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The Revitalisation of the *Aragoz* Puppet in Egypt: Some Reflections

This article is intended to shed light on the process of revitalisation of the *Aragoz* puppet in Egypt. Through ethnography and in-depth interviews with a sample of *Aragoz* puppeteers, the study argues that in their attempt to revitalise the puppet, after several years of desertion, contemporary puppeteers have developed an approach based on (1) modifying some of the basic physical characteristics of the puppet using imported plastic dolls rather than the traditional hand-made wooden puppet of *Aragoz*, and (2) adjusting some of *Aragoz*'s theatrical sketches and narratives to be presented to the public in a contemporary style. Despite the disparities, puppeteers emphasise that these modifications are necessary for the revival of the *Aragoz* puppet in Egypt. *Nashaat Hussein* is Assistant Professor of Sociology of Childhood at the Misr International University in Cairo. He has published extensively in *Cairo Papers in Social Sciences* of the American University in Cairo, the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, and the *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. He is interested in studying the impact of popular culture on children's cognitive learning.

Key words: puppetry; revitalisation; popular culture; *Aragoz*; cultural reproduction

Puppetry, as a form of expressive culture, is an extremely energetic, rich, and complex form of popular culture. It involves both social and individual creativity and expression. Although puppets may have similar shapes and textures, "each culture had a distinct puppet form and style that was maintained in a continuing tradition,"¹ which seemingly reflected the socio-economic, cultural, and historical forces of a society and the construction and enforcement of its social structures. The Ottomans first introduced *Aragoz*, also *Karagoz*, to Egypt.² The appreciation by Egyptians of the idea of puppetry and

portable theatrical performance turned *Aragoz* into a significant character in Egyptian folklore and popular culture. Gradually, the puppet became a main source of entertainment for the amusement of both children and adults. *Aragoz* is a small wooden glove-puppet of a man with a funny cone-shaped hat and shiny clothes. It appears on a small wooden stage especially designed by puppeteers. Historically, the plots and sketches of *Aragoz* criticised one or more aspects of the lifestyles of some debauched Egyptian and foreign characters, such as those who used excessive power against the underprivileged in society, or those whose personalities were marked by laziness, brutality, and egoism.

Nevertheless, the puppet became less popular in Egypt between the 1970s and 1990s due to a sharp decline in the number of skilled and experienced puppeteers,³ and because of the spread of competing TV programs, satellite channels, and other means of entertainment that targeted and attracted children. Currently, many Egyptian entertainers are attempting to revitalise *Aragoz*. Yet, instead of adhering to the physical features, sketches, and language of the traditional *Aragoz* form, they have started to refurbish the puppet and its moral messages to conform to those of contemporary society. This discourse raises a serious concern as to whether the revitalisation of historical products of visual cultural heritage should replicate the forms of the past or whether those products may undergo transformations in form and style to correspond with the tastes and values of contemporary society.

This study contributes to the history of the *Aragoz* theatre by examining the practices currently employed by puppeteers to revitalise the historical *Aragoz* puppet in Egypt. Through ethnography and in-depth interviews with a sample of *Aragoz* puppeteers, the study argues that in their attempt to bring the puppet back to life after several years of desertion, contemporary puppeteers have employed a strategy based on (1) modifying some of the puppet's basic physical characteristics, principally through their massive reliance on imported plastic dolls rather than the traditionally hand-made wooden puppet of *Aragoz*, and (2) adjusting some of the traditional sketches and narratives to suit a more contemporary audience. Despite the disparities, most of the puppeteers interviewed emphasise that those modifications are necessary for the revival of the puppet in Egypt.

Method

Through in-depth interviews with a sample of twenty puppeteers who perform both *Aragoz* and other entertainment shows in Cairo, I was able to explore the performance techniques they currently utilise to re-introduce the *Aragoz* theatre to the public. Sample recruitment was based on employing the "network sampling technique," in which I started with one puppeteer, and through his networks of relationships I was introduced to others. Interviews covered various themes related to the puppeteers' familiarity with the history of *Aragoz*, the thematic modifications they added to the shows, the nature of *Aragoz's* character, and the reasons for the declining popularity of the puppet in

Egypt. Other techniques of data collection included attending shows and recording and documenting several *Aragoz* sketches.

The puppeteers interviewed ranged in age from 21 to 32 years (median age 24.2). Less than half of the sample finished their college education while the remainder did not pass their secondary education. All of the puppeteers interviewed were male, which is perhaps a main reason for the male-dominance that is evident in all of the *Aragoz* sketches. Although they did not specifically confirm that a puppeteer should be male, the puppeteers interviewed referred to the hard physical requirements of the job and constant mobility that could not be undertaken by a woman. Illustrative quotes will be used in the article whenever needed to reflect the respondents' viewpoints on questions related to the nature of *Aragoz* and the basic features of his character. Quotations, however, have been translated and edited to suit the nature of the research.

Brief History

The history of the *Aragoz* puppet in Egypt reflects a prolonged process of adaptation, appropriation, and struggle. Many scholars argue that the contemporary Egyptian *Aragoz* is the same Turkish *Karagoz* that was first introduced to Egypt with Sultan Selim I, the conqueror of Egypt, and of the Mamlukes, who ruled Egypt in 1517.⁴ As the original story shows, "Selim was so amused by an Egyptian shadow-play depicting the hanging of the last Mamluke Sultan, and sent the performers to Istanbul so that his son could also enjoy the show."⁵ The support from Sultan Selim I motivated Egyptian entertainers to spread the practice, and Egyptian shadow-play (*Khayal El-Zhell*) began to be diffused among other Middle Eastern countries that fell under the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Nevertheless, interaction with Turkish entertainers helped the spread of *Aragoz* shadow-play to Egyptian society.

During the Ottoman reign, the Egyptian shadow-play, which preceded the theatre of *Aragoz*, received a new direction from Turkish *Karagoz*. According to Viola Shafik, "*Karagoz*, which in Turkish literary means "black eye," presumably comes from the Arabic *Qaraqush*, the name of a dreaded comrade-in-arms of Saladin."⁷ No one recorded exactly what early *Karagoz* figures looked like when they first came to Egypt. However, there is a rich source of reference in the Ottoman miniatures of the 16th to 18th centuries which depict "jesters and grotesque dancers whose costumes and characteristic postures conform to the style of *Karagoz* figures."⁸

Performers from the Ottoman Empire designed shadow puppets in order to elude the Islamic instruction that no artistic representation of humans should be made since it is believed that Allah is the only creator: hence shadow puppets that represented the human being merely as a shadow. Apparently, "this form enjoyed a certain freedom from the normal social constraints on behaviour,"⁹ since it corresponded to Islamic values and to the *Sharia* laws.

When shadow puppetry first came to Egypt, however, Egyptian entertainers modified the shadow characters as well as the nature of the show, and “there were visible featured puppets, not shadows projected on a screen.”¹⁰ As explained by most of the puppeteers interviewed for this study, the Turkish term *Karagoz* was also replaced with the colloquial Egyptian slang *Aragoz* and gradually *Aragoz* shows became a matter of daily occurrence in the streets and alleys of Cairo and other major cities and villages. Gaining a celebrity among Egyptians, “*Aragoz* shows were concentrated and mounted on a larger scale during Muslim holidays and other public festivities,”¹¹ thus affirming the way Egyptians admired the art of puppetry and considered it a new form of art that was at odds with neither the Islamic doctrine nor with their popular culture.¹²

The depiction of *Aragoz* as a valiant and sarcastic character who defied oppression created a socially-mediated sense of admiration and sympathy with the puppet among Egyptians. Consequently, Egyptian puppeteers used *Aragoz* as a means of expressing their criticism of certain duplicitous characters in society or types of social misconduct and as a device for “criticism of their rulers in veiled jokes and subtle witticism.”¹³ During the Ottoman reign, *Karagoz* shadow-play performed similar roles in Turkish society where “*Karagoz* and *Karagiozis* shows provided an outlet for the peasant population to define themselves and to criticise the higher classes.”¹⁴ Likewise, Egyptian puppeteers used the glove-puppet of *Aragoz* as a social mechanism to express their opinions, to resist occupation, and to criticise wealthy Egyptians and their deplorable habits.



Figure 1 Traditional *Aragoz* depicted in the film “Every Beat of my Heart” (*Kol daka fi kalbi*), dir. Ahmed Diaa Eddin (Mohamed Fawzy Films, 1959).

Manufacturing wooden *Aragoz* puppets became a craft for many Egyptian entertainers who also designed a portable wooden stage (a rectangular box with curtains in the front) to perform their *Aragoz* shows. [Fig. 1] Carrying the wooden stages on their back and travelling with them from one area or city to

another, early Egyptian puppeteers diffused *Aragoz* shows throughout the country. All of the puppeteers interviewed asserted that street *Aragoz* theatre was set in any location: on pavements, main roads, cafes, and many other social settings where children and adults used to congregate. In time, it became a principal source of amusement for children and their families and *Aragoz* street shows were propagated on a large scale between the 1920s and the 1970s.

The gradual decline of *Aragoz* shows in Egypt paralleled a global decline in the popularity of puppetry, mainly due to the prevalence of TV and cinema and other modern entertainment and communication forms.¹⁵ Moreover, most skilled puppeteers either died or had become very old, a situation that threatened the handicraft of wooden puppet making in Egypt and thus the existence of *Aragoz* puppetry altogether.¹⁶

In the early 1990s, however, a new fad appeared among wealthy Egyptian families which eventually resulted in an effortless revitalisation of the puppet. Entertainment shows that celebrated children's special occasions such as birthdays became a new fashion among most upper-middle and upper-class families. The idea of organising entertainment parties to attract and amuse children was also diffused to many Western fast-food restaurants, schools, and hotels, both in Cairo and in other governorates. Party organisers recognised that in addition to the shows they presented, there was an opportunity to revitalise the character of *Aragoz* and to adapt the traditional sketches. Although the term "revitalisation" is often associated with deliberate, organised, and conscious efforts to construct a culture, or to retain a missing element of culture, the case with the revitalisation of *Aragoz* was spontaneous, as a respondent explains:

Aragoz is a unique character in itself. It makes children laugh. The other characters we presented were meant to amuse children through music and dancing. But, *Aragoz* shows are different since they depend on the plots we create and on the intensity of interaction with children.¹⁷

Basic Characteristics of Traditional Aragoz

Understanding that some individual puppets have inherent symbolic attributes,¹⁸ Egyptian entertainers portrayed and presented the character of *Aragoz* as a clever and witty masculine figure. Being the protagonist of his stage, *Aragoz* won his battles by tricking his antagonists, mostly characters that were popularly detested like tyrant village mayors, greedy policemen, etc. This attribute created a heroic figure Egyptians admired and supported for years. A renowned typical sketch that revealed *Aragoz's* character was presented in 1961 through Operetta *Al-Laila El-Kebera* (the Great Saint's Night Operetta). *Aragoz* appeared in his wooden stage making fun of a village mayor who lost his way in Cairo and wanted to go to the area of *al-Metwaly* located in old Cairo.¹⁹ The following conversation took place in the form of a song:

Mayor: Dear Aragoz, can you help me?
 Aragoz: Sure. What do you want Mayor?
 Mayor: How can I go to al-Metwaly?
 Aragoz: Praise the Prophet Mohamed.
 Mayor: I do.
 Aragoz: Go straight ahead until you see a multi-story building.
 Mayor: (Repeats). Until I see a multi-story building.
 Aragoz: You will come across a man who sells beans. His shop is near an alley.
 Mayor: (Repeats). His shop is near an alley.
 Aragoz: Go to the right and to the left for two streets. Then, turn at the third.
 Mayor: (Repeats). For two streets, then turn at the third.
 Aragoz: Keep on the right side of the road. Walk straight with arrogance.
 Mayor: (Repeats). Walk straight with arrogance.
 Aragoz: Keep on walking, turning, and entering from where you exited.
 Mayor: (Repeats). Entering from where I exited.
 Aragoz: When you reach a Peanut Shop.
 Mayor: (Repeats). When I reach a Peanut Shop?
 Aragoz: You would understand that you have lost your way.
 Mayor: These are easy and excellent instructions.
 Aragoz: Yes, they are. Goodbye. Goodbye, Mayor with a twisted turban.

Traditionally, *Aragoz* was never depicted as a ‘child’ but had always been presented as a ‘married man with a wife,’ [Fig. 2] who appeared with him on the stage in most of his sketches. In Zakaria Ghazaly’s novel *Aragoz and his Five Children*,²⁰ *Aragoz* appeared on the stage as a father of five children. These basic characteristics of age and personality traits have confined puppeteers to a specific socio-cultural context they could neither evade nor manipulate. For example, when I asked the puppeteers to identify the real age of *Aragoz*, to my surprise, there was no specific answer. One of the puppeteers even stated:

Aragoz is neither a child nor an old man. He is simply a married man. We always try to make sure that *Aragoz* appears as an adult. I don’t know exactly how old *Aragoz* is, but the tricks and jokes he makes are not like those of young children.²¹

In order to depict signs of manhood and emphasise masculinity on the puppet’s static facial expression, all of the puppeteers interviewed argued that they put a moustache on the puppet’s face. From their perspective, placing (or drawing) a moustache on *Aragoz*’s face was essential for two reasons: first, to emulate early *Aragoz*; and second, because they believe that moustaches still play a main role in emphasising manhood in the Egyptian society, especially in rural areas.²² Such ideas correspond to what the historian Edward William Lane stated in his “*Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*” when he referred to the social significance of moustaches to typical male Muslims during the Ottoman period (or to the time when the character of *Aragoz* was first introduced to

Egypt).²³ Other researchers also emphasise that during the Ottoman period, “the beard or moustache was a symbol of male honour, something one swore by or insulted.”²⁴ One of the puppeteers interviewed referred to that point by saying:

I believe that the earliest *Aragoz* had a moustache. We grew up watching *Aragoz* with a moustache. I put the moustache on the puppet’s face for two reasons: to imitate *Aragoz* as it has always been depicted, and because a similar puppet without a moustache would appear like a child or a female.²⁵



Figure 2. *Aragoz* punishes his wife with a stick from the film “Every Beat of my Heart” (1959)

Traditional *Aragoz* used to speak in a distinctive masculine voice. Imitating *Aragoz*’s voice was a main skill of traditional puppeteers, since *Aragoz* typically speaks in a distinctive voice that has been preserved over years of practice. Puppeteers do not speak in their normal voices when depicting *Aragoz* but try to imitate the traditional voice of the puppet by placing a voice modifier, composed of two pieces of copper (now usually plastic) above their tongues.

Producing the voices of several male and female characters requires great skill. A puppeteer needs to be acquainted with different accents and slang languages spoken in their society. The puppeteer is thus capable of imitating “the sociolinguistic repertoire of an entire society, community, or region, and even beyond.”²⁶ One of the puppeteers interviewed referred to his experience of imitating *Aragoz*’s voice as follows:

We grew up knowing that *Aragoz* has a wife. So, we always try to imitate a man’s voice. Although *Aragoz* speaks in a distinct tone, it is still a man’s voice. Some puppeteers cannot imitate *Aragoz*’s voice today because they

don't have the talent. So, they use audio-cassettes with old records of popular *Aragoz* sketches (like the Great Saint's Night Operetta), and simply move the puppets on the stage for the audience.²⁷

Being a form of visual art that reproduced Egyptian popular culture for years, early puppeteers had to abide by the norms and dominant cultural practices of the mainstream culture, especially with regard to the way masculinity was constructed and enforced. For example, until the mid-1970s, *Aragoz* puppeteers repeatedly emphasised a social and psychological distance between male and female characters, proclaimed male dominance, and perpetuated a distinctive gender hierarchy that bestowed marginal roles for females. All of the puppeteers interviewed asserted that the use of physical force was one of the main attributes of manhood, and accordingly of *Aragoz*.²⁸ Historians claim that *Aragoz* "usually resorted to beating as the preferred mode of resolving disputes."²⁹ One of the puppeteers interviewed, for example, referred to the way *Aragoz* used to treat his antagonists in many of his sketches by saying:

It was normal for *Aragoz* to punish others with a stick to conform, including his wife. That was a normal scene in the past. The stick of *Aragoz* was used against those whose behaviours needed to be corrected. No one was offended by those scenes, which we do not present today.³⁰

The familiar male-female relationships of Egyptian society were perpetuated in most *Aragoz* sketches throughout the history of the form. This is not surprising in view of the fact that puppeteers used to present their art in popular districts and among underprivileged communities in Cairo and in other governorates. There was an intentional portrayal of male dominance in the sketches and a contemporary puppeteer elucidates this by explaining:

Aragoz, as a masculine figure, was always portrayed as a cunning figure who took the right decisions in several situations. Accordingly, all other characters that accompanied him on the stage, including his wife and other female characters, came secondary in terms of problem-solving. That situation indirectly proclaimed male dominance to the audience.³¹

Puppeteers' Revival of Traditional Aragoz

The available literature about cultural replication emphasises that replication is the central mechanism for the transmission of various elements of culture from one generation to another. Replication, as explained by Gross, refers to "the attempt to close the gap between texts, so that they continue to appear the same through time."³² Nevertheless, cultural changes in societies usually make it hard to replicate different objects or products of cultural heritage, especially those related to popular culture or to the oral traditions, such as the art of puppetry. Artists involuntarily resort to cultural reproduction as it "serves to articulate the dynamic process that makes sensible the utter contingency of,

on the one hand, the stasis and determinacy of social structures and, on the other, the innovation and agency inherent in the practice of social action.”³³

The Egyptian situation is analogous. Puppeteers’ revitalisation of the *Aragoz* puppet has contended with a similar process of cultural reproduction in which two major strategies have been employed to restore the puppet: first, modifying some of the basic physical characteristics of the puppet, using imported plastic dolls rather than the traditional hand-made wooden puppets, and second, adapting some of the theatrical sketches and narratives for contemporary audiences.



Figure 3. Simple Chinese-made doll (from the author’s collection)

Lack of expertise in the traditional craft of making wooden *Aragoz* or similar glove-puppets has obligated contemporary puppeteers to rely on imported plastic dolls already available in local markets in order to simulate *Aragoz*. Once available, several modifications are usually made to the dolls to adjust their facial features to resemble those of *Aragoz* and the other traditional characters that accompany him on the stage. Puppeteers emphasise, however, that most of the imported plastic dolls found in local markets cannot be directly used to simulate *Aragoz*, since they neither reflect masculinity nor the Arabic facial features. From their perspective, most of the dolls have childish faces, fair hair, blue eyes, and western-based complexions that do not typically reflect the Egyptian character [Fig. 3]. Having blue eyes, for example, is a rare genetic trait among Egyptians, which if directly used to depict *Aragoz*, might create confusion for the audience concerning *Aragoz*’s Egyptian identity. Additionally, having a childish face may not correspond to *Aragoz*’s alleged age.



Figure 4. Chinese-made doll adjusted as Aragoz figure (from the author's collection)

To overcome those complexities, puppeteers usually resort to a strategy in which they paint the eyes of the plastic dolls with black dyes and add the rest of *Aragoz's* traditional features, such as thick eyebrows, a moustache, and dark hair [Fig. 4]. They argue that their reliance on readily available plastic puppets (even if imported) helps revive the puppet, especially in the light of the sharp decline of the skills required to make similar wooden puppets. When the puppeteers were asked to explain the rationale behind their insistence on preserving *Aragoz's* outfit and typical facial features, most of them explained that this would help sustain the distinctiveness of *Aragoz*:

It is very important to create a puppet somehow similar to that of *Aragoz* because if we don't, nobody would believe that we present *Aragoz*.³⁴ [Fig. 5]



Figure .5 The doll on the Aragoz stage (from the author's collection)

In one of the shows I attended, I realised that the puppets were not similar to those of traditional *Aragoz* or early wooden puppets. Most of the

imported plastic dolls (mainly from China) have round faces unlike the oval face of the early *Aragoz*. Depiction of *Aragoz* as such gave the audience a different impression, leading one of the old people present to observe: "I have never seen a fat *Aragoz* before." Surprisingly, however, the reactions of the children present were similar to those we had when we were their age: happiness and enjoyment. A further discussion with the old man indicated that several modifications have been added to the way *Aragoz* is presented and that the authenticity of the show is losing its foundation. He even commented:

This is not the *Aragoz* I used to watch in the 1960s in my school. It does not have the same tinge of history. Children, however, are happy because they have not seen the real *Aragoz* of the past.

I realised that puppeteers still attempt, as much as they can, to adhere to the basic traditional performance strategies of early *Aragoz* shows, whether in the techniques used to set up their portable stages, or in the way the *Aragoz* show is presented. Perpetuation of traditional *Aragoz* techniques is evident, but modifications to the content of sketches, music, and the language used are deliberately meant to present the puppet in a contemporary style. Some of the sketches, for example, include modern Egyptian songs in order to add an up-to-date ambience to the show and make children dance and interact with it. Performers still wrap themselves in a box-like structure and proceed to manipulate hand-held glove-puppets on a stage above their heads in ways similar to traditional styles. In case a puppeteer needs to control three glove-puppets in a single scene, he usually uses a stick to fix the third puppet on the stage until its turn to become part of the conversation.

Attempts to emulate *Aragoz's* cunning tricks are also still evident in contemporary shows. Nevertheless, several changes are usually made to the content of the scenes. For example, the elimination of scenes where *Aragoz* resorts to violence, especially against women, is one of the principal features of today's *Aragoz* shows. Instead of using violence against others, which was one of the basic characteristics of traditional *Aragoz*, puppeteers have started to employ a different technique with dialogue based on negotiation, persuasion and discussion between *Aragoz* and the other characters that accompany him on the stage, especially his wife. The use of *Aragoz's* stick is almost absent from most contemporary sketches. One of the puppeteers explains the reasons behind the disappearance of *Aragoz's* stick thus:

It is improper to show scenes of *Aragoz* beating others. We know that it is hard to make children laugh without action (moving scenes), but the stick should not be the solution. We always try to present *Aragoz* in a way that reflects the situation in the society today. We speak in today's words and act accordingly.³⁵

All of the puppeteers interviewed believe that it is necessary to restructure and modify the scenes they present to their audience, and not merely resort to traditional scenes. They also emphasise that such modifications could lead to the continuity of the puppet in Egypt after many years of abandonment, and that the shows they present need to reflect changes in the social, political, and economic aspects of contemporary Egyptian society. In one of the shows I attended, *Aragoz's* wife belittled him and his ability to sustain the family. He produced his stick and waved it at her, and the following conversation ensued:

Aragoz: You have to listen to what I say and behave.
Wife: Are you crazy? Are you going to beat me?
Aragoz: (Hesitantly) I am sorry. I was only joking.

Conclusion

Findings of the present study indicate that the social history of the *Aragoz* puppet, throughout years of practice and interaction with audiences, has resulted in the production of a distinctive masculine persona of *Aragoz* that principally corresponds to the way the Egyptian mainstream culture has been structured and enforced. Prolonged processes of social adaptation since the Ottoman period resulted in the construction of a valiant figure who defended his nation and criticised misconduct through the moral messages he conveyed to the public. Understanding that puppets throughout the world can convey moral messages and can educate audiences with concepts of constructive behaviours,³⁶ puppets can function as “agents in transmitting and preserving social concepts that are part of a particular cultural structure and identity.”³⁷ Thus Egyptian puppeteers have reflected the characteristics of the Egyptian personality and the mainstream culture whenever they presented *Aragoz*, including the social construction of relationships in the society.

The research undertaken for this study also reveals that although *Aragoz* shows declined in the late 1970s due to the introduction of TV and the emergence of other forms of children’s entertainment, there was a social need, mainly triggered by market-demands from upper-middle and upper class individuals, to restore the puppet during the late 1980s. Despite the fact that the revitalisation of *Aragoz* has not followed a planned scheme to revive the traditional *Aragoz* (whether through government or private initiatives), Egyptian puppeteers have attempted to reproduce the puppet in a way that corresponds to the nature of contemporary Egyptian society. Market forces accelerated the revitalisation of *Aragoz*, despite limitations such as the fact that the art of puppetry-making has declined. Due to puppeteers’ reliance on imported plastic dolls, the revitalised *Aragoz* puppet show has eliminated various traditional elements, such as violence, and replaced these with new concepts of egalitarianism and tolerance.

This issue raises a serious concern as to whether the revitalisation of historical products of a visual cultural heritage should replicate the artefacts of

the past, or whether they can be allowed to undergo transformations in form and style to correspond to the nature of contemporary society. Puppeteers believed that by modifying some of its basic characteristics of behaviour, the *Aragoz* puppet would regain its popularity, thus keeping the historic figure in the minds of Egyptians for years to come. From their perspective, changes in the language and personality traits of *Aragoz* are inevitable and the modernisation of the shows seems like a rational choice for the continuity of the *Aragoz* puppet.

¹ See Connie Champlin, *Storytelling with Puppets* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1998), 4.

² See Roger Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Pierre Cachia, *Arabic Literature: An Overview* (New York: Routledge Publications, 2002); Iris El-Masri, *The Story of the Copts: The True Story of Christianity in Egypt* (California: Anthony Coptic Orthodox Monastery, 1982); Stanley Hochman, *McGraw-Hill Encyclopaedia of World Drama* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984); Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo- New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2007).

³ Many of the old puppeteers simply died without passing the craft to their children who seemingly were not interested in keeping the art alive as a way to sustain themselves and their families.

⁴ See Beth Osnes, *Acting: An Encyclopaedia of Traditional Culture* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2001).

⁵ Steve Tillis, *Rethinking Folk Drama* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 147.

⁶ Many countries such as Syria, Persia, Tunisia, and Algeria have a history of *Karagoz* shadow puppet theatre from as early as the seventeenth century.

⁷ Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, 67.

⁸ Hochman, *Encyclopaedia of World Drama*, 127.

⁹ Osnes, *Acting*, 172.

¹⁰ Cachia, *Arabic Literature*, 173.

¹¹ See Ehud Toledano, *State & Society in Mid-nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹² According to many scholars (for example Osnes 2001), the *Aragoz* show was a principal entertainment in almost all *Sufi's "Mulids"* which are annual public celebrations to commemorate the birth of *Awlia* (saints).

¹³ El-Masri, *The Story of the Copts*, 291.

¹⁴ James Smith, "Karagöz and Hacivat: Projections of Subversion and Conformance," *Asian Theatre Journal* 21:2 (2004): 187-193.

¹⁵ See Sampa Ghosh and Utpal Banerjee, *Indian Puppets* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2006).

¹⁶ UNESCO, "Safeguarding Egyptian Traditional *Aragoz* Street Puppetry," 2009, available at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/cairo/aboutthisoffice/singleview/news/safeguarding_egyptian_additional_aragoz_street_puppetry/ (accessed 7 December 2010).

¹⁷ Field notes based on an interview with a respondent carried out by the author in June 2010.

¹⁸ Kathryn Geldard and David Geldard, for example, in *Counselling Children: A Practical Introduction; 3rd Edition* (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 219, argue that "wolves can be dangerous, monkeys can be entertaining and mischievous, and policemen may be helpful or authoritarian."

¹⁹ The Gate of *Al-Metwaly* is located in the area of *al-Darb al-Ahmar* in old Cairo. The gate was built during the Fatimid period in Egypt (969 - 1171 AD).

²⁰ Zakaria Ghazaly, *Aragoz and his Five Children* (Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandria, 1993).

²¹ Field notes based on an interview with a respondent carried out by the author in March 2010.

²² One of the puppeteers interviewed emphasised that before the 1952 Revolution in Egypt, one of the main techniques used to subdue resistant and non-conforming farmers in rural areas was

to threaten them to shave their moustaches, an act that would keep them in their homes for weeks until their moustaches grew again.

²³ The book was originally published in 1836.

²⁴ See Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islam World: 1500–1800* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 26.

²⁵ Field-notes from an interview with a puppeteer carried out by the author in March 2010.

²⁶ See Dina Sherzer and Joel Sherzer, "Verbal Humor in the Puppet Theatre," in *Humor and Comedy in Puppetry: Celebration in Popular Culture*, eds. Dina Sherzer and Joel Sherzer (Bowling Green State University Press, 1987), 48.

²⁷ Field notes from an interview with a puppeteer carried out by the author in July 2010.

²⁸ An interview with a puppeteer carried out by the author in May 2010.

²⁹ Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 196.

³⁰ The concept of *Fetewa* (bully) was prevalent in Egyptian society until the mid-1950s and most areas of Greater Cairo were dominated by bullies whose roles were to protect the residents of the areas under their control from attacks by outsiders from neighbouring districts.

³¹ Based on an interview with a puppeteer carried out by the author in April 2010.

³² Joan Gross, *Speaking in Other Voices: An Ethnography of Walloon Puppet Theatre* (Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing, 2001), 181.

³³ See Chris Jenks, *Culture, 2nd Edition* (Oxon: Routledge Publications, 2005), 114.

³⁴ Field notes from an interview with a puppeteer carried out by the author in January 2010.

³⁵ Field-notes from an interview with a puppeteer carried out by the author in April 2010.

³⁶ See Marilyn Atyeo, "The Influence of an Adult Model on Behavior and Attitudes of Young Children," *Journal of Educational Research* 66:4 (1972): 147-149; George Latshaw, *The Complete Book of Puppetry* (New York: Courier Dover Publications, 2000); Minna Ruckenstein, "Toying with the World: Children, Virtual Pets, and the Value of Mobility," *Childhood* Vol. 17:4 (2010): 500-513; Carolyn Steedman, *The Tidy House* (London: Virago, 1982); Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994).

³⁷ See Marie Kruger, "Social Dynamics in African Puppetry," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20:3 (2010): 316-328, at 316.