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Marco Aurelio Golfetto, Letizia Osti, Brahim Chakrani

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Literature in Dialect: The Great Absentee

Francesco De Angelis

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ABSTRACT

Prose production in dialect is probably the big absentee in Arabic literature textbooks. While poetry in dialect has managed to carve its own small space in textbooks on the history of Arabic literature, the same does not go for novels or short stories written in *‘āmmiyya*. Most critics, especially Arabs, do not acknowledge their literary dignity. However, scholars of contemporary Arabic literature can no longer avoid seriously analysing Egyptian literature in *‘āmmiyya*. In fact, in the course of the last two decades, the number of novels and short stories in Egyptian dialect has significantly increased. Furthermore, writing in dialect is increasingly widespread thanks to personal blogs and websites. In light of this emerging panorama in Arabic literature, the question is whether something is changing in relation to the acceptance of dialect as a literary language and if the time has come for literature in dialect to find its own place in literary textbooks.

Keywords: dialect and literature; Egyptian dialect; *fushā* and *‘āmmiyya* in literature.

First of all, when I speak of “Arab literature in dialect”, I am exclusively referring to literary production in Egypt. Secondly, when one speaks of “Egyptian dialect”, this essentially consists in the dialect spoken in Cairo, unless otherwise indicated. Thirdly, it is necessary to specify that with the term “literary production”, I mainly mean prose that has been written in Egyptian dialect, thereby referring to short stories and novels, or anyhow to texts that are intended as literary by their authors. Nevertheless, it will not be possible to avoid occasional references to literary works in verse.

Artistic production in dialect has always existed in the Arab world but, given its oral tradition, it is very difficult to pinpoint its origins.

This entails that, at least at the beginning, most of it had not been written, but rather orally passed down from generation to generation, with all of the consequences that such a tradition implicates. However, it is clear that a dialectal production has always been present, even before the arrival of Islam (Beeston 1997, 287). Since the time in which classical Arabic was conserved and protected by the sacred nature of the Coran, *fuṣṣḥā* and *‘āmmiyya* have travelled along parallel paths. They represent the tools of two different and distinct types of literary production that have never truly competed against one another. As far writing in dialect is concerned, Doss maintains that “one should start observing that the trend of writing in colloquial has a very long tradition, dating back to the 15th century, and that it follows a rising and falling curve at different times according to social and historical factors” (Doss 2006, 54). For centuries, all knew the boundaries within which such tools could, or should, be used. Nevertheless, perhaps only in the course of the past twenty years have *fuṣṣḥā* and *‘āmmiyya* unexpectedly met and converged on some occasions, while in others dialect has substituted classical Arabic without really clashing with it, as we will see later on.

It is worth noting that Arab literary production in general, and Egyptian literary production in particular, does not only consist in works written exclusively in dialect or in *fuṣṣḥā*. Mixed varieties that combine features that are typical of *‘āmmiyya* and *fuṣṣḥā* have spread since ancient times: some authors have written in what is known as “Middle Arabic” because it is better suited for the content of their works, or simply because they did not master the use of standard language (Lentin 2012, 209). Other authors opted for a simplified form of *fuṣṣḥā*, whose words often derive from dialect, to add a touch of “Egyptianness” to their works, like in the case of Yūsuf Idrīs. It has been ascertained that in the premodern age numerous writers consciously used dialectal linguistic structures for artistic reasons and to better convey the work’s message to the less educated members of society. In fact, as Lentin observed, many authors wrote in both impeccable classical Arabic and Middle Arabic, so it is not possible to sustain that they did not master standard Arabic (Lentin 2006, 217).

In any case, this is not the place for further reflections on the various nuances of Arabic in Egyptian literary production for the present study intends to consider only works that were purposefully and exclusively written in Egyptian dialect for artistic reasons.

Tracing back the origins of dialectal tradition, it consisted of songs, commendations, love poems, adventure stories, and so on. Life in Eryp-

tian prisons, the songs of the *misahḥarātī*, songs sung during weddings, the suffering of farmers in the fields, the love pining of the Bedouins of the desert, the melancholy of a felucca driver, and the sadness for the loss of a loved one are all topics that have been orally transmitted to the present day. Only occasionally did someone – often in the form of notes – put such frequently defined folkloric tradition in writing, and in doing so made use of the language in which those songs, those stories, and those poems had been passed down.

In any case, the first written records in dialect are in verses. Arabic vernacular poetry is a centuries-old practice whose first evidence may be traced back to medieval Andalusia, and that has evolved according to well defined ways that differ from region to region. In Egypt, for example, written and oral colloquial poetry was known as *zağal* (Booth 1992, 421) until a new form of vernacular poetry emerged in the 1950s. Nevertheless, whatever was written in dialect has always been considered to be of low value, as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 1339) had already claimed in the XIV century in his *Al-‘Āṭil al-ḥālī wa-l-murabbaṣ al-ğālī*. In this work, he introduced a sort of classification of poetry in which *mu‘raba*, exclusively written in *fušḥā*, is in first place and *zağal* and *mawwāl* (Allen 2000, 82-83) in the final positions. Such an attitude towards works in dialect has lasted for centuries, and even if this seems to be changing, vernacular production still seems to arouse some suspicion both in critics and in readers.

Upon following the history of literary production in dialect, some works of unexceptional artistic value are to be mentioned. Noteworthy ones among these include that of ‘Alī b. Sūdūn al-Bašbuğawī (1407-1464), who in the middle of the XV century wrote *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-mudḥik al-‘abūs*, a work alternating poetry and prose and whose topics range from grief for his mother’s death to sex. The collection *Hazz al-qubūf fi qaṣid Abī Šadūf* by Yūsuf al-Širbīnī (d. 1687) is more famous and already denounced the hardships of farmers in the countryside at the end of the XVII century.

At times these works, which seem to be these writers’ spontaneous attempts to write in dialect with artistic awareness, are actually works in which the effort to insert dialectal elements is evident, and in which it is often possible to see the influence of classical language (Vroljik 1998, 137).

One must wait until the end of the XIX century to find works of some importance in dialect or with dialectal elements, for instance when ‘Uṭmān Ġalāl (1829-1898) composed *Šayḥ matlūf*, an adaptation of

Moliere's *Tartuffe*. He also elaborated other works by the same author and Racine. It is noteworthy to point out that to translate these French writers' works 'Uṭmān Ḡālāl made use of a popular Egyptian setting by introducing colloquial expressions, proverbs, and aphorisms from everyday language (Zakariyā 1964, 264). He also had the merit of being the first to use colloquial language to disseminate cultural products and literary works from Europe by translating theatrical texts (Macdonald 1901, 117), even if his works now seem to interest dialectologists in relation to the evolution of dialect rather than experts in literature.

An important turn, in terms of the use of dialect in prose, occurred with the invention of the printing press, and in particular with the first satirical magazines, where dialect appears for the first time in the history of Egyptian journalism. Precisely within such literary prose production in dialect, Sabry Hafez identified an embryonal form of narrative writing that was later employed in short stories and novels (Hafez 1993, 110-129). In particular, Hafez refers to the *fuṣūl tabḍībiyya* (instructive tales) by 'Abd Allāh al-Nadīm that were published in "Al-Tankīt wa-l-tabkīt" and "Al-Ustād". However, it is necessary to underline that tales written in dialect in newspapers were neither the result of a stylistic or artistic choice, nor was their intention that of proposing a greater use of dialect in literature or for other purposes. In this phase of Egyptian history between the XIX and XX centuries, writing in dialect was a functional choice with ideological aims. The magazine and newspaper owners seemed to have perceived that publishing in dialect could be an adequate educational – if not indoctrination – tool. In fact, the satirical newspapers of the time were generally nationalistic, and therefore opposed to the English occupants and the political class supporting them. To make their political action more consistent, the opposers therefore needed not only the help of small educated elites, but also the support of the masses. The stories that were published in dialect focused on stereotypes such as the amorality of the Western ways and issues that were familiar to the more unfortunate classes: the injustices of dealing with loan sharks, Egyptians' acritical admiration for European products, and the spread of alcohol. In this way, the reader – or rather the listener – recognised him or herself in the protagonists of the tales, in which the use of such a familiar language was also fundamental to emotionally identify with them. The humorous tone, moreover, made those tales even more appealing. In brief, in this phase, publishing in dialect represented a political act, and one of opportunism, and certainly not of sincere solidarity towards the less educated social classes. Writers like

‘Abd Allāh al-Nadīm or Ya‘qūb Ṣanū’, just to mention the most famous ones, went down in history as *iṣlāḥī fukāḥī* (humorous reformers). Significantly, both of their journals explained their position in relation to linguistic ideology. In actual fact, neither of the two had ever been in favour of a linguistic reform that entailed concessions for dialecticisms.

Only in the 1950s did scholars of Arabic begin to become passionate about their national cultural heritage. A new attitude towards working classes, the acceptance of dialect as a vehicle of an “other” culture, the admission of a “conception of the world” straying from the dominant culture, and the publication of the journal *Al-Funūn al-ṣa‘biyya* in Egypt were the consequences of this (Canova 1977, 212-215). Nevertheless, a speech that was delivered by an Egyptian high officer on the occasion of the publication of the first issue of the journal shows how endowing literary production in dialect with dignity is more a political act and a concession to the masses than a stylistic choice that matured in the wake of artistic awareness. The speech in fact implicitly includes the usual considerations: to write, and read, in dialect is something that concerns the masses, as if to say that it is inferior to classic literary production. But is it really true that the entire epic, poetic, humorous, etc. literary production has only enticed the less fortunate social classes, as is often claimed?

Perhaps it would be the case to quote some passages from the above-mentioned statement of the officer:

The publication of this journal has more than one meaning. Not only it is a cultural periodical specialised in a specific discipline; rather, it is a natural response to the sentiments of our socialist society [...], a sign of respect towards the people and of appreciation for their arts. (Ḥātim 1965, 3)

Moreover, in *Difā’ ‘an al-fūlkulūr*, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus underscored the Arabs’ newfound awareness that their cultural heritage is not limited to the remnants of books and manuscripts, inscriptions, vestiges, religious and civil architecture, but also encompasses the popular art of the average man (Canova 1977, 215).

In my opinion, as much as it may seem to open towards literary production in dialect, the speech of the high officer, like ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus’ observed, actually conceals some of the main reasons for its failure.

As a matter of fact, the issue of the use of language in literature in the period from the end of the XIX to the middle of the XX century is often characterised by very ideologised connotations that have little to

do with the principles on which a stylistic and literary choice is based. This is precisely one of the fundamental reasons for the scarce use of *‘āmmiyya* in literature. For instance, it is difficult for a writer to use dialect in a work because it is considered a democratic language, as Salāma Mūsā argued (Mūsā 1956).

In investigating the linguistic choices of popular Egyptian bloggers, Teresa Pepe claimed that “the use of the vernacular sets the tone for intimacy, authenticity, honesty, liberal thought, accessibility, pragmatism, closeness to ordinary people, and a leftist and anti-traditional attitude; often it has a humorous effect” (Pepe 2019, 114).

Such a statement is exactly what has been argued by many scholars and writers in relation to the choice to use vernacular language in literature. Here, on the contrary, it is believed that these considerations were validated during a specific period of Egyptian political and literary history. ‘Abd Allāh al-Nadīm e Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘, as previously mentioned, wrote in dialect to approach the masses and obtain their consensus. Salāma Mūsā promoted dialect because he considered it more accessible to all, although he did not use it in his works. The ironic reformists, or *iṣlāḥī fukābī*, and humorous literature in general, mostly employed dialect because it was indeed more suitable for their aims. Nowadays, the quantity and variety of literary production in dialect (poems, short stories, novels, and obviously plays) enable us to claim that in general, when a writer chooses the linguistic register to use, he or she is guided by stylistic, and not political, considerations.

However, it is evident that an infinite number of works has been produced throughout the centuries in various dialectal variations, and that a precise classification is difficult. In general, as the title of the journal suggests, they are defined as *ša‘biyya* (popular). The use of dialect is the characterising element, as well as that which denies these works their *status* as literature.

As is known, the term *ša‘biyya* is a clear reference to a specific part of society, i.e. the lowliest, least well-off, and least sophisticated one. Whoever has been in Egypt, or in another Arab country for some time, has heard the words *maṭ‘am ša‘bī* (popular restaurant), *qahwā ša‘biyya* (popular café), *ḥayy ša‘bī* (working-class district), where the adjective *ša‘bī* encloses a series of implications that “popular” translations into other languages cannot completely convey. Suffice it to think of how rarely equivalent expressions are found in European languages. In fact, a *maṭ‘am ša‘bī* or a *qahwā ša‘biyya* lead to think of a noisy, cheap, not-so-clean, restaurant or café, where it is easy to socialise with those sitting at

nearby tables, waiters, etc. In the same manner, a *ḥayy ša'bi* conveys the idea of a district that is happily chaotic, dirty, sometimes disreputable, but warm and welcoming at the same time.

As a result, while referring to *adab ša'bi* (popular literature) or *funūn ša'biyya* (popular arts) leads one to think of a type of art that does not neglect less educated and fortunate social classes, it also implicates that one is referring to a sort of literature that is “dirty” and not “pure”.

In truth, even if it is often claimed that works in dialect address the less educated masses, it is evident that they were and are liked by all social classes. They may therefore be defined as popular in the sense that Peter Burke intended, i.e. they seek to target the widest audience possible: rich and poor, inhabitants of cities and the countryside, educated and uneducated people (Burke 1978, 28).

To confirm that works written in Egyptian dialect are appreciated by a heterogeneous audience without any distinction among social classes in terms of economic wealth or educational level, it is possible to consider a survey conducted by Kristian Takvam Kindt and Tewodros Aragie Kebede (2017). The survey demonstrated that more than two thirds of the population in Cairo writes in Egyptian dialect more than once a week. Moreover, a significant part of the population embraces dialect as a written language, although the extent of such appreciation decreases with the increase in the interviewees' educational level: 75% preparatory education, around 65% secondary education, 55% university education (Kindt and Kebede 2017, 30-31).

In the years in which the quarrel between the supporters of *fušḥā* and *'āmmiyya* raged, many *mudakkirāt* (memoirs) in dialect were produced. In most cases, these consisted in the autobiographies of people from very low social classes, as the titles often suggest. Since the protagonist is often illiterate, the *mudakkirāt* are presented as stories that were dictated to another person who transcribed them (Zack 2001, 194). This is not the time and place to discuss such works in detail, but suffice it to mention the most successful and famous *mudakkirāt*: *il-Sayyid wi mara'tuh fi Baaris* and *il-Sayyid wi mara'tuh fi Maṣr* published in 1925 by Maḥmūd Bayram al-Tūnisi; *Mudakkirāt ṭālib ba'ta* by Luwīs 'Awaḍ, written in the 1940s but published only in 1965 due to difficulties in finding a publisher.

Only at the beginning of the 1940's was the first novel entirely in Egyptian dialect published, i.e. *Qanṭara alladī kafara* written by Muṣṭafā Muṣarrafa, who is also the author of a collection of short stories in dialect and classical Arabic, entitled *Hadayān wa-qīṣaṣ uḥbrā*. It is worth

dwelling on this writer because I believe that we are in the presence of a literary phenomenon that has been guiltily neglected by historians and critics of Egyptian literature. In fact, *Qanṭara alladī kafara* is not only the first novel to be written in dialect, and not just a linguistic experiment, quite the contrary. Mušarrafa, in fact, is among the first – if not the absolute first – works in the history of Egyptian literature to make extensive use of the stream of consciousness technique, which was still in its embryonal stage in 1940s Egypt. Furthermore, he employed other little-experimented narrative techniques, such as interior monologue, association of ideas and differing points of view. The writer demonstrates being a skilled scrutineer of the characters' consciences, thus managing to sound their intimate world and project it onto the pages of the novel in a simple and flowing style. I believe that the fact that Mušarrafa does this at the beginning of the 1940s, and does so in dialect – a language that was supposedly reserved for *al-adab al-sāḥir* (irony) – is something revolutionary that cannot be left out of books on Arabic literature. Moreover, in *Haḍayān wa-qīṣaṣ ubrā*, Mušarrafa writes short stories in dialect on very diverse topics, thus demonstrating versatility in his use of *'āmmiyya*. These questions therefore follow: does a writer like Mušarrafa not deserve to be mentioned in a textbook on the history of Egyptian literature? And how many students of, and experts on, Arabic literature have ever heard of Mušarrafa and his novel?

In fact, *Qanṭara alladī kafara* is well known among dialectologists, who obviously have treated it as a source for studies on linguistic phenomena.

In general, the publication of *Qanṭara alladī kafara* did not spark great enthusiasm among critics and readers. The fact that it was written in dialect has always overshadowed all of its evident merits: one may claim that Mušarrafa was a pioneer of some narrative techniques in Egypt.

In following the chronicle of publications in dialect, it may be observed that they are not numerous until the end of the 1990s. However, it would be appropriate to leap forward in time to the new millennium, when new technologies and new historical-cultural events also change the way of creating literature. Thanks to the internet, for example, more people write, and this also highlights the idiomatic preferences of a potentially vast audience.

According to Gabriel Rosenbaum in fact, Egyptian dialect has not only become a written language but also a second literary language. Works in dialect are also written in other Arab countries, but only in

Egypt does this occur on a vast scale and in poetry, prose, theatrical texts, and even some journals (Rosenbaum 2011, 324). While it is true that up until a few years ago – and still today in some cases – it was sustained that *‘ammīyya* is not a reliable linguistic system for writing because its spelling is not codified, the facts demonstrate that this is not the case. First of all, for decades it was believed that the alphabet of classical Arabic was not appropriate for writing in dialect, so many proposed to use the Latin alphabet. In truth, as Rosenbaum asserted, it is sufficient to understand that when one writes in dialect, the graphemes that are normally used in classical Arabic take on a different function (Rosenbaum 2004, 284). For instance, Rosenbaum actually describes what happens on an everyday basis when millions of Egyptians write text messages, e-mails, Facebook posts, tweets, as well as private letters and personal blog post, in dialect without much difficulty.

This proves, once again, that as much as language academies and experts seek to instate linguistic rules, it is always the speakers who actually determine them.

The publications in Egypt of the past two decades prove that there is increasing tolerance for the use of dialect in literature, even if the ranks of purists are still rather numerous. The fact that dialect enjoyed a certain degree of favour in poetry is demonstrated by the publication of *zağal* in the first centuries of Islam, and by the fact that two contemporary poets like Aḥmad Fu’ad Niğm and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī were among the most acclaimed, even more so than their colleagues who wrote in *fusḥā*. It is important to keep in mind though that for Egyptians, as for Arabs in general, poetry has always enjoyed a greater prestige compared to other forms of literary art.

The introduction of dialect in prose was more complex, although it had already appeared in the dialogues of *Zaynab* by the Egyptian Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, which was considered the first novel in the history of Arab literature. Today in Egypt, the use of *‘ammīyya* in dialogues is widely tolerated – if not even preferred – because it more faithfully mirrors what happens in real life, i.e. that people of all social backgrounds speak with one another in dialect. Obviously, there are still purists who continue to write dialogues in classical Arabic: for instance, it is known that literature Nobel prize winner Nağīb Maḥfūz had always opposed the use of vernacular language in literature. Nevertheless, some scholars noticed that the writer had actually developed a code for such dialogical sections, which actually consists in the introduction of dialectal expressions in the classical language, with the aim of repre-

senting dialect for the reader. This is a style that has been defined as *colloquialized fuṣḥā* by Somekh (1991, 26-27), and as *camouflaged fuṣḥā*, or *fuṣḥāmmiyya*, by Rosenbaum (2000).

Furthermore, in recent years, numerous writers have adopted a style that also grants more concessions to dialect in narrative sections. In such a manner, their works result in a mix of *fuṣḥā* and *‘āmmiyya* that is intentionally sought in order to create specific narrative effects. Often internal monologues and streams of consciousness are written in dialect, or even more so when changing points of view, for instance from the author to the character (Rosenbaum 2008, 393-396). By changing the linguistic code, the reader immediately understands that that specific narrative part represents the thoughts of the character, who expresses them in the language in which he or she is used to formulating them, i.e. dialect.

For centuries, dialect was considered a language that could not even compete with the exceptional – not to mention the sacred – nature of *fuṣḥā*. It has been long thought – and still is by many – that the Egyptian language did not have the tools to express complex or “serious” concepts, as it was confined to humourism. On the contrary, *fuṣḥā* has been – and still is – considered pure, melodious, sweet, and better suited to express complicated concepts, although there are no scientific grounds to attribute it with these adjectives since they express subjective concepts but, as Mejdell sustains, “these values are central in shaping language ideology” (Mejdell 2017, 69). In this regard, Brustad refers to the ideology of diglossia that triggered a sociolinguistic process that made all texts written in dialect, or in a mix between dialect and standard Arabic, invisible. In other words, the ideology of diglossia induces the expectation that the texts will be written in the standard language, and that this will be the norm: in contrast, the texts that do not respect these alleged rules will be brushed off or – during the period of the *Nabḍa* and the XX century – physically erased, corrected, or unpublished. The idealisation of *fuṣḥā* as also being a morally sublime language, so that distancing oneself from it implies a sort of moral failure, must not be underestimated (Brustad 2017, 47). It is worth reminding that the institutions, and the Academy of Languages in particular, have done nothing to acknowledge the urges coming from society. They have been the bastion of standard Arabic and substantially worried about keeping it as intact as possible (*ibid.*, 48).

However, much has changed over the past two decades: the publication of poems and prose in dialect has escalated, and authors who

write in the vernacular language increasingly enjoy the esteem of critics and readers (just think, as previously mentioned, of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī and Aḥmad Fu’ād Niġm)¹.

Moreover, one cannot omit some considerations on writing on the internet: suffice it to think, for instance, of how many personal blogs host works by young writers: this, perhaps, is the phenomenon that most questions the rules not only of writing but also of Egyptian literary production. It is important to keep in mind, in fact, that works like *‘Aiza atġawwiz* by Ġāda ‘Abd al-‘Āl, *Urz bi-laban li-šāḥsen* by Riḥāb Bassām, and *Amma ḥādībi... fa raqṣatī anā* by Ġāda Muḥammad Maḥmūd were created for the web and successfully printed only later (Avallone 2011, 28). In particular, *‘Aiz atġawwiz* became a best seller, was translated into many European languages, and extensively read also in other Arab countries. The three mentioned works are part of the *mudawwan@š-šurūq* series that was introduced in 2008 by the publishing house Dār al-Šurūq. The fact that such a prestigious publishing house has accepted to publish works in dialect is a clear sign that something is changing, especially upon recalling writers like Mušarrafa and Luwīs ‘Awaḍ, whose novels were rejected simply based on the fact that they were written in dialect.

Internet writing itself, as mentioned, can truly question the exclusivity of standard Arabic as a literary language. Everything that is posted on personal blogs, social media, and other online channels is not subject to the control of the authorities or the proofreaders of publishing houses. The authors therefore feel free to express themselves without any restrictions, thus giving vent to their inclinations in terms of idiomatic preferences. This results in a sort of linguistic heterogeneity that is increasingly accepted by young generations but still contested by purists. What is truly interesting and could lead to imagine that works in dialect will be accepted like those written in standard Arabic in the future, is the fact that the language of those outlets also find its way to publishing houses and print media (Mejdell 2019, 82). This imply neither that dialect will be the only written language, nor that standard Arabic will be confined to having a role only in specific sectors: instead, it is possible to imagine that *‘āmmiyya* and *fušḥā* will coexist as two literary languages. Finally, as Brustad underlined, the “ideology of *fušḥā* is not threatened by writing in *‘āmmiyya*, but is threatened by mistakes in *fušḥā*” (Brustad 2019, 62).

¹ For a summary list on works written in dialect until 2004, see Rosenbaum 2004, 320-340.

Perhaps the strongest sign that something has truly changed emerged at the beginning of 2019, when two novels won the Sawiris Cultural Award *ex aequo*. It is also relevant to point out that the rewarded novels were not selected among young writers. *Al-Mawlūda* in fact, which was written entirely in dialect by Nādiya Kāmil, tied for first place with *Misk al-tall* by Saḥr Mūġī, which was written in a mix of dialect and classical Arabic.

In the significantly entitled article *Tatwiġ riwāya maktūba bi-l-‘āmmiyya... ṭayf Ṭāḥā Ḥusayn wa-mustaqbal al-ṭaqāfa bi-miṣr*, ‘Umrān ‘Abd Allāh observed that the announcement of the victory of these novels was accompanied by the resumption of the debate on the use of dialect in literature. He begins by acknowledging that ‘āmmiyya has the right to be a true literary language, just as it has been the language of music and cinema for some time (‘Abd Allāh 2019).

In light of the present observations, it now seems inevitable to pay more attention to literary production in Egyptian dialect. I believe it has earned the right to a place of its own in the textbooks on the history of literature that we use at our universities, and not merely as a sporadic phenomenon of linguistic experimentation, but rather as literature in all respects.

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