RESEARCH ARTICLE	Arabic Writing Between the Labyrinth of Meaning and the Divergence of Concept
Yamina Bensouiki	Dr.
	Faculty of Literatures and Languages, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, University of Larbi Ben M'hidi
	Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria
	Email: yamina.bensouiki@univ-oeb.dz
	Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9729-8023
Doi Serial	https://doi.org/10.56334/sei/8.6.04
Keywords	Writing, Arabic Language, Meta-Criticism, Paper-Based Writing, Electronic Writing.

Abstract

The topic of writing is an engaging one to read about, especially when addressed at the level of meta-criticism, where we explore the views of a group of scholars on the subject, discuss their ideas, and compare them with one another to ultimately gather a considerable amount of knowledge. It is no longer hidden from today's Arab reader that the complexities of writing have expanded due to the diversity of its forms creative, critical, political, and religious. On one hand, some writers still prefer paper-based writing; while on the other hand, others view electronic writing as a refuge that enables rapid dissemination and fame.

Citation

Bensouiki Y. (2025). Arabic Writing Between the Labyrinth of Meaning and the Divergence of Concept. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(6), 50-56; doi:10.56352/sei/8.6.04. https://imcra-az.org/archive/364-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-6-volviii-2025.html

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Received: 11.01.2025 | Accepted: 27.04.2025 | Published: 15.05.2025 (available online)

Introduction

Talking about the topic of writing is as complex as the significance carried by this term, especially in our modern era with the emergence of numerous theories, methods, translations, and the division of writers and intellectuals into factions based on beliefs, convictions, and motivations for writing. The term now raises many questions: What does writing mean as a cultural act for its practitioners? Why has its concept diversified? And why do we write? Do we write to heal our wounds, as Ahlam Mosteghanemi once expressed in her writing?

This article seeks to speak about the "writing of writing" "a shift in understanding and in thinking, in the ways of posing questions and formulating answers. It is also a shift in approaching the read text, which has in turn

moved from the authority of the 'full signifier' as termed by Barthes, to the 'nebular signifier' that is, from the closed and absolute to the open and relative."

1. The Topic of Writing and the Divergence of Concept:

In talking about the significance of writing, Mohamed Al-Abbas answers us with a simple yet profound definition: "To write means to exist and to express ourselves." There is no human existence without writing, and the writer, through practicing the act of writing, expresses himself and creates his identity; for he expresses his thoughts if he is a critic or an opinion holder, and expresses his emotions and feelings through poetry or narrative if he is a creative writer.

Writing is a mold that defines the characteristics of its owner, which the reader can discover after the first (the writer) finishes the act of writing and the second (the receiver) begins the act of reading. The writer does not write for himself but for a reader to inform him about something, whether at the level of creativity or thought.

In an interview conducted by Barksam Ramadan with the writer May Telmissany, asking her what writing means to her, she answered with strong certainty and no hesitation, saying: "...Writing, for me, is a purely existential moment, in which a person stands before himself, rediscovers himself, delves deeply into himself. So, it is a very intimate moment with the self. This space is what makes me resort to writing: I withdraw into myself and search within it and examine its folds. When I do not write, I get depressed and spin in pointless whirlpools. In it and through it I express myself to reach others!" ³

Resorting to writing is a chance for reconciliation with the self and its discovery, as May Telmissany expressed. It is a very intimate moment with the self; it makes it balanced with its surroundings so that it does not fall into depression, because through it, it reaches the selves of others, communicates with them, expresses its thoughts and theirs, and accepts their criticisms so that the cycle of practice and renewal continues each time at the level of styles, topics, and ideas.

Jamal Foughali stated: "...Writing is an act of faith, and it is, to a great extent, an expensive faith... Even if what we believe in and write about is a stone or a crocodile sliding on the surface of a cloud or the mouth of a volcano. To write means to shape human faith into words, and thus our minds and souls starve from the burning of this fierce faith that offers us nothing of the gifts of beauty but smoke and embers and the torment of minds and consciences." ⁴

The idea of believing in what we write forms a strong motive for writing for many writers, as it is not logical for a person to write about ideas he does not believe in. And what one writer believes in, another may not believe in. Therefore, writing varies from poetry, narrative, essay, letter, speech, report... and each writer retains stylistic characteristics that distinguish him from others, stemming from what he believes in.

Writing is a subject each sees from a different angle. Here is Mohamed Bennis telling us: "There is an aspect of adventure in writing. When we encounter writing, when we dare to use a word used by others, we are astonished... I feel that the time left for

me before I die is very long because there are dangerous shifts in the world. That is my feeling. Therefore, I try to protect myself in multiple ways: first, I have no relationships except with writing and reading," ⁵

As if Mohamed Bennis protects himself from this world through reading and writing. And despite his experience in this field he is a critic and a poet he is still astonished at using words used by others; for a person is affected by his environment without realizing it. He still feels that writing carries the nature of adventure and sometimes needs courage to practice it.

As for Kilito, he sees that "the desire to write comes from the pleasure derived from reading." The relationship between reading and writing remains one of those relationships that is hard to explain, if not impossible. The well-known French proverb confirms that, as it says: "To be a good writer, you must read."

This is almost what we find in our Arab heritage; in the story of the boy who said to a well-known poet: I want to be a poet. He said to him: Go and memorize one hundred lines of what the Arabs have said. When he returned after a while and told him he had memorized them but could not compose poetry, he said to him: Go and forget what you memorized.

Of course, in the past, (listening, memorization, and recitation) were faculties that distinguished the Arab from other peoples. But in our current era, the trio has shrunk to only two: (reading and writing); so whoever wants to be a distinguished writer in a particular field must regularly read in that field, so that his ideas and styles are constantly renewed, and he does not repeat himself, as we notice now with some writers, where we read multiple texts from them but feel that we have read only one text.

That is why the writer Miral Al-Tahawy, when interviewed by Barksam Ramadan about writing, said: "And I also aspire through writing to change everything I have discovered!"

To change what we discover through writing is a way by which we renew its mechanisms; so the writer avoids repetition and tries what he has not previously tried from the conventions of writing and the secrets of its laws.

2. Writing Between Achieving Uniqueness and the Democracy of the Act:

Although writing is a linguistic system with its own syntactic, morphological, and grammatical rules, it is at the

same time an individual act linked to the personal ability of the writer to compose words, construct sentences, and shape meanings... etc. Therefore, some have considered writing about the self "a democratic luxury that any person can engage in, recalling events from their personal life. Publishing houses contribute to the democratization of this genre by publishing works of people who have lived exciting and attractive experiences, without being concerned about the artistic value of their works as much as they rely mainly on the uniqueness of their events and their exceptional nature." ⁸

Writing about the self is a type of writing that achieves uniqueness for its author; because what a writer male or female has lived through in terms of conditions, experiences, and milestones is certainly different from what another writer has lived. The uniqueness of events results in the uniqueness of writing, which makes publishers rush to focus on works they believe to be unique in order to achieve precedence and quick profit from their sales.

If we search in our Arab heritage for uniqueness in writing, we find the Sufi master Ibn Arabi achieving such uniqueness in a remarkable way unmatched in Arab history. "The writing of existence with Ibn Arabi intersects with Qur'anic writing, which enables him to see each in the light of the other. Sufi writing stands opposite these two and weaves complex connections with them. This opposition between divine sacred writing and human writing is almost universal; it has appeared in various cultures and is a mine of endless questions concerning the concept of writing and the relationship between the divine and the human."

Writing for Ibn Arabi represents a foundation derived from his epistemological and linguistic background and his personal experience, which made it an existential writing that intersects with Qur'anic writing due to the Muslim writer's contact with his holy divine book. Every writer intertextually connects with it and is influenced by it in his own way, for it is a divine text that cannot be bypassed no matter how linguistically skilled the writer may be. In addition to existential and Qur'anic writing, there is the Sufi writing specific to the sheikh; it is a form of writing that sets itself in direct opposition between the divine sacred writing and the human writing, and from this emerges endless questions about the relationship between the divine and the human, as Khaled Belkacem puts it.

Our discussion of achieving uniqueness in writing leads us to the topic of women's writing, which was at the beginning "reserved and shy, limited only to social shocks (illness, divorce, disability, the death of a family member) that women experienced and which prompted them to write in order to express their negative impacts on their psyche, body, and social status. But as the democratic margin expanded and the professional performance of journalists improved, women began writing about the self to express the various forms of torture and repression they endured in the pursuit of a just society."¹⁰

Women's writings in various fields have been marked by great awareness; the female writer began to prioritize public interest over personal interest, which is referred to in feminist criticism as the state of "subjectivation" the woman's feeling that anything affecting humanity is her right to speak about and struggle to establish if it is good, and to remove if it is bad. The woman's attainment of this state of subjectivation refutes a false claim often read among some non-objective scholars who accuse women of being able to write only about themselves, and of mastering only autobiographical literature.

It is enough to mention here female writers who reached global recognition with their writings, not for any reason other than their excellence in this field, such as: Agatha Christie, Ahlam Mosteghanemi, Khalida Said, Yumna Al-Eid... and the list is long; we cannot mention all creative women since we are not conducting a statistical survey.

And it is not only women's writing that seeks to achieve self-realization and excellence in addressing issues and ideas with attractive, modern styles that ensure continuity and maintain constant readability, but there is also another type of writing: autobiographical writing.

"And the motives for writing autobiographies are generally many and varied, and often come intertwined. Among the most prominent of these motives: enlightenment, apology, justification, pursuit of fame, purification, the desire to teach others, the pleasure of recalling the past, and the attempt to give meaning to the life the writer has lived... etc." "

We can say that autobiographical literature is driven by a desire to convey personal experiences to others, because a person may live the same conditions as someone else and may face the same obstacles, and it is appropriate for him to learn from others' experiences in order to avoid the same mistakes and try to live a better life than those who preceded him. It is a form of literature that is characterized by a more human nature than other types of literature.

As we talk about types of writing, we must not forget critical writing the core of our specialization because it is "a form of writing that has become more than ever the unknown element that demands confrontation and revelation. It is therefore about 'settling' within the literary work, and extracting the structure that forms the framework of literary writing. We start from the idea that writing and its methods themselves constitute a 'set of attitudes' (Ensemble d'attitudes) that can be analyzed on different levels..."

3. Arabic Writing and the Struggle Between Rejection and Acceptance:

Writing is an existential act that explores "the problem of the continuity of expression and its life." This is how Yumna Al-Eid viewed the effectiveness of writing in human life it is what grants life and continuity to the faculty of expression, which distinguishes humans from other creatures. Writing may even create its own life through incitement, which "incites the self against the other and, at the same time, incites the other against the self. Rightly did the Arabs say: 'He who authors is targeted'... Writing is a counteraction through its pursuit of surpassing all others and attempting to negate them through its difference from and superiority over them."

It is no surprise that Al-Ghadhami points to the notions of incitement and opposition in his discussion of writing. If the writer is not incited by ideas, they will not proceed to practice the act of writing. These ideas may arise through their reading that is, certain writers have provoked them to respond to their positions. Inspiration may also come from the surrounding environment and current events. As for the idea of opposition, the writer, in writing, seeks for their writing to stand out from that of others to differ and surpass it so as not to appear similar or merely echo what others have said.

It is a struggle that has marked writing since the dawn of history, where "the act of writing was a struggle because it was a search for a free dwelling, and it was a dwelling on the edge of danger in screaming and silence, in violence and groaning, in fragmentation and reconciliation..." ¹⁵ Mohamed Bennis surpasses Al-Ghadhami in expressing the obstacles of writing, considering it a residence on the edge of danger, where violence in all its forms shapes a struggle in the search for a free space

free of any constraints that interfere with or hinder the act of writing.

It seems that every type of writing has its pitfalls that push writers to confront and overcome them not only in the Arab world but also in the Western world. Arabic writing may face rejection by writers educated in Western culture; "that is, they undermine Arabic writing and lead their readers to believe that other writings are free of flaws and pitfalls, while in reality, as found in actual writings in other languages, those claims are false, and many flaws exist in world languages, from which Arabic is largely free." ¹⁶

When we read such false claims directed at Arabic writing, I believe we must remember one thing that refutes them: the Creator, Glorified and Exalted be He, chose the Arabic language to be the language of His final revealed Book. If it had real deficiencies, the Almighty could have invented a new language suitable for His last divine revelation and would not have chosen Arabic. Those standing against the Arabic language "have tried to convince Arabs that these flaws are fatal, that they ruin education and comprehension, and that Arabic writing has become one of the worst in the world if not the worst."

This is an attempt to delude Arabs into believing their language is weak and the reason for their backwardness, and that they cannot build a civilization with it. Their evidence: Kemal Atatürk's replacement of the Arabic script with Latin letters in the Turkish language as if Turkey was backward when it used Arabic script and became developed after switching to a foreign script.

Defenders of Arabic writing, "those who hold on to it, have offered sound and reasonable responses. On the aesthetic side, for example, to the best of my knowledge, there is no writing system with aesthetic capacities comparable to or approaching Arabic writing, and the art of Arabic calligraphy proves this." ¹⁸

Thus, it is the right of those defending Arabic writing to feel that a conspiracy is being woven against them on a scientific, intellectual, and cultural level and that it is their duty to defend their language as a symbol of identity. There is no room for doubting or destroying it. We do not need to look far to see this; it is enough to reflect on our Algerian society, especially in the post-colonial period, when the Francophone intellectual class began preferring to speak in a foreign language rather than Arabic. We have also recently seen certain conspirators who publicly call for replacing Classical Arabic with dialects, claiming that Arabic is difficult due

to its grammar and that dialects are easier. They overlook the vastness of a country like Algeria, described as a continent, with its many regional dialects. How can we unify educational curricula within one country if every region teaches in a different dialect? This is one side of the issue.

On the other hand, every language in the world according to what I know has a formal language and local dialects specific to each region. However, educational curricula are always taught in the formal language, and local dialects or colloquial languages are never taken into account.

In my humble personal opinion, Classical or formal Arabic cannot be the reason for the backwardness of any Arab country. Rather, backwardness stems from numerous other economic and political causes. As proof: Japan's language is unique to the Japanese people, not widespread globally, yet the country is among the most advanced in the world.

Writing requires "a kind of continuous boldness in testing predicaments and in overcoming their bottlenecks. In our view, this cannot happen without a theoretical awareness..." that makes its possessor return to
heritage and review the glories recorded by creators,
thinkers, philosophers, writers, and scholars across the
fields of writing. This leads its possessor to acquire a
genuine epistemological background that strengthens
his confidence in his language, religion, and identity,
making him immune to the schemes of others against
him because he knows his roots well, like a towering
tree with deep roots in the earth, unshaken by the
winds no matter how they blow in different directions.

4. Electronic Writing and the Virtual Reader:

Talking about the subject of writing inevitably leads us to discuss electronic writing, which represents the latest stage reached by contemporary writing. From orality to paper-based writing to electronic writing, it has been a long and arduous historical journey that writing has undertaken.

Regarding electronic writing, Mahmoud Khalif Al-Hayyani says: "The idea of deconstruction, destruction, and erasure which undermines the authority and readability of writing on the computer screen marks the birth of nothingness through the emergence of the electronic text, which goes beyond the mental and linguistic center to embody erasure as a new stage that reflects the triviality, illegitimacy, and irrationality of existence, as it has turned into a click or the employment of a virus that ends the autonomy of the text and brings a state of anxiety, confusion, loss, and inability to act..."²⁰

Man has long believed that by reaching the stage of technology, computers, and the blue cyberspace, he has achieved significant progress and convenience; many tasks that once required going to administrations and service offices... are now completed with a click on a computer, by using a specific program or accessing a certain link or website... But as for electronic writing, it has become subject to erasure, deconstruction, and destruction, and the text barely settles into a fixed state in various fields. Upon reaching this stage, it is as though man is living a state of nihilism to create an electronic text that surpasses language, reason, and the body especially since a single mistaken click can cause the device and the text to be destroyed by a virus, thus ending the creativity or research and the anxiety that had originally driven the author to write. In this way, the person moves from a state of loss which had driven them to write into another kind of loss in search of their missing text.

From this, it can be said: "The language of postlanguage took form within the surrealist and Dadaist dimension through the fragmentation of words and the focus on the role of the sound/letter in shaping a visual and kinetic space. It has turned into a philosophical dimension or a structure of questions that sought to reveal the truths of things and the inner depths of the human soul. This transformed into a scientific dimension that embodies space and objective realities that have objectified the human and distanced him from his humanity." ²¹

The language of post-language is electronic writing that has surpassed paper-based writing. It has become Dadaist in nature because it has surpassed the conventional paper format, and surrealist because it lacks system and logic. It is a form of writing that is subject to destruction and deconstruction at the will of its creator. It does not remain in a fixed state, and its presence in the blue cyberspace has also given it a philosophical dimension meaning, its author is constantly immersed in the act of posing questions.

With the advent of digitalization, the writer has come to believe that if they do not leave a trace in this fantastical virtual blue space, their writing will not be characterized by objectivity and scientific merit, nor will it live long among readers. Their reliance on the machine has caused them to objectify themselves and move away from the emotions they once felt when presenting a handwritten or printed text to their reader waiting eagerly for the reader's interaction with their writings, so they could revise, modify, add, delete, and refine their thoughts and styles to suit the audience's level of appreciation. The use of the machine in the act of writing has made the human being interact with it and drift away from the humanity that once distinguished them before the post-language era.

CONCLUSION:

As we reach the end of this study, it may be appropriate to conclude it with a reference to the novelist *Ahlam Mosteghanemi*; for we do not write merely to heal our

wounds. We write to connect with others by expressing our thoughts and emotions. We write to represent our identity and defend our beliefs. We write to contribute to the legacy of future generations. We write to mark our presence in the world of writing, whether that be on paper or in this blue virtual space that now brings us together.

The divergence among scholars regarding the perception of writing and its purpose is something inevitable, due to the diversity of writers, their backgrounds, and their environments. What matters is not so much to agree on a single concept or goal, but rather to read one another and accept our differences, which have resulted in richness and accumulation across various forms of writing.

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