

If poetry is the legacy of Arabs, prose is the legacy of the age, because what it holds of ties, relationships, and features are applicable to the reality of life, either directly/ explicitly or indirectly/ symbolically. This perfectly is the case with Ebn Arab Shah's *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa wa Mofakahat Al-Zorafaa*—a book of literary prose, written in an epoch replete with numerous political, economic, social, and cultural challenges.

The narration in *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa wa Mofakahat Al-Zorafaa* is the main issue which constitutes the crux of the thesis. The investigation on this topic is very important as it attempts to disclose an unknown loop in our cultural heritage by shedding light on a very important book that has long been abandoned by many researchers and almost received no moment of scientific research, possibly due to the withdrawal of many researchers to study the Mameluke literature which, from their own perspective, is full of weaknesses and defects.

This historical era has been excluded from the recognition of academic and literary research because it has been circulated among many scholars that the product of this age—despite its vigor and magnitude—is not fit for literary and critical research for being void of moral values and creativity. However, believing that the Mameluke era is part and parcel of our national, cultural, and literary history that cannot be forgotten, ignored, or denied, the thesis enthusiastically studies the book *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa* as an attempt to draw the attention of researchers to the Mameluke era's literature by presenting an important book of literary prose that is generally written in this era, and is particularly replete with symbolic stories.

This book appeared in a historical epoch distinguished by political, economic, social, and cultural challenges that affected

the creator in his ideological struggle with power and authority. The thesis, thus, attempts to study the technical role played by narration in the presentation and representation of the deteriorating conditions—politically, socially, and economically; and its management in the form of symbolic narrative when the author makes animal symbols pose questions; agree and disagree; discuss various topics in various fields; show their advantages and disadvantages so as to affect man and make him compare his actions with theirs; acquire joy through imaginative identification with the narrative; and benefit through contemplating the speech of animals. Shortly afterwards, the recipient finds that the addressed gets him to realize the absurdity of power when he criticizes the chaos and disintegration that afflict his society and, hence, mixes fictional pleasure with realistic truth.

Perhaps the author felt that his narrative will inevitably stumble if imagination took precedence over reality, or vice versa; hence, he resorted both to fictitious and realistic stimulations: the former achieved through animals; the latter through pieces of advice particularly associated with politics. In this way, Ebn Arab Shah did not openly express his ideas in an oppressive political and social climate, terribly afflicted with the nightmare of the enemy trying to take hold over the State of Islam (the Tatars and the Crusaders); but only through animals and birds could he express his pain and suffering, his misfortunes and strivings, his hopes and aspirations; and intended to disclose at the end of every story his objectives and his purpose, what he wants to stress, and what he wants the recipient to understand and realize.

In fact, the motive behind this research is the seriousness of this book, which has not received a wholly integrated

academic study in the arena of literary studies keen on analyzing it or investigating its stories<sup>(1)</sup>. The only study of this book appeared in Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghazali's study of "The Narrator and the Addressee in *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa* " (Ch. VII). Yet, the aim of this research has been confined to "studying the political life in Ebn Arab Shah's time, studying his life and traveling, the reasons leading to his escape from his country, and the relation of all this to the book. This is followed by the study of the content of the book as a whole while focusing on the framework narration of Chapter VII. In this way, the study has extremely resorted to historical sources and greatly depended on it in unveiling the truth about the narrator and the addressee. This cast its shadow effects on the study making it become more like a historical survey since it has not focused on the profound meaning of the text, and has not tried to explore its significance as a literary rather than a historical work<sup>2</sup>. Hence, the present thesis came as an attempt to determine an overall analysis of the ten chapters of the book, aiming to analyze its narrative wholly, not partially.

The thesis, thus, aims to expose the core of the narrative; attempts to detect its hidden aspects, and investigates how the writer dealt with the different political, social, and intellectual levels through the symbolic stories told sometimes by animals and sometimes by birds. Therefore, the thesis assumes an in-

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<sup>(1)</sup> For further reading see Dr. Mohamed Abul Magd. "Bibliography of Dissertations in Egyptian Universities since its Foundation until the Twentieth Century." 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. Rhetoric and Criticism Sections, The Library of Arts; 2002.

<sup>(2)</sup> Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghazali. "The Narrator and the Addressee in *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa* " (study in Ch. VII). The Scientific Publishing Council, Kuwait University, the Annals of Arts and Social Sciences, Dissertation 173, Yearbook 22, 1422 AH, 2001, P.13.

depth-analysis of the narration; focuses on the symbols and attempts to classify them; shows how they unite and differ? How they vary and identify? How they overlap and mix?

In fact, the modern critical approaches have provided the critics with diverse procedural tools that enabled them to read, study, and analyze the text in more than one way. Thus, the present study has been assisted by the semantic, structural, historical, and social approaches as it has tried to exploit this systematic correlation among these approaches in serving the text in order to highlight the details of the narrative inherent therein.

Actually, the thesis has benefited from the procedural tools of the semantic and structural approaches in tackling the mechanisms and implications of the text as it managed to detect the structural levels of narration in addition to highlighting the inherent semantic implications of the narrative and its intentional profound implications that are nonetheless implicit not explicit, since the explicit—the animals—are not intended while the implicit—man—is intended. This is being done basically in order to get out of this superstitious labyrinth where interpretational efforts of the symbols have been made relying on the logical semantic implications and the translation of the superstitious symbols of animals, birds, and genies to intentional implications related to reality. Hence, came the attempts to disclose and reach the communicative messages between the addressed and the addressee; and the informative ones between the writer and the reader in order to provide logical rhetorical interpretations especially that the narration by animals is based on concealment and declaration at the same time since the explicit, which is narrated, is something while the implicit, which is intended, is something else.

As for the utility of the systematic historical and social approaches in studying the book, there is no question that the narrated text is the product of very important historical and social circumstances. Hence, there was a need to have a full grip of the social and historical contexts of the book. This is mainly because taking the social and historical variables into account reveals different visions that enrich the text with the intention of getting suggestive implications consistent with the historical and social contexts of the narrative particularly that the narrated text is replete with references of social traditions and history.

Conspicuously, the study has not completely adopted a single approach and adjusted the text to its procedural rules. Rather, it has taken from each approach some practical tools that would shed light on a vague angle of the text. And, believing that every text has its own cultural, social, and creative circumstances that need varied requirements and data, the study has been prompted to expand its systematic scope while taking into account the selection of the relevant data provided by the mentioned critical approaches that are, unlike the present typical Arabic text, originally Western.

On this basis, it can be affirmed that the thesis has relied on an integrated approach through which it has tried to unveil the symbolic narrative text by delving inside it, showing its hidden parts, and disclosing its minute components. It has, thus, to embark from a mere study of form to a study of the content in an attempt to penetrate from the peripheral to the core in order to detect the real intended implications.

To tackle the previously stated points, the thesis is divided into an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The

introduction presents the epoch the author lived in, from the late eighth century AH until the mid-ninth century AH; and shows his traveling east and west, starting with his escape from his motherland (Damascus) and then returning to it and his final stay in Egypt. It also focuses on the political side of this era, clarifies the historical and contemporary circumstances of the time the author has lived in for the effective role this plays in revealing the identity of the narrator and disclosing the diverse animal symbols and their intended implications. The introduction then discusses the reasons counting for writing the text and for resorting to the animals to recount the stories, and ends with tracing this literary genre from *Kalilah wa Dmenh* up to *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa*.

Chapter I, entitled "Symbols and Narrative Implications' Production," attempts to identify the shifts within the various symbols in the book in order to explore its profound implications and tries hard to construe it so as not to remain incarcerated in the superficial reading of the narrative. The chapter is divided into five key axes. The first axis presents symbolism as a technical mechanism, focuses on its meaning and significance, and refers to the identical nature of symbols in those old stories told by animals (*Kalilah wa Dmenh*, *Al-Namer wa Al-Tha'lab*, *Tha'llah wa Afraa*, etc.) as to pave the way for understanding symbolism in *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa*. The second axis discusses the semantics of the title and of the subtitles the author has extracted from this title as headings for the ten chapters of the book in order to trace and monitor their development. The third axis deals with semantic symbolism that is related to a set of stories evolving over a single substantial symbolic significance as some stories focused on particular issues and was keen on monitoring and interpreting them in accordance with the main issue posed in the story. The fourth axis tackles the semantic

diversity of the book through interpreting the different stories, subjecting them to a variety of narrative implications, and trying seriously to link the narrative symbols with the various humanitarian aspects and dimensions. Finally, the fifth axis attempts to get a close perspective of the symbols of the narrative and its different changes; shows how the symbols mix up with the symbolized, and how the latter then takes precedence over the former; and manifests how the implicit author gives verbal evidences that easily transmit and identify the significance of the symbol to the thing that is being symbolized, even when both blend and mix.

Chapter II, entitled "Levels of Narrative Construction," puts forward the problematic issue of "the logic of structure that governs the old narrative forms including, of course, *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa*." It then deals with the narrative structure that constitutes the interdependent, interrelated structural frame of the book. Such structure emerges in three forms. First, the major structural framework: as the structure of the narrative is related to a major framework-story that strategically unifies the structure of the whole book since narration begins and ends therein. Second, the interdependent generative structure: as narration continues constantly, even when it seems to terminate it simply starts all over again. Interrogation is the device used to create this constant process of reproduction and generation. Third, the complex inclusive structure: since narration cannot properly develop in a constantly generative structure, there occurs an implicit inclusion of sub-stories. This inclusion is reflected in the blending of seemingly separate stories and leads to a complexity in the construction of the narrative and a spider's web-like overlapping of the action. These three structures represent the different levels over which the whole narrative is built and through which it looks a coherent and cohesive whole.

Entitled, "Narrator's Forms and Functions," chapter III seeks to present the various forms and multiple functions of the narrator. This was quite a hard mission that could only be solved when the prominent narrators in the book were located and arranged according to their chronological appearance and imminence in the narrative construction. These are the anonymous narrator, the external narrator—the one who narrates the frame story, and the internal narrator—the one who narrates the different stories within the book. This chapter also focuses on the presence of the writer as reflected in his work, extracts evidence of this presence, and exhibits its multiple forms and various methods. And, since narration is full of the narrating writer's interference that mostly sounds like rhetoric and preaching, a discussion about him occupies a good deal of this chapter.

Noticeably, many of the studies on narration do not distinguish between the construction and the narrator, often relating one to the other in a vicious way that causes confusion and even ambiguity. Thus, the thesis tends to discuss construction in a separate chapter followed by a discussion of the narrator in another chapter in a manner that leads neither to confusion nor to ambiguity.

Chapter IV, entitled "Characters and their Models," deals with the most prominent and most frequently repeated characters in the narrative. Believing that the repetition and insistence on mentioning certain characters in more than one story can hardly be unintentional, this chapter deals with these frequently repeated characters in an attempt to find out the author's implicit purpose behind such repetition.



Ultimately, the characters in *Fakehat Al-Kholafaa* portray numerous models of animals, birds, people, and genies that may reflect the spirit of a specific era with its fluctuations. Yet, this does not in any way imply that it merely represents the past, but it still endures through its appeal and impact on the hearts and minds of thinkers and scholars. Who can ever deny the role of the symbolic animal characters and its effectiveness in breaking the silence of the governed, and its attempts to amend the mistakes of the rulers; or the oppressed women in the Middle Ages; or the endeavoring farmer; or the corrupted judge; or the just king; or the unscrupulous assassin; or the Satan that seduced Adam and Eve and drove them out of paradise and still seduces their offspring till the Judgment Day? These are living characters: they lived in the past, endured through history, still live in the present, and will live in the future as long as people's hearts dream of peace, equality, and justice.