learning but the first, if taken to extremes, inheres indoctrination while the other promotes creativity and critical thinking.

Generally, and as previously insinuated, the communicative paradigms in children's literature can be roughly encapsulated in three main modes of address: Adult to Child, Adult to Adult, and Child to Child. The first paradigm is the overt and most obvious communicative act, and which comprises an adult voice speaking down to a child audience. The second is a more furtive mode of address according to which the adult voice implicitly and often unconsciously addresses an adult audience. Finally, the third paradigm involves the dormant child voice of the adult author addressing a child audience[(5)]. Accordingly, the following sections of this study examine these paradigms in order to detect the interplay between such modes and the shifts in the dynamics of cultural identity in Egypt within the last fifty years as represented in children's theatre.

This analysis is triggered by two main assumptions: First, the basic affinity between the two texts relies on a causal relation emphasizing the proposition that the past, to a large extent, forges the present even if, on face value, the temporal contexts seem, to say the least, entirely at odds. This hypothesis does not, however, exclude the concept of re-routing and the image of a continuum that admits the concurrence of affiliations and deviations. Second, this re-routing of the communicative paradigms reflects Scott Lash's postulation regarding the shift from "hegemony or extensive politics"

to a "politics of intensity" and from an extensive (and hegemonic) regime of *representation* to an intensive regime of *communications*."(Lash, 56). In other words, in contemporary mediatized culture there is an emergence of agency at the expense of hegemony, with power working from 'within' rather than from "without"(Lash 59) According to Lash, hegemony operates through a symbolic order of a "national manufacturing society" that is in decline and is now replaced by the order of communications that is basically "generic and global" (Lash, 65). It follows that the study will question the plausibility of the above shift in power relations as embodied by Ṣaḥṣaḥ who, according to Lash's premise, would have been living in a world dominated by the symbolic order of hegemonic power and as embodied by Lālā who would live in a post-hegemonic world governed by the order of communications in an ethereal and borderless globe.

The Adult to Child Communicative Paradigm:

The communicative model of an adult (the author) addressing a child (the target audience) often involves a patronizing author who speaks down to the child in an attempt to impart a pedagogical content either through a direct didactic message or by covertly appealing to the imaginative potential of the child in order to convey an educational message. In both plays the parental voice, materialized in the moralizing tone of the two texts, is by default present. However, the mode of 'speaking down' to the child

varies from one text to the other. It is significant to note at this point that such an attitude corresponds to a great degree with the theory of hegemony or cultural domination. The child in this case is regarded as a passive subject who has to be guided and trained "in the process of becoming an adult in the making" (Kehily, 6). Accordingly, childhood becomes a social construction determined by power relations represented by the adult world.

The cultural imposition of the adult world is apparent from the obvious didactic weight of the two plays. To begin with, Salāḥ Jahin's play centers, for instance, upon the importance of time management. The hero of the play is Ṣaḥṣaḥ, a wayward child, whose father has promised to reward by buying him a new watch if he passes his exams. Terribly excited, Ṣaḥṣaḥ goes to sleep and dreams of an enchanted world where watches, bells and various other objects come to life. To his dismay, those objects don a parental and authoritative stance throughout the play reprimanding him for his lack of commitment and trying to set him on the right track. The naughty Ṣaḥṣaḥ learns his lesson at the end of the dramatic piece and promises not to waste his time in play!

On the other hand, Shawqy Ḥegab's *The Gazelle Lālā,* produced 2007, tells the story of a village whose residents are composed of docile animals and who are governed by a tyrannical group of locusts that bans schools and education. Lālā , the young gazelle, defies this law and manages to escape in order to join a school in a neighbouring village. Eventually, and through the help

of a group of humans, the gazelle is able to defeat the evil locust soldiers who are trying to hunt her down. Apparently, The lesson that Shawqy Ḥegab is trying to drive home to his child audience is to affirm the importance of education.

Ostensibly, the respective configuration of the two child heroes projects the differences in the addresser's position regarding the child addressee. The child in Jahin's play is presented as a rebellious member who has to be subdued in order to conform to a specifically assigned role that would help him acquire social acceptance. On the other hand, the child's defiant stance in Ḥegab's play is a commendable act that is not only approved of but is also regarded as a sign of personal initiative and self-empowerment. Accordingly, it is no surprise that the authoritative tone, usually associated with the adult author, is more heavy-handed in Jahin's text. Indeed, the parental voice is omnipresent throughout the text, developing sometimes into a domineering and highly disciplinary tone. Suffice it to mention, that most of the moving objects in Ṣaḥṣaḥ's dream either reprimand him or use corporal punishment. For instance, the Clock hits him slightly with its arms when he oversleeps (41) and the Sun strikes him furiously when he dozes off once more (45). This attitude is sustained throughout the work in a school scene that consistently follows the same abusive pattern in the persistent pursuit of Ṣaḥṣaḥ's (the Arabic equivalent of 'wake up") disciplinary molding. Hence, the audience watch Ṣaḥṣaḥ as "the school bell "chases him relentlessly, ringing ominously,

almost pushing him to the ground, as the flower forces him to sit in the corner for being late, as the fork prods him in the back to eat his lunch and as the camel teacher rocks and swings him from one side to the other while ordering him to recite certain verses of Arabic poetry.

Now, the above situation is totally contrasted to the one portrayed in the 2007 play. To begin with, the address in Ḥegab's play does not assume the high-handed, condescending guise typical of Jahin's play. The litany of reprimands and instructions, that are given full sway in Jahin's text, are highly controlled in Ḥegab's play. The child is depicted in revolt against an oppressive force that deprives him of his basic human rights; the right to learn. Unlike the previous play, the potential of the child is in no way haltered. On the contrary, the child in Ḥegab's play takes the initiative and insists on going to school, which, in turn, is pictured as an inviting establishment where Lālā can have fun while learning. Suffice it to note that it is named 'laṭafa' which means 'pleasantness' in spoken Arabic. Learning and schools are part of play and not the boot camp portrayed in Jahin's text. On the contrary, the child in Ḥegab's play takes the lead and is self-empowered. Lālā confirms this stance, asserting that she could "see things that usually go undetected by other people" (10); a concept akin to the Romantic notion of the child as 'father of Man'. On the other hand, Ṣaḥṣaḥ's defiance of social codes is regarded by the adult voice as a misdemeanor that has to be checked. The adult-child address promotes a strategy based on a

degree of indoctrination evincing a patriarchal rule that is ironically celebrated and according to which the child's attempts at self-expression is looked upon as an unruly conduct that should be checked(6).

Such a patriarchal address is underlined by gender-centered choices of casting. The child hero in the prototypical play is a male while in the contemporary text the central character is a female. On the whole, Jahin's play conforms to a stereotypical, anti-feminist rendering of the woman as a subservient 'other' whose rule is restricted to private space. This premise is clear from the very first scene of the play which introduces Ṣaḥṣaḥ's parents. Jahin depicts the mother knitting while the father is reading. Indeed, Ṣaḥṣaḥ's mother is the 1960s version of Nagib Maḥfuẓ's *Åmina* who has become an archetype of the submissive wife in Egyptian culture. On the other hand, the female child, represented by Lālā, is, as previously pointed out, empowered. It is true that Lālā 's mother is subservient but there is no binary opposition designating a gender-based classification (she is depicted as a single mother). The mother is as submissive as the rest of the animal population that seems sexless.

To go back to the parental presence in the two texts, it is easily discernible that the preeminence of the parental figures in Jahin's play is counterbalanced by an insubstantial role played by Lālā's mother in Ḥegab's play. Ṣaḥṣaḥ is hemmed in by his parents who conform to the traditional stereotype of a firm patriarch as opposed to a tender and passive matriarch. It is a close

familial circle that appears loving but is essentially controlling. The father and mother love Ṣaḥṣaḥ but they do not approve of his conduct. They engage in a singing duet in praise of their son at the beginning of the play listing his merits:

The Father: Ṣaḥṣaḥ is indeed messy and mischievous but, he is well-bred and a hard worker.

The parents count Ṣaḥṣaḥ's virtues while swinging in harmony from one side to the other

The Father: And bright!

The Mother: And cute!

The Father: And brave!

The Mother: And handsome!

The Father: And Adorable!(26)

However, when this melodious string of compliments is interrupted by Ṣaḥṣaḥ's ball, hitting the father on the head and breaking his glasses, the melody is reversed into a litany of abuses that is compared in the stage directions to bullet shots. Even their gestures change to convulsions as they rant at him:

The Father: Ill-behaved!

The Mother: Shameless!

The Father: Stupid boy!

The Mother: Infuriating! (27)

All adult voices in the play assume an instructive, if not abusive, attitude *vis a vis* the child. On the other hand, the configuration of the adult voices in the contemporary text is not as uniform as in Jahin's play. Hence, the spectator is encountered by an adult world, which encompasses hostile as well as friendly figures. This diversity is mitigated by a wide-ranging constraint of the parental and patronizing tone. Hence, Lālā 's mother is depicted

as a faint-hearted parent who lives in fear of a despotically militant rule. Naturally, this fear impedes the assumption of a guiding role, which is, ironically, adopted by the chorus of human singers who visit the village in order to advertise for the school. However, even those adults assume a childish rather than a patronizing demeanor as apparent in their bouncy and playful attitude. The authoritative tone, usually associated with the adult- child address, is undermined by the carefree and cheering tone of the singing chorus:

Rise, Rise

Up, up

Let all windows

Enjoy the breeze

We have come to announce

A school that would make you bounce(6)

The chorus is a mere catalyst that helps set the child on the right track. Within this framework, the child is allowed to take the lead while the pseudo-adults are content to assume the role of a support group. This leads to a reversal of roles with the child figure adopting the mature tone that is supposed to characterize the adult speech. Accordingly, it is no surprise that when the crow is amazed that a gazelle could befriend a hedgehog, Lālā soberly answers:

No matter even if we were a cat and a dog

Friendship is in the heart

And when we follow the same aim

Friendship can be handy.(33)

All things considered, the authorial point of view upholds a more liberal and appealing mode

of address than the one adopted in *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes*. The heavy-handed tone of the adult as an instructor is extensively undermined. Surprisingly, it is the child who adopts the teacher's stance. This does not rule out the atmosphere of child play, which is naturally present in the employment of music, songs and anthropomorphism. Beyond doubt, such devices are typical of children's theatre and they are equally omnipresent in Jahin's play. However, against the backdrop of the strictly patriarchal community that governs Ṣaḥṣaḥ's world, devices such as songs and puppets are part of child play that is frowned on, according to the overt authorial view, in Jahin's prototypical play.

On a different note and as apparent from the school image in the two plays, the address in Jahin's play conforms to the doctrine of educating through direct instruction rather than through play whereas in Ḥegab's text, the motto of learning through play steers the mode of child address and hence, to some extent, narrowing the gap between the adult/author and the child/spectator. On face value, the asymmetrical communicative paradigm typical of children's literature is formatively subdued in the 2007 play as opposed to the 1963 play. All in all, the child leads rather than being led in the contemporary script.

The Adult to Adult Communicative Paradigm:

As previously pointed out, the asymmetrical relation between author and child in children's theatre is counterbalanced by an adult-adult covert address that could stealthily peep through the

text in the form of underlying symbols or even often explicitly in the subtext and the stage directions. To begin with, the variances between the overall moods of the given texts lend color to this assumption. Jahin's text, for instance, is enveloped by a jubilant and festive spirit that correspondingly reflects the "widespread optimism for the social and political future of Egypt" (*Whatever Else Happened to the Egyptians?* 113) considered by Galāl Åmin as the typical cultural inclination that prevailed during the sixties. On the other hand, Ḥegab's play evokes, in spite of the seemingly positive message, dark and ominous undercurrents that mirror the desperate and gloomy socio-political scene characterizing the state of affairs in Egypt prior to the 25th of January revolution and the ousting of Ḥosni Mubarak. The same author, Galāl Åmin, who has testified to the optimism of the early 1960s, affirms that the feeling of alienation and discontent among Egyptians during the last decade of the Mubarak era was associated with depression. He, briefly but eloquently sums up the evolution of Egyptian discontent in the following statement: "The discontent in Nasser era(7) was closely associated with fear; in the Sadāt era with anger; and in the Mubarak era with depression" (*Egypt in the Era of Ḥosni Mubarak 1981-2011* 145).

The discrepancy between the cultural context and the authorial optics is apparent specifically when the adult spectator considers the reflection of the orderly, almost army-like, society characterized by an acute sense of both time and purpose in the 1963 play as

contrasted to the atmosphere of fear and darkness that permeates the 2007 play. Jahin's *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes* emanates a high degree of confidence and belief in the potentials offered by the future. The Song of Clocks is a clear illustration of this spirit

Tic Toc Tic Toc

We are the clocks that organize time

Whether big or small, we have the same mission

Those on the walls and those in public squares

Those around the wrists or those still in stores

We all sing:

Tic Toc Tic Toc

Tic toc a second passes, tic toc a second passes

Tic toc they turn into minutes

Tic toc they turn into days

Tic toc they turn into years

Tic toc they turn into dates

Straddling Pyramids and spaceships. (74)

The tic tocs that run throughout the play echo a fast and furious world, controlled by an approaching deadline. This sense of urgency is counterbalanced by a sense of achievement that, in turn, is buoyed up with high expectations. Twined with this optimism is a sense of subjugation and disciplinary molding that extols rather than depreciates the importance of conformity at the expense of individual initiative. It is vital to note that this conforming attitude is applauded and regarded as a sign of belonging to what Lacan labels 'the symbolic order' (15). It is a means of normalizing hegemony

and sanctifying 'the law of the father' (Kristeva, 5). By the same token, the notion of a 'nation as culture' is materialized in the play by the references to historical and local sites such as the pyramids, the sphinx, the camel, endorsed by a number of native variables mirroring the grass roots of Egyptian society. Salāḥ Jahin presents a polyphony of verbal utterances that are rooted in Egyptian popular street scenes, ranging from the Upper Egyptian dialect of Ȧm Gomʿa, the school porter, Ṣaḥṣaḥ and his father wearing the traditional 'Galabia', the mother's 'zaghrūda'[(8)], to the flippant lingo of the urban maid, so popular in Egyptian films and perfected by actress Widād Ḥamdy and which is adopted by the figure of the fork that picks up Ṣaḥṣaḥ from school. Such an orchestra of intertwining local voices builds up an image of an Egyptian *Volkgeist or a 'culture as nation'* that while appealing to adult spectators, would not be consciously grasped by a child spectator. The polyphony and the shift in dialects and intonation would attract the child but this attraction would be restricted to the phonetic level.

With respect to Ḥegab's text, there is an evident absence of a specific local orientation. The supposition that the animal allegory could be a justification for such an abstract rendering is not really well grounded when we consider the fact that Jahin is able to Egyptianize his puppets by constructing a local spirit through a blend of verbal allusions that appeal to the collective memory of his public. It is true that there are a few instances when Ḥegab uses cultural signs, such as the symbol

of locusts and sheep. However, those allusions are biblical symbols whose encoding tends to be universal albeit the possible occurrence of mild variances in the decoding process among different cultures. After all, the theme of a totalitarian regime that oppresses its subjects could apply to any culture. To use a term from culture studies, the cultural context of the play is *globalized*, ignoring traces of "common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history"(Stuart Hall, 111); a monolithic view which, to a great extent, is reflected in the 1963 play.

In contrast to Jahin's play, which mirrors a sanguine and expectant atmosphere, the dim ambience of the 2007 text is sensed from the very beginning and specifically in the subtext describing the opening scene. According to the stage directions, the audience are introduced to a façade of poor houses enveloped in total darkness while a group of locust soldiers working for Sulṭan *Gahāla* (ignorance) march to and fro carrying their rifles and singing loudly in a piercing and decisive tone. Meanwhile, the inhabitants are in deep sleep.(1) On the whole, Ḥegab's text covers up undertones of apprehension that are given vent to by means of an array of socio-political projections, unlikely for a child spectator to grasp. The choice of locusts as the forces of oppression governing a passive herd of animals mostly sheep and gazelles is one of such allusions. It is a

transparent political symbol for the adult spectator but would certainly fall flat when it comes to a child spectator. As a matter of fact, the adult addressee would grasp the biblical and cultural significance of locusts as creatures associated with aridity and divine curse and would also respond to the covert message implicit in choosing a population of sheep, associated in Arab culture with subjugated attitudes. By the same token, the choice of a scorpion to represent the ruler, a crow and a donkey to represent his followers is a symbolically rendered depiction that is also intended for an adult audience. Accordingly, the use of anthropomorphism typical of children's literature is wrapped in Ḥegab's text with a political message addressing the adult through a register that operates beyond the child spectator. Indeed, the child spectator would regard the use of anthropomorphism according to a black and white dichotomy of the weak (the child) versus the strong (the adult) animal, an opposition that is common in children's literature.

The adult-adult address is not restricted to the allegorical significance of the text, but is extended to a number of verbal exchanges, mostly uttered by Lālā who seems too mature for her age. In one of such instances, Lālā expresses her resentment of the passivity of the animals and calls for a revolution against the oppressive regime of Sultan Gahala (also nicknamed BaLālā , which is a derivative of disaster in Arabic)). According to her: "Oppression has no substantial form. It seems like a raging bull afraid of light and if we are able to

speak together collectively and in solidarity, we will no longer fear BaLālā."(24) It is amazing how the lines anticipate the 25th of January revolution in Egypt and the ousting of Ḥosni Mubarak (epitomized by Sultan Gahāla and his gang of locusts)! Obviously, the utterance is not really addressing the child. Indeed, Lālā 's speech is too grown up for child language, which, according to Piaget's classical study, is characterized by the lack of causal relations which "remain unexpressed and are thought about only by the individual, probably because, to the child mind they are represented by images rather than by words. Only the underlying factual element finds expression … the causal 'why' hardly enters into the child conversation " (23). Apparently, the author in this instance is carried away and is apparently addressing an adult spectator. Yet, in spite of the political relevance of the ideological context, the political projection lacks the cultural specificity usually manifested in localized references. Unlike the 1963 script, the metaphors are mostly abstract. Generally, The adult to adult message reflects a society suffering from sociological malaise, a condition that though not present in Jahin's adult world, does not, to my mind, absolve the militantly oppressive cultural scene of the sixties from triggering the sinister atmosphere mirrored in Ḥegab's text Similar to Ḥegab's play, there are specific verbal instances in Jahin's text that do not suit child-directed speech. One of the most compelling instances of the covert adult to adult address is illustrated by the problem that *the Man from Calculus Book* asks Ṣaḥṣaḥ to

solve. He tells Ṣaḥṣaḥ that he comes from problem no. 23 from the book and insists that Ṣaḥṣaḥ solves the problem. He goes on to explain that a young man has asked for his daughter's hand in marriage and that he consented:

> **The Man**: When I found him suitable I told him..
>
> **Ṣaḥṣaḥ**: What?
>
> **The Man**: I told him "Alright". .. He answered: "Thank you, *the Man who has Bought .. So What is ..?*"(9)
>
> **Ṣaḥṣaḥ**: What?
>
> **The Man**: What is his profit? May the Prophet be praised!
>
> **Ṣaḥṣaḥ**: The Prophet Be Praised!
>
> **The Man**: "When, then, is the wedding?", asks the suitor. I answered: "Listen! I bought some merchandise and I was paid a certain sum of money but I have to wait for the solution of a certain problem"(67)

The topic of the problem is beyond the interests of a child audience who could be amused by the comic demeanor of the man and the imaginative potential of the scene but would find it very difficult to relate to the situational context of the problem, which, definitely, belongs more to the adult rather than child world. It is no surprise that Ṣaḥṣaḥ's retorts are restricted to short echoes of the man's prompts. He shows no interest in the man's problem and when he hears the soundtrack announcing the beginning of the children's programme (*Māmā Samiḥā)* on TV, he pleads with the man to let him go and watch. (68) Typically, the man reprimands him harshly, and even hangs him from the arm of the clock. "Your

homework comes first", he shouts at poor Ṣaḥṣaḥ who complies in fear.

Indeed, Mary Jane Kehily's resentment that the popular views "position children as essentially passive-things happen to them that they do not choose and cannot control"(5) applies to a large extent to Ṣaḥṣaḥ's situation. This dominance of the adult over the child world takes the form of the chase. In both plays the child is pursued by parental figures of authority that are socially accepted in the old text, but are ominously vilified in the recent play. It is interesting to note that while, in Jahin's play, the patriarchal forces engaged in this chase insist on waking the child up, in the contemporary text they force the child to sleep! This, to my mind wraps up the cultural and social changes that have occurred during the span of the last fifty years in Egypt: *a nation awake versus a nation asleep*. So as not to present such a bleak message, it is also significant to pinpoint that whereas the child is compelled to toe the line in Jahin's text by admitting his guilt, Lālā, as previously marked, is pictured as a rebellious child who refuses to conform to the agents of hegemony (the adult world). She insists on waking up and is eventually rewarded for such a stance. The child's configuration in the 2007 play foreshadows the Egyptian revolution.

The Child to Child Communicative Paradigm:

In this particular paradigm, the focus is on the symmetrical relation between the author and his audience. This communicative interaction takes place when the

author drops the parental mask and speaks to the child inside him. This position is marked by a symmetrical aspect which upholds the concept of play as paramount in a child's constitution. In his groundbreaking study of the language and thought of the child, Jean Piaget explains that verbal ego-centrism is the key feature characterizing the child's intellectual and verbal domain:

What then is the verbal ego-centrism of a child? When two adults converse they have something to tell each other, their conversation has two correlated characteristics. In the first place each one tries to influence the other.. Now the child is in some degree capable of all this when still quite young… trying to get what he wants from others. But, besides this characteristic, childish speech shows us another, of which the adult equivalent is only to be found in some exceptional cases such as, among others, the mystical soliloquies in which the filial relationship of the child reappears (265-66)

Piaget goes on to explain that what distinguishes a child's from an adult's soliloquizing is that the "child's speech thought are externalized by him, as it were made "objective"; while in our case there would be a feeling of inwardness and subjectivity. For instance, what engages the child's mind in the imaginative game is projected on to the very things themselves and they are thus symbolically incarnated into the external reality" Hence, instead of thinking of dinner, a child would identify with dolls and even transforms grass into food (Piaget 268). To put it in a nutshell, it is typical of childish thought to blur the line that separates the

imaginative and the real and for his talk to border on the monologic rather than the interactive or socialized language.

The above observation explains the ubiquitous employment of puppetry in children's theatre, which according to Jane Taylor, plays "in the territory of the evidently make-- ‑ believe. It is an illusion that is created and broken simultaneously."(14).To start with anthropomorphism per se is a manifestation of fantasy which, according to J.R.R. Tolkien, is based "on our ability to separate modifier from substantive and recombine them to produce green suns and flying serpents" (84.). Basically, this is what literature and creativity is all about. This would entail then that creativity and imagination is intrinsically child play. The only difference would be that the adult who is engaged in this activity would be more aware of the lines that separate the 'substantive' from the 'modifier' than the child.

Although fantasy and reality seem opposites, they are interconnected. In his *Stategies of Fantasy* Brian Atterbery attests to the truth of this premise by stating that " Mimesis without fantasy would be nothing but reporting one's perceptions of actual events. Fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention without recognizable objects or actions … Fantasy depends on mimesis for its effectiveness" (3-4). Now, given that the child's world is based on imagination while the adult's world is governed by the actual, this section will examine the appropriation of the fantastical and the ways it determines the child to child address. In other words, it will investigate the

instances when the "child represents an extension of the adult self, a symbolic link with one's own childhood invoking a psychic dynamic between the past and present"(Kehily 2), transforming the adult author to a child.

In spite of the fact that Ṣaḥṣaḥ is reprimanded and oppressed throughout the play, he is more child-like than Lālā who, as I have previously pointed out, seems too grown up for her age. She acts as a persona for Ḥegab's adult self, never letting go of the parental tone. Examples of this assumption are Lālā 's following platitudes on the importance of learning:

Lālā: Learning is not just being able to read and write. Learning opens up an entire new world. Learning to read and write is just a beginning (30)

Lālā : We will learn together so that we can bring happiness to people and so that the evil crows and owls disappear and Gahala bites the dust, (33-34).

The above speeches stand as an obvious flouting of Piaget's findings in his extensive study of the child's language which, according to him, is mainly characterized by the lack of causal explanations:

This absence of causal explanations is remarkable. … Causal relations remain unexpressed and are thought about only by the individual, probably because, to the child mind they are represented by images rather than by words. Only the underlying factual element finds expression. … the causal 'why' hardly enters into the child conversation 23

Ṣaḥṣaḥ, on the other hand, is

obviously a child. Indeed Jahin is able to get in contact with his child self in his portrayal Ṣaḥṣaḥ. The play is brimful of examples that illustrate the childish demeanor to the extent that it is quite a task to focus on a single instance. However, perhaps, one of the most obvious examples is his reaction when the butterfly taunts him as he stands in the corner, facing the wall, as a punishment for his misconduct. He tries to play with the butterfly but is instantly rebuked by the hibiscus flower (one of the teachers of the school). Typical of childish tantrum, Ṣaḥṣaḥ cries hysterically and knocks the wall with his fists. Finally, he is released and is allowed to go home with the fork (the maid):

Ṣaḥṣaḥ: I want to play

The Fork: No! Come on!

Ṣaḥṣaḥ: I want to have a look at that tree.

The Fork: No! Come on. Step on it!

Ṣaḥṣaḥ:I need to talk to a friend.

The Fork: Not now. Come on!(60)

Eventually, Ṣaḥṣaḥ is able to trick the maid and runs around mimicking the butterfly's words: "I am a butterfly that is free and unfettered"(60)

As typical of the child's language, the words are accompanied with action. Ṣaḥṣaḥ speaks and acts simultaneously, unlike Lālā who is verbally-oriented. The simplicity of his diction, the use of repetition, the word/action syncronization and the lack of causal explanations are in complete accordance with the features of children's speech as

designated by Piaget (14). Indeed, Jahin is able to invoke the child inside him.

As previously pointed out, child play is basically an imaginative activity that involves a recreation of reality through language. It is an innate human urge that is usually expressed in adulthood through mitigated and more socially accepted forms that reconcile what *is not* to what *is* or, as Atterbery eloquently puts it, that represent "a mass-produced supplier of wish fulfillment" (2). While admitting the a priori assumption that the use of puppets involves an engagement with the fantastical, let me focus on the relation between reality and the fantastic in the two plays.

The song of the arithmetic signs that come out of the copybook and force Ṣaḥṣaḥ to do his homework represents one of the most fascinating manifestations of the employment of fantasy in Jahin's play:

The Signs: We are the arithmetic signs

You can find us in both book and copybook

We add, subtract, divide and multiply

like sports, we can help you be fit ….

Remove the table.. Put the desk

Add, Subtract! Divide, multiple!

A sum by sum equals a sum

Calculate and formulate the figures!

The signs bring four oranges and then another four

The Plus Sign: You got four oranges And another four oranges

The minus sign takes three oranges

The Minus Sign: You ate three

All the Signs: How many are left? (64-65)

The interrelation between the fantastic and the real, the inanimate and the animate is apparent in the anthropomorphosis of the arithmetic functions. The abstract ideas are magically metamorphosed into living creatures in an apparent harmony between the real and the imaginary. It is a fantasy that is grounded in reality. In that respect, the employment of phantasy echoes the child play that is usually based on the simulation of real and everyday situations through the identification with toys and dolls.

A similar instance that spotlights the child's ego-centric attitude is when Ṣaḥṣaḥ puts a paper boat in the sink and starts romancing and imagining that he is sailing:

Ṣaḥṣaḥ, the boat and the sink disappear and instead the audience are introduced to a different Ṣaḥṣaḥ dressed as a sailor. He is aboard a big sailing boat and holding a rod with a huge fish. Ṣaḥṣaḥ speaks in a dreamy tone:

I am a sailor who travels across the world… The sky is so vast and blue. The sea is so big and deep. It is full of fish… colorful fish… red, green, yellow and blue … big fish! I catch the biggest fish with my rod. I don't care how big it is. Even if it were as big as 7000 million and billion Kg…I don't care . I can catch it with my rod(54)

The adult author identifies with the child to the extent that he becomes one with him. It is Jahin the child that speaks through Ṣaḥṣaḥ. Typical of children's

cognitive abilities, the fantastical is transformed into action; what *is not* becomes what *is*. Hence, Ṣaḥṣaḥ becomes a sailor, the paper boat becomes a sailing boat and the sink becomes a sea. This is naturally coupled with a containment of interactive and socialized speech and a correspondent foregrounding of monologic language. The same observation applies to Ṣaḥṣaḥ's singing monologue when he overhears that his father is getting him a watch (35) .

Another observation that affirms Salāḥ Jahin's ability to identify with his child self is Ṣaḥṣaḥ's apparent tendency to accompany actions with speech; an aspect that Piaget has highlighted in his study.(14) One of several examples is when he dresses for school. As evident in the following quote, the nonverbal is endorsed by the verbal:

Okay, I am getting out of the bed! Where is the shirt? Here it is! Where are the pants? Alright, I'll put them on. Oh, I have to wash my face! .. Done! What else? Oh, my shoes! I have to put them on(46)

In contrast to Ṣaḥṣaḥ, Lālā does not engage in ego-centric speech. Her speech, as I have previously noted, is characterized by a socialized aspect. Whereas there are a number of monologues in Jahin's text, Lālā speaks merely a single time to herself throughout the play! This monologue marks her first entrance in act two. To begin with, it is a very long monologue that lacks the major features of child talk. There is neither engagement in fantasy nor coupling of action with speech. The soliloquy deals with an obvious adult issue of political

oppression and the means of subjugating people through fear and ignorance. Lālā affirms that she is more daring and knowledgeable than the other animals who are afraid of the evil ruler and his soldiers. She knows that education is the answer and she is willing to defy and revolt against dictatorship.

Sleep, sleep, sleep. …Prohibited, prohibited, prohibited

Weeping and tears are the only things allowed

No sound is heard but the sound of the locusts' steps

Our future is going down the drain and we are afraid to speak

Why? What are we afraid of? We are neither weak nor few!

Afraid of BaLālā and his locusts?

Who is this BaLālā? He is an unjust and ignorant sultan and his locusts are mere servants! They serve their self-interest and what do we do?

We sleep all the time! (23)

This is definitely Ḥegab's adult self, speaking in the above monologue. It is so out of tune with the child's speech as illustrated by Ṣaḥṣaḥ's above quotes. It is almost impossible to believe that such complex ideas would be expressed by a child! Questions of causality, which are characteristically subdued in young children's speech, (Piaget, 24) represent the overpowering feature of this monologue.

What about the element of fantasy that characterizes child speech? Apparently and unlike Ṣaḥṣaḥ's monologue, Lālā does not engage in daydreaming or roleplaying. Admittedly, fantasy is simultaneously embedded in the

two plays by virtue of the employment of anthropomorphism. However, anthropomorphism is just a technique that does not guarantee the effective employment of the fantastical. Apparently, Ḥegab's engagement with fantasy is limited to the use of animal anthropomorphism. However, there are two instances that could be cited as examples of the use of uncurbed fantasy in the play : the first is the taxicab whose driver is a mouse, named *Ḍāḍa al-Ảḍāḍa*. The passengers have to give her soap bars as fare. The second instance is when Lālā meets an elephant with two trunks: one for eating and the other for fire extinguishing.

The link between money and soap is almost nonexistent. On a similar note, the extra trunk borders on the grotesque with no apparent clue or justification to render the transformation from the real to the unreal plausible or smooth. The elephant could put out a fire using one trunk! The extra trunk appears as an imposed disfigurement rather than a harmonious implementation of fantasy. Indeed, such instances prove the validity of the previously quoted premise by Atterbery that "fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention without recognizable objects or actions"(4)

The only means through which Ḥegab gets in touch with his child self is through the extensive use of babytalk, a term used to designate the special kind of simulated speech that adults adopt to communicate with toddlers and infants usually characterized by a number of phonetic and syntactic structure, the most known of which is the overstressing of rhythm , the long vowels and the use of reduplication in a

consonant and vowel harmony e.g. mama, dada, baba (Clark, 400). This applies to the choice of names like Ṣaḥṣaḥ and Lālā. Generally the acoustic and lyrical aspect is stressed in such an address. (Harley 60-2). Examples of such talk in Ḥegab's play are "Suktum buktum", "Naymīn Ninnā", el ʿaṣfura ya ʿAskura" "*Ḍāḍa al-Åḍāḍa*" Tikāki kuku kuki" "hauhau" "nawnaw" "sawsawa". This baby and child talk is also present in Jahin's play but is not used as extensively as in the 2007 text. On the whole, the focus in Jahin's play is on the characteristics of child language at on older stage. Jahin's reproduction of the child's language is more akin to the language uttered by the child himself than the infant and child directed speech. It echoes the child's language after the two-word stage (toddler stage) when children start "to elaborate both the function and the structure of their first language" (Clark 372) This specific speech mode is apparent in the opening song of the play:

Ṣaḥṣaḥ ya misaḥṣaḥ ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

A blooming flower, ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

Salty and yummy, ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

Clever and cool, ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

Come on stage, ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

Would you please, ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

Show us your utmost , ya Ṣaḥṣaḥ

Don't let's beg , ya Sasah (21-2)

When the child self is in control of the communicative process, as in the above case, the creative and spontaneous aspects are usually foregrounded. To my mind, the great success of *el-Leila*

el-Kabīra and its popularity among generations of children is due to the fact that Jahin was able to give free rein to child play without assuming the parental guise. It is unfortunate that the pedagogical element, conventionally associated with children's literature, casts its shadow over the omnipresence of child play throughout the text.

All things considered, the child-to-child address is more prominent in the prototypical play in spite of the apparent hegemonic authority that permeates the play. Strangely enough, the empowerment of the child hero in the recent play is coupled by a diminishing of the creative potential of child play. The darkness and obliviousness surrounding the child in the 2007 text could be tied to the oppressive pedagogical regime of the 1963 play. Ṣaḥṣaḥ was living in a world with a creative potential but the oppressive "order of the father" and the puritanical educational approach paved the way for the rebellious, adult-like Lālā who is struggling to earn the simplest of human rights: the right to education. Hegemony and oppression arrested the development of the creative potential of the child self.

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***Conclusion*:**

Ṣaḥṣaḥ and Lālā relate the story of the cultural transformations that Egypt has endured in the second half of the twentieth century. Such transformations are quite discernible in the alterations in the modes of addressing the child. The child in the earlier script is not empowered, on the contrary he has to conform to the adult world view which promotes a nationalist and hegemonic agenda. This

hegemony is replaced by an obvious demotion of the adult world coupled with an empowerment of the child who is endowed with an adult wisdom that enables him to resist oppression. Whereas Ṣaḥṣaḥ follows, Lālā leads! Accordingly, the adult-child address is characterized in Jahin's script by a threatening and intimidating attitude that insists on subjugating the free-spirited child.

In accordance with the oppressive system, the pedagogical dimension as embodied by the image of the school varies in the two plays from a system that depends on direct instructions to a system that upholds the concept of education through play. However, this conception seems to be limited to the theoretical domain. It is true that there is an obvious contrast between a highly disciplined school life that Ṣaḥṣaḥ is trying to escape from and an appealing school entitled *Laṭafa* that Lālā is attempting to escape to. It is, however, surprising, that child play permeates Jahin's play in spite of the austere tone of the adult world whereas it is limited to songs and babytalk. in Ḥegab's script.

The adult-adult paradigm displays two different cultural backgrounds: the first bright but fearful and the second dark and desperate. Ṣaḥṣaḥ's world is a highly disciplined world that has to adhere to a deadline. There is a sense of urgency and nationalistic pride that runs throughout the work. On the other hand, Ḥegab's play is permeated with a gloom and depressing atmosphere that is associated with an unstructured and abstract setting. There is a complete

lack of local or national referents and, hence, endorsing Lash's tracking of a movement from a national manufacturing culture (hegemony through an *order of representation*) to a more generic and global culture (dominated by the *order of communications*). However, the loss of the hegemonic *order of the father* in Lālā 's world is not compensated for by a correspondent *order of communications* that could meet the needs of the child in a post-hegemonic, mediatized culture that has no externally controlling cultural apparatus. There is, however a prioritization of the element of *agency* on the ideological level. On the other hand, there is no attempt to meet the challenges of a fluid and rapidly growing information culture that demands an integration of different theatrical and communicational strategies to attract the child spectator to the theatre. As confirmed by Yaḥcūb al-Sharuni, the children's theatre in Egypt is unable to attract the child because of the deplorable conditions of the theatre and the lack of the necessary funds and strategies.(5) On balance, theatre was much more influential in the 1960s than in our contemporary mediatized age. Accordingly, it is quite comprehensible that Ṣaḥṣaḥ would be remembered by the 1960's generation while Lālā would pass unnoticed by this contemporary generation.

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Notes

1- All translations from the Arabic works are mine

2- All Arabic names in the paper follow the Brill Simple Arabic Transliteration System.

3- Although *Al-Leila al-Kabīra* is considered a masterpiece that

has influenced generations of child and adult audiences, I chose to write on *When Ṣaḥṣaḥ Passes* because *Al-Leila al-Kab¯ra* was not originally written for children. Jahin wrote it as an operetta for the radio and was later performed as a puppet play.

4- The center was the focus for what became known as the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, or, more generally, *British cultural studies.*

5- The child to adult paradigm would involve a child author which is difficult to attain without an adult supervision and which could be the topic of a different research.

6- Although Salāh Jahin's writings is characterized by an obvious joie-de-vivre and child-like attribute which, strangely enough, makes his works that are originally addressing adults appealing to both adults and children, however, it seems that this spontaneous childish stance looses ground when he writes for children. A case in point is his Al-Leila al-Kabira which had and still has enormous popularity among child and adult audiences.

7- The feeling of discontent during Nasser's era was not as prominent and widespread in the early sixties as after the 1967 defeat.

8- A shrilling cry of joy that women perform during celebrations

9- 'The man who bought..' and 'so what is..' refers to the conventional prompts of the problems in mathematics textbooks.

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