

Abrahamson, David and Abusharif, Ibrahim N. "Literary Journalism in the Middle East: The Paradox of Arab Exceptionalism." In Keeble, Richard and Tulloch, John, eds. *Global Literary Journalism: Exploring the Journalistic Imagination*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2012: 23-38.

Literary journalism in the Middle East: The paradox of Arab exceptionalism

David Abrahamson and Ibrahim N. Abusharif

Introduction

The genre generally known as literary journalism has appeared in many cultures across the globe. Each manifestation has served to represent a range of sociocultural, economic and (sometimes) political purposes. Historical currents and contemporary realities of nonfiction practice within various nations and cultures have shaped the forms, modalities and intentions of these different forms.

Given this global context, it is notable that there is a relative *absence* of literary journalism in the Arab/Muslim world. Exceptions exist – extraordinarily skilled journalists whose work can comfortably be located within the genre – but their rarity supports the validity of the generalisation. In contrast to the West, the Arab world has long and exclusively revered works of the imagination. Poems from celebrated Arab poets appear on the front pages of newspapers, and narrative novels find unusually wide audiences in Muslim lands. This chapter explores, from a variety of economic, political, sociocultural/religious, historical and technological perspectives, the role of nonfiction literary journalism in a culture which so privileges the fictional forms.

Literary journalism across a diverse range of traditions

As a genre, literary journalism finds expression across a diverse range of national and cultural traditions – all the more notable when one considers that journalism itself, particularly in its printed form, does not really travel well. Reasons for this include the impediments of localised custom, journalism’s essential temporality and an inherent geographic boundedness. Indeed, with the prominent exception of global television enterprises (e.g. CNN, Al-Jazeera, the BBC), conventional journalism serves the informational needs of a definable “home” audience – what media marketers refer to as its “natural constituency”. Despite the advent of the World Wide Web broadening journalism’s potential reach, the concept of a largely local, core audience, retains its essential validity.

Literary journalism, however, is at least partially beyond the fiat of the local-audience rule. It is, we would argue, the literary dimension which largely makes this so. One of its finest American practitioners, Ron Rosenbaum, observes: “It isn’t about literary flourishes or literary references. At its best, literary journalism asks the same questions that literature asks: about human nature and its place in the cosmos.”¹ The techniques that define literary journalism have been detailed with commendable rigour elsewhere (see Connery 1992; Hartsock 2000; Keeble and Wheeler 2007; Sims 2008). If, however, one considers what makes literary journalism “literary”, some aspect of timelessness and meanings which resonate beyond the expected boundaries of time and space must certainly be part of the answer.

This inherent quality of literary journalism also plays a part in its protean appearance in various forms around the globe. Both the historical currents and the contemporary realities of nonfiction practice within various nations and cultures have shaped the modalities of the different varieties of literary journalism. Given the global context of literary journalism, it is notable that there is a relative *absence* of it in the Arab/Muslim world. Exceptions exist – accomplished journalists whose work is within the genre – but their rarity reinforces the generalisation. Why this is so, as well as what it might suggest about both the Arab/Muslim world and the global state of literary journalism, is the focus of this chapter.

A trio of caveats

Three inherent limitations of our study come quickly to mind. First, is that we are exploring the absence of something – a tricky task.

A second caveat is that most scholarship about Arab journalism – indeed, most of the journalism from the Arab world which forms the basis of this study – has been either originally written in or translated into English. An argument can be made that because much (but not all) of the world’s literary journalism finds the roots of its expression in Western forms, it is defensible to survey the genre as expressed in a Western language. Furthermore, even though Arabic and English-language journalisms in the Middle East speak to different audiences, we make an argument for an admittedly speculative parallelism. A dearth of a literary form in one language may reasonably lead to the inference that there is a similar dearth in another, namely English and Arabic. Indeed, a sound argument can be made that the absence is observable in both languages (see below).

Lastly, this essay is written about a non-Western subject from a Western perspective. We are very much aware of the ways in which Western ethnocentrism – at times referred to as Eurocentrism or Orientalism (see Said 1978) – and cultural insensitivity can insinuate themselves into such a discourse. Citizens of the Middle East have sensitivities arising from political post-colonialism, religious strictures and sociocultural norms which are markedly different from ours. While we have tried to be resolutely respectful in such matters, we confess to holding the scholarly principle of free inquiry to be an absolute. As a result, we can only ask forbearance if some of our readers feel otherwise.

Scholarly literature on the subject

The relative absence of literary journalism in the Arab/Muslim world is paradoxical. Few regions have a greater appetite for works of literary merit. Moreover, there is no shortage of critical reflection by scholars, as well as practitioners, who study the Arab media. Some of the extant scholarship bears on the issue of the region's lack of a substantial long-form journalistic or nonfiction tradition.

One important issue is the overall level of professional development. Michael C. Hudson, for example, observed that “the Arab media are some distance away from the highest standards of competence, capability, and professionalism” (Hudson 2005: 18). In addition, it can be argued that a relatively free press is a condition for literary journalism. “The question that needs to be answered,” wrote Salameh Nematt, the Washington bureau chief of *al-Hayat*,² the newspaper of record for the Arab diaspora, “is, ‘Where do we have a free

Arab media?’ It does not exist. In the 1950s and 1960s there were more independent media than there are today” (Nematt 2005: 12).

Even if the Arab media was less constrained by officialdom, a survey of Egyptian journalists by Jyotika Ramaprasad and Naila Nabil Hamdy suggested that they viewed their jobs as explicitly agenda-driven. Ramaprasad and Hamdy’s study ranked these hoped-for outcomes as (a) supporting Arab/Islamic ideals and values, (b) supporting democracy, (c) providing entertainment and (d) supporting the country and government (Ramaprasad and Hamdy 2006: 178-179). Similarly, Lawrence Pintak and Jeremy Ginges have argued that Arab journalists see their mission rather narrowly, focusing on driving political and social reform in the region (Pintak and Ginges 2008). While such a purpose-focused approach does not prevent the production of literary journalism, it may very well serve to limit it. Some observers have even suggested that Arab journalism needs to re-think itself.

Arguing from Pierre Bourdieu’s critical-theory perspective,³ the noted scholar Noha Mellor, author of *Modern Arab journalism: Problems and prospects* (2007) and *The making of Arab News* (2005), has called for Arab journalists to “re-conceptualise their role” and serve as “cultural intermediaries” (2008: 446). In addition, Mellor has argued that Arab journalism scholarship could benefit from significant improvement, suggesting that much existing research was mired in “irrelevant conceptualisations” and “ideologically inclined” (Mellor 2010: 2-3).

Exceptions which prove the rule

Before examining possible reasons for the relative scarcity of literary journalism in the 22 nations which make up the Arab League – what we term “Arab Exceptionalism” – there may be value in discussing some exceptions which perhaps prove the rule. The region does have extraordinarily skilled literary journalists such as Nawal El-Saadawi and Rami Khouri whose work certainly qualifies to be considered within the genre.

Born in 1931, El-Saadawi was educated as a physician at Cairo University. Her career as a writer grew out of her work as a doctor with Egyptian rural women, and her most famous nonfiction work is *The hidden face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (see El-Saadawi 1985). Its powerful descriptive passages and moral passion have moved readers since it was written in the 1980s. Often threatened and occasionally imprisoned by Egyptian authorities, she once said: “Danger has been a part of my life ever since I picked up a pen and wrote. Nothing is more perilous than truth in a world that lies” (see Sharma 2010).

Another example is Rami George Khouri. Born in 1948 in New York City to Palestinian Christian parents, he is an editor-at-large of the Beirut-based *Daily Star* newspaper. His influential and widely read columns are published throughout the Middle East in the *International Herald Tribune* and are often a unique combination of exposition and narrative.⁴

It is also worth mentioning that quite recently Arab journalists have made an organised effort to expand and advocate investigative journalism by the Arab press. Leading this

effort is Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism based in Amman, Jordan. While not the same as literary journalism, this form does employ some of the same principles and techniques, such as great attention to detail, reliance on extended research, the importance of dialogue, and, in many cases, narrative storytelling.⁵

Moreover, there is another category of literary journalists whose accomplishments in the realm of literary nonfiction can certainly bear mention. Some Arab-Americans have gained attention for their work while often writing and/or publishing in both the United States and in the United Kingdom.⁶ One such author is Laila Lalami, a Moroccan-born American known for her essays and criticism published in the *Nation*, the *Boston Review* and *World Literature Today*, as well as for two celebrated novels, *Hope and other dangerous pursuits* (see Lalami 2005) and *Secret son* (see Lalami 2009). Another is Moustafa Bayoumi, a Swiss-born Arab-American who excels at nonfiction. His recent book, *How does it feel to be a problem?: Being young and Arab in America*, explores the lives of young Arab Americans in the post-9/11 United States (see Bayoumi 2008). Another worthy example is Alia Malek's nonfiction work, *A country called Amreeka: Arab roots, American stories*, an immigration-driven narrative which explores American history through the eyes of Arab-Americans (see Malek 2009). Although primarily a novelist, the Iraqi-American Diana Abu-Jaber has written commendable nonfiction books such as *The language of Baklava* (see Abu-Jaber 2005). And no list of Arab-American nonfiction writers would be complete without the master-essayist Edward Said, whose *Reflections on exile: And other literary and cultural essays*, for example, is an acute reflection on the inevitable tension between the historical past and the personal present (see Said 2000). .The University of Houston's

Hosam Aboul-Ela, an Egyptian-American critic, has observed:

The literary production of Americans of Arab descent is increasingly staggeringly diverse, with everything from long poems, novels, stories, memoirs, spoken word, theater and most recently film. But it is the marks left on our consciousness by this tension between the grand foreign policy narrative of 'home' and the injustices visited upon 'homeland' that connect these exciting new voices in American letters (Aboul-Ela 2010: 4).

Explaining the phenomenon

Exploring why something does *not* occur is an interesting challenge, but not an impossible one. Any comprehensive explanation might usefully approach the question from a variety of perspectives: economic, political, sociocultural/religious, historical and technological. It is difficult to judge the relative importance of the factors. No doubt they are highly interrelated, and perhaps the symbiotic nature of their relationship amplifies their effect. However, this interrelation does not imply stability or stasis. As the events of the spring of 2011 showed, the region is ripe for significant and largely unforeseen political and social change.

In the last decade or so, many media scholars have concluded that the economic dimension of most media can be analysed from two distinct points of view: the consumer and the producer – the demand and the supply sides of the equation,⁷ reflecting the interests and desires of reader/viewers and the market-driven considerations of editors and publishers.

Regarding the seeming preference for fictional forms of a substantial portion of the literate Arab world, one astute observer, Nawal El-Saadawi, has suggested a straightforward explanation: poverty. “Much of the Middle East is poor, and poor people tend to want to escape the harsher realities of their life. The result is that poor people live in their imagination” (El-Saadawi 2010a).

Perhaps that, in part, explains why evidence of the demand for poetry and novels rather than substantial long-form journalism is easy to find in the Arab world. Indeed, poetry is the oldest literary form in Arabic. Pre-Islamic Arabs (before the 7th century) were known for their passion for poetry, a sentiment that continues today. Modern poets have been revered in Arab societies, and their poems have often appeared in newspapers. In fact, the logotype of the Egyptian weekly newspaper *Watani (My Country)* carries lines of poetry by Ahmed Shawki (1869-1932), a pioneer of the modern Arabic literary scene. The literary historian Salma Khadra Jayyusi cites several 20th century poets, including Ilyas Zakariyya, Niqula Qurban and Ibrahim Shukrallah, who were published in Arab newspapers (Jayyusi 1977: 634). More recently, the poems of the Palestinian “national poet” Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) often appeared in newspapers, typically addressing themes of the Palestinian diaspora (Arana 2007: 126). Moreover, the cultural currency of poetry is remains highly valued in the Middle East. A popular reality television programme in the Arab world is called *Sha'ir al-Milyun (The million's poet)* introduced in 2006 in which hopeful poets compete for one million Euros by reciting their poetry before judges.⁸

More specific economic considerations, largely dictated by market factors, also play a role

in this lack of literary journalism. The standard profit-producing modality which sustains most media remains the commercial model perfected in the late 19th century in the United States by Cyrus Curtis, the founder and owner of the Curtis Publishing Company in Philadelphia.⁹ Two assumptions underpin the model. The first is that most readers/viewers will *not* be willing to bear the full cost of production and distribution. The second is the pre-conditional assumption of the market presence of potential advertisers willing to advertise.

The key imperative in the media business model is to offer a specific kind of information of perceived value to a definable group of readers or viewers to whom economic entities are willing to advertise. So the question then arises: has the Middle East been a region containing potential advertisers willing to advertise in a media outlet (e.g. newspaper, magazine, website) that offers meaningful, enterprising long-form journalism which may qualify as literary journalism? The answer is a decisive No. Fear of disapproval and retribution by the government, as well as other political/ideological/religious forces, account for much of this self-censorship. In addition, crossholdings of media properties, either actual government ownership or dominant holdings by self-serving economic elites, create another factor which impedes journalistic endeavour. And this leads the discussion to the realm of politics.

The press and the political dimension

Analyses of the press in the Middle East usually conclude with a familiar refrain: that it is hopelessly restrained by governmental control and official and/or unofficial censorship.

But the prospects of press freedom in the Arab world were significantly encouraged during the winter of 2011, raising hopes that change is actually possible. Some of the conversations after the resignation of Egypt's autocratic President Hosni Mubarak included the issue of changing the country's repressive press laws (see Baker 2011). In fact, days before Mubarak resigned (on 12 February 2011), discussions between the regime and opposition leaders focused, in part, on the question of a free press.

The political implications of lacking a free press were well known. Political opposition groups become severely limited in their reach, abetting the perpetuation of a leadership, often dictatorial, that lasts for decades. But there are other implications of a press-restricted environment. What we suggest here – and thus to perhaps provoke future study – is the potential influence that a severe lack of press freedom has on the stunted development of literary journalism in the region.

According to Reporters Without Borders, very few Arab nations are in the top hundred ranking of countries as scaled by press freedom, and none ranks above 75th.¹⁰ The majority anchor the bottom half of that list and many are near the bottom. However, there have been striking changes in the region's mediascape. None are larger than the emergence of Al-Jazeera and then Al-Jazeera English – in broadcast form and, later, online. Despite Al-Jazeera and its competitors, there is little progress regarding the actual press laws of the nations in the region. Censorship and self-censorship still reign. And there is even evidence to suggest that matters have actually worsened.

In February 2008, for example, information ministers of Arab League nations met in Cairo to discuss censorship – not to explore relaxing the rules, but to make them more restrictive. According to Jon Weinberg, in the *Harvard International Review*: “The result of the meeting was a charter for a decidedly paternalistic regional media code that would allow host countries to annul or suspend the licence of any broadcaster found in violation of its rules.” Though Qatar and Lebanon reportedly opposed the charter, Weinberg noted that “these new developments serve as a severe reminder of the profound fragility of press freedoms in the Arab world” (Weinberg 2008: 12-13). Journalism educators and journalists in the region viewed the move as particularly disempowering of the local media.

Speculation about the future prospects of the press in the Middle East is not idle. While the state of affairs may improve, generations in the region have been raised in an environment in which a free press was exclusively a quality of the West, particularly the United States. For instance, the introductory essay in *Arab media in the Information Age*, a study by the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies, a think-tank in Abu Dhabi, concluded: The truth of the situation in the Arab world is that the communications domain is still far from being open and dissemination of information still remains under Arab governmental control and only a handful of Arab mass media outlets enjoy public popularity and credibility. The main question is: Will the next stage witness greater media openness, freer flow of information, and the emergence of more diverse, healthy media alternatives and options? (2006: 1).

How this might impact on the presence or absence of literary journalism has been

considered at some length by Washington State University's Lawrence Pintak. "I think there's long-winded journalism but not much literary journalism. There are several reasons for this. One, Arab journalism in general until recently was not very well developed. There was very little training; it was mainly self-taught. The other aspect is about outlets. You do not have outlets that cultivate that kind of journalism. You do not have the *New Yorker* or *Harper's*." The dearth of literary journalism, Pintak believes, is observable in both Arabic and English. "There are literary outlets, and a strong poetic tradition and some of that poetry is highly political, but for some reason the genre of long-form literary journalism...has not really emerged" (see Pintak 2011a).

A necessary fictive digression

While it is possible that press restrictions dampen long-form journalism, particularly investigative journalism which exposes corporate or political corruption, it does not obviate the creative narratives employed in fiction. There are, for example, Egyptian writers who use fiction to offer commentary on society and politics without naming actual names – though the symbolism is often clear. One such novelist is Alaa Al-Aswany, whose second novel, *The Yacoubian building: A novel*, first published in Arabic and translated into English, has been well received throughout the Middle East (see Al-Aswany 2004). According to National Public Radio, the novel "describes a country that is corrupt, unfair and thuggish" (Siegel 2005: 1). The *Guardian* said: "With its parade of big-city characters, both ludicrous and tender, its warm heart and political indignation, it belongs to a literary tradition that goes back to the 1840s, to Eugène Sue and Charles Dickens" (Buchan 2007: 1).

But again, this is fiction. Such a book could not have been written as long-form narrative journalism with names of real people in power. “When you read Naguib Mahfouz and Alaa Al-Aswany, you can read their books and guess who they are talking about, but they are not laying it out all on the line so that they can be arrested for criticizing the president by name or some minister by name,” said Pintak. His central point is that press restrictions do not restrict creativity in the realm of fiction and poetry, which is heavily laden with symbolism and allusions. Journalism is another story. Pintak does, however, believe that long-form journalism will eventually emerge in the Arab world, mainly because of the potential and promise of online journalism – which can provide the forum for long-form writers to publish their work in a safer context (see Pintak 2011a).

Critic James Wood made an interesting connection between restriction and literary creativity in his *New Yorker* review of an Iranian novelist living in the United States:

Sometimes, the soft literary citizens of liberal democracy long for prohibition. Coming up with anything to write about can be difficult when you are allowed to write about anything...What if writing were made a bit more exigent for us? What if we had less of everything? It might make our literary culture more “serious”, certainly more creatively ingenious. Instead of drowning in choice, we would have to be inventive around our thirst. Tyranny is the mother of metaphor... (Wood 2009:1).

The shadow of the West

Examining any form of journalism in the Arab world requires a close reading of context.

Two important historical realities of modern Arab history are relevant: the memory of Western colonialism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The former tends to be amorphous in its effects, while the latter is much more distinct. They colour not only political considerations and private and public discussions – but also cultural movements which, in turn, inform the role of the modern journalist in the Arab world.

Spanish, French and Italian colonialists carved out swaths of Arab land in North Africa, mainly in the 19th century, while the British held Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and the Indian subcontinent. The French also were present in Lebanon and Syria. Arab nations gained independence only after a long and violent struggle. The Algerian liberation campaign against the French from 1954-1962 is known as the “War of a million martyrs”.

For most citizens of the West, colonialism is a bygone era. For the people of the Middle East, bitterness and mistrust still abide to varying degrees, embodied in borders which were “carved out with little concern over people, geography, or history. The states, which emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, were neither homogeneous nor cohesive” (Kumaraswamy 2006: 63).

Middle Easterners’ view of the West, however, is self-conflicted. Hundreds of thousands of people from the Middle East have emigrated to the West for education and economic opportunity. The Arab population embraces Al-Jazeera, patterned after 24-hour news networks in the United States. But colonialism is not some abstract concept. The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 drew heavy criticism in the Middle East not only

for the violence and destruction that ensued, but also because of the appearance of a “neo-colonial” rush on the region’s resources. Few people among the Arab population accept the democratisation or security arguments for the war. For the vast majority, it was *déjà vu*: uninvited Western powers overrunning the region for its natural treasures or geopolitical advantages.

The lingering effects of colonialism in the region deserves its own study. For our purposes here, we raise the possibility that the fear of neo-colonialism has created an underlying mistrust for many of the cultural forms that the West has to offer.

The creation of the state of Israel may be viewed as an extension of Western colonisation in the region, primarily through the midwifery of the British. But the Palestinian-Israeli issue has not only become a stand-alone problem, it is at the epicenter of Arab geopolitical thought. Americans, in particular, are not accepted as honest brokers in the dispute because they are viewed as fervently one-sided in their support of Israel. Yet how does this affect culture? In the introduction to her volume, *Anthology of modern Palestinian literature*, Jayyusi argues:

While one can say that all Arab literature nowadays is involved in the social and political struggle of the Arab people, politics nevertheless imposes a greater strain on the Palestinian writer. It usually determines where and how this writer lives, and prefigures a degree of personal struggle greater than that which other Arab writers...tend to experience (Jayyusi 1992: 22).

The media and the Arab identity

For the purpose of summation, Pintak's views of both colonialism and the Palestinian-Israeli issue as they affect regional media are worth considering:

The artificial boundaries imposed by Western colonizers, the creation of the state of Israel, the pattern of Western aggression since the Crusades, the perceived hypocritical contradictions of Western expressions of morality and political/military actions, Western support for authoritarian rulers and the corrupting influence of Western culture – all these complaints and more fill the speeches of political Islamist and Arab nationalist leaders alike; intellectuals representing each political philosophy feed and nurture the other. These are the same hot-button issues, save the more recent imposition of Western media culture, which formed the backbone of the Arab nationalist and Islamist messages over the previous half-century. Each strain of thinking strives to overcome the psychology of subjugation, occupation and exploitation that has characterised modern Arab history (Pintak 2009: 202-203).

There is an iron link between the Arab identity struggle, colonial memory and the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. This narrative presses inexorably upon the minds and lives of people in the region. Journalism plays an important role in this struggle and never more than during the winter of 2011. Loosening the grip of government and other shackles on the free press has given voice to new generations of Arab writers. Some, it is hoped, may use longer and more aspiring forms of journalism. A telling insight by Jayyusi seems apt: "Art has its own internal laws of growth and development...Although these laws are

influenced by external forces, social, political and psychological, the ultimate determinant in the development of art will be the demands, needs and possibilities of art itself at a certain moment in its history” (Jayyusi 1992: 1).

The hopeful future

It is now clear that the “Tunis effect”¹¹ which swept through the Middle East in the spring of 2011 is likely to have begun a profound transformation in the region, and it was widely reported that the use of internet avenues – most notably Facebook and Twitter – was a key factor in the Tunisian and Egyptian outcomes.¹² It is not hard to imagine that journalism will benefit from this growing use of interactive media – greater numbers of more engaged consumers of the journalistic product will result in the blossoming of a more diverse and pluralistic journalistic culture.

Indeed, Elisabeth Kendall has argued that, particularly during periods of intense political activity in the first half of the 20th century, there was a robust literary journalism in Egypt (see Kendall 2006). In addition, she observed that “the development of literary journalism...came to be the life support of literary experimentation and creativity” in the later decades of the century (Kendall 1997: 217). Many believe that the events of 2011 are a precursor to a substantial transformation of the political and social structures in the Arab world. If so, narrative forms of literary journalism may find a warm welcome among Middle Eastern audiences – because, as one observer noted, one of its unique attributes is that “literary journalism can both shape and reflect larger social, cultural and political currents” (Abrahamson 2011: 80).

Recent research by Noha Mellor examined self-empowerment among Arab journalists. She found that many practitioners acknowledge the primacy of devising personal strategies for professional autonomy (Mellor 2009: 307). Three other factors significantly support this professional development. These included viewing “journalism as a creative process” (ibid: 310), accepting the role of “journalists as witnesses to their era” (ibid: 315) and being willing to “draw on their experience and knowledge of other cultures, particularly the Western” ones (ibid: 316).

These three factors head a commendable list of valuable perceptions which might encourage – or increase the probabilities of – the development of literary journalism in the Arab world. Along with the “Tunis effect”, we suggest that bodes well for Arab publics in general and the journalists who will serve them.

In the words of the inimitable Nawal El-Saadawi: “To my mind literary journalism is a creative effort to undo the traditional separation...between science and art, between the self and the other” (El-Saadawi 2010b). With luck conditions will foster the development of a genre of journalism – rigorously reported and honestly sourced, rendering social reality, telling untold stories and speaking truth to power – so sorely needed in the region.

Notes

¹ Ron Rosenbaum, in an interview with Tim Cavanaugh, Feed Magazine. Available online at http://www.feedmag.com/re/re196_master2.html, accessed on 1 September 2003

² Published in London, *al-Hayat* has been called “far and away the best and most intensely read Arab newspaper”. See Ibrahim, Yousef M. Al-Hayat (1997) A journalistic Noah’s ark, *New York Times*, 15 January 1997, Available online at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9801E0D61138F936A25752C0A961958260>, accessed on 14 December 2010

³ The full realisation of the concept of the cultural intermediary can be found in Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

⁴ For access to the last half-dozen years of Khouri’s journalism, see his personal web site. Available online at <http://www.ramikhouri.com>, accessed on 1 February 2011

⁵ Available online at <http://arij.net/en/>, accessed on 13 March 2011

⁶ There a number professional associations of Arab-American writers. One of the more prominent is the Radius of Arab-American Writers. Available online at <http://www.rawi.org>, accessed on 5 January 2011

⁷ For an insightful analysis of these two approaches, see Mersey, Rachel Davis (2010)

⁸ Originating in Abu Dhabi under the auspices of the emirate’s Authority of Culture and Heritage, *Sha’ir al-Milyun* has its own cable and satellite channels. See Politics dominates the million’s poet, *Zawaya*, 24 January 2008. Available online at <http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20080124150020>, accessed on 20 February 2011.

⁹ For a summary of the evolution of the media’s commercial model, see Abrahamson, David (1996: 16-17)

¹⁰ Reporters Without Borders’ Press Freedom Index is available online at

<http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html>, accessed on 10 February 2011

¹¹ The citation for one of the earliest mentions of the term “Tunis effect” is a Reuters dispatch: Tunisian contagion hard to predict, *Arab Times*, 18 January 2011 p 12

¹² One of the more interesting stories from Cairo was the role of Wael Ghonim, the Google executive who helped jump-start the demonstrations by setting up a popular social-media site. His detention for ten days significantly increased the fervour of his Facebook followers. See Zimmer, Ben (2011) How the war of words was won in Cairo, *New York Times*, 12 February, Week in Review, 4

References

Abrahamson, David (2011) The counter-coriolis effect: Contemporary literary journalism in a shrinking world, Bak, John and Reynolds, Bill (eds) *Literary journalism across the globe*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press

Abu-Jabar, Diana (2005) *The language of Baklava*, New York: Pantheon

Aboul-Ela, Hosam (2010) What is distinctive about Arab-American writing today, Huffington Post, 29 September. Available online at <http://www.allword-news.co.uk/tag/arab-american-literature>, accessed on 15 January 2011

Arana, R Victoria (2007) *Companion to world poetry, 1900 to the Present*, New York: Facts on File

Al-Aswany, Alaa (2004) *The Yacoubian building: A novel*, Cairo: the American University in Cairo Press

Baker, Peter (2011) The return of pushing democracy, *New York Times*, 12 February 2011. Available online at [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/weekinreview/13baker.html?_r=1&sq=press freedom in the egypt&st=cse&scp=3&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/weekinreview/13baker.html?_r=1&sq=press%20freedom%20in%20the%20egypt&st=cse&scp=3&pagewanted=all), accessed on 14 February 2011

Bayoumi, Moustafa (2008) *How does it feel to be a problem?: Being young and Arab in America*, New York: Penguin Press

Emirates Center for Strategic Studies (2006) *Arab media in the Information Age (2006)* Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research. Available online at

http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20070520174458_AMS2_BR_Sune_Haugbolle.pdf, accessed on 25 February 2011

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Buchan, James (2007) A street in the sky, *Guardian*, 17 February. Available online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/feb/17/fiction.featuresreviews>, accessed on 1 February 2011

Connery, Thomas S. (ed.) (1992) *A sourcebook of American literary journalism: A guide to an emerging genre*, Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press

El-Saadawi, Nawal (1985) *The hidden face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*, trans. Hetata, Sherif, London: Zed Books

El-Saadawi, Nawal (2010a) interview by authors, 13 August 2010, tape recording

El-Saadawi, Nawal (2010b) personal communication with the authors via email, 10 August 2010

Hartsock, John C. (2000) *A history of American literary journalism: The emergence of a modern narrative form*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press

Hudson, Michael C. (2005) Uncovered: Arab journalists scrutinize their profession. Occasional Paper from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Washington: Georgetown University Press

Ibrahim, Yousef M. (1997) Al-Hayat: A journalistic Noah's ark, *New York Times*, 15 January. Available online at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9801E0D61138F936A25752C0A961958260>, accessed on 14 December 2010

Jayyusi, Salma Khadra (ed.) (1992) *Anthology of modern Palestinian literature*, New York, Columbia University Press

Jayyusi, Salma Khadra (1977) *Trends and movements in modern Arabic Poetry*, Lieden: Brill

Keeble, Richard and Wheeler, Sharon (eds) (2007) *The journalistic imagination: Literary journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Kendall, Elisabeth (1997) The marginal voice: journals and the avant-garde, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 pp 216-238

Kendall, Elisabeth (2006) *Literature, journalism and the avant-garde: Intersection in Egypt*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Kumaraswamy, P. R. (2006) Who am I?: The identity crisis in the Middle East, *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 10, No.1 pp 63-73. Available online at <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue1/Kumaraswamy.pdf>, accessed on 25 February 2011

Lalami, Laila (2005) *Hope and other dangerous pursuits*, Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books

Lalami, Liala (2009) *Secret sons*, Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books

Malek, Alia (2009) *A country called Amreeka: Arab roots, American stories*, New York: Free Press

Mellor, Noha (2005) *The making of Arab news*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers

Mellor, Noha (2007) *Modern Arab journalism: Problems and prospects*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Mellor, Noha (2008) Arab journalists as cultural intermediaries, *International Journal of Press/Politics* Vol. 13, No. 5 pp 465-483. Available online at <http://hij.sagepub.com/content/13/4/465.full.pdf>, accessed on 25 February 2011

Mellor, Noha (2009) Strategies for autonomy: Arab journalists reflecting on their roles, *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 pp 307-321

Mellor, Noha (2010) Arab Journalism as an academic discipline. Paper from Information Evolution in the Arab World Symposium, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Washington: Georgetown University. Available online at: <http://explore.georgetown.edu/news/?ID=50587>, accessed on 12 December 2010

Mersey, Rachel Davis (2010) *Can journalism be Saved?: Rediscovering America's appetite for news*, New York: Praeger

Nematt, Salameh (2005) Uncovered: Arab journalists scrutinize their profession. Occasional Paper from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Washington: Georgetown University

Pintak, Lawrence (2009) Border guards of the "imagined" *watan*: Arab journalists and the new Arab consciousness, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 2 pp 191-212

Pintak, Lawrence (2011a) Interview with authors, 15 January 2011, tape recording

Pintak, Lawrence (2011b) *The new Arab journalist: Mission and identity in a time of turmoil*, New York: Macmillan Library of Modern Middle East Studies

Pintak, Lawrence and Ginges Jeremy (2008) The mission of Arab journalism: Creating change in a time of turmoil, *International Journal of Press/Politics* Vol. 13, No. 3 pp 193-227

Ramaprasad, Jyotika and Hamdy, Naila Nabil (2006) Function of Egyptian journalists: Perceived importance and actual performance, *International Communication Gazette*, Vol. 68, No. 2 pp178-179

Reporters Without Borders (2010) *Press Freedom Index*. Available online at <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html>, accessed on 10 February 2011

Said, Edward (1978) *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books

Said, Edward (2000) *Reflections on exile: And other literary and cultural essays*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press

Sharma, Kalpana (2001) Egypt's face of courage, *Hindu*, 3 June 2001. Available online at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/06/03/stories/13030786.htm>, accessed on 14 December 2010

Siegel, Robert (2005) Yacoubian building houses uncomfortable truths, *NPR*, 22 February. Available online at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4508427>, accessed on 1 February 2011

Sims, Norman H. (2008) *True stories: A century of literary journalism*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press

Weinberg, Jon (2008) Bound and gagged: Silent censorship in the Arab press, *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 pp 12-13

Wood, James (2009) Love, Iranian style, *New Yorker*, 29 June. Available online at http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/06/29/090629crbo_books_wood, accessed on 1 February 2011

Zimmer, Ben (2011) How the war of words was won in Cairo, *New York Times*, 12 February, Week in Review, p. 4