

Transcultural  
**Journal of  
Humanities & Social Sciences**

Print ISSN 4239-2636 Online ISSN 4247-2636



An Online Academic Journal of  
Interdisciplinary & transcultural topics in Humanities  
& social sciences

**TJHSS**

Designed by Abeer Azmy & Omnia Raafat

**BUC Press House**



**Volume 2 Issue (3)**

**November 2021**



**Transcultural Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences (TJHSS)** is a journal committed to disseminate a new range of interdisciplinary and transcultural topics in Humanities and social sciences. It is an open access, peer reviewed and refereed journal, published by Badr University in Cairo, BUC, to provide original and updated knowledge platform of international scholars interested in multi-inter disciplinary researches in all languages and from the widest range of world cultures. It's an online academic journal that offers print on demand services.

**TJHSS Aims and Objectives:**

To promote interdisciplinary studies in the fields of Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences and provide a reliable academically trusted and approved venue of publishing Language and culture research.

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|----------------------|------------------|
| ▣ <b>Print ISSN</b>  | <b>2636-4239</b> |
| ▣ <b>Online ISSN</b> | <b>2636-4247</b> |

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## 汉语成语的阿拉伯语翻译问题

### The Problems of Arabic Translation of Chinese proverbs

مشكلات ترجمة الأمثال الصينية إلى اللغة العربية

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**Abstract:** The meaning of proverbs in any language is far beyond the sum of the semantics of the words it constitutes, because it itself is a synthesis of language and culture, it is like a mirror, which can reflect the cultural characteristics and historical stories of a nation, Folklore and customs. Therefore, translating proverbs is a great challenge for translators. How to deal with cultural factors in proverbs during translation has always been a hot topic and difficulty in translation. As a translator, I have faced this problem myself. This article summarizes how to deal with the answer to the translation of proverbs through personal experience and analysis of some Chinese proverbs and their translation methods.

**Key words:** Chinese proverbs, literal translation, literal translation with explanation, translation of meaning, cross translation

**المخلص :** الأمثال الموجودة في أي لغة دائما ما تحمل معان أكبر من مجموع معاني الكلمات المكونة لها، وذلك لأن الأمثال عبارة عن اتحاد ما بين اللغة والثقافة، ويمكن تشبيهها بمرآة تعكس الخصائص الثقافية والقصص التاريخية والعادات والأساطير الشعبية لقومية ما. ولهذا تعد ترجمة الأمثال تحديا كبيرا ومسألة صعبة بالنسبة للمترجم، أما كيفية معالجة العناصر الثقافية في الأمثال أثناء عملية الترجمة من لغة إلى لغة أخرى فقد ظلت دائما موضوعا ساخنا وصعوبة كبيرة. ولقد واجه المؤلف تلك المشكلة بنفسه بصفته مترجما، لذا سنحاول من خلال هذا البحث تلخيص كيفية معالجة إشكالية ترجمة الأمثال الصينية إلى اللغة العربية على وجه التحديد، وكذلك الطرق المختلفة لترجمة الأمثال وذلك من خلال التجربة الشخصية في الترجمة، ومن خلال تحليل بعض الأمثال الصينية وترجمتها بأساليب مختلفة، كذلك يتحدث البحث مزايا وعيوب الطرق المختلفة لترجمة الأمثال الصينية إلى اللغة العربية، والصعوبات التي تواجه المترجم سواء في اللغة الصينية أو اللغة العربية. وبالطبع سيجيب أولا عن سؤال مهم ألا وهو، ما هي الأمثال؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمثال الصينية، الترجمة الحرفية، الترجمة الحرفية مع الشرح، ترجمة المعنى، الترجمة التقابلية

**摘要:**任何一种语言中的成语的含义远远超越了其构成的词语语义的总和，因为它本身是一种语言和文化的综合体，它好比一面镜子，可以反映出一个民族的文化特点、历史故事、民间传说和风俗习惯。所以翻译成语是译者的极大的挑战，翻译时应怎样处理成语中的文化因素，一直是翻译中的热门话题和难点。本人作为翻译家也亲身面对过这个问题，本文是通过个人的经验和对部分汉语成语及其翻译方法的分析，总结出如何处理成语翻译这个答题。

**关键词** 汉语成语 直译法 直译加注法 意译法 套译法

## 1.引言

为什么要关注汉语成语的翻译问题？回答这个问题该从成语的定义出发，成语是人类智慧的精髓，随着中西文化的交流和传播，中国成语的翻译受到中西翻译家的重视。虽然中国成语翻译的历史很悠久，但是成语的翻译发展却是非常艰难的。另一方面，翻译的最终目的是促进不同文化间的交流。而成语作为语言的精华，所以在交流方面成语的重要性极为突显，所以笔者认为在翻译研究中，带有文化特色的成语的翻译应该获得足够的关注。再说，上述所说的“文化交流”其实指的是中西的文化交流，因为关注汉语成语阿拉伯语翻译的文献几乎是没有的。

本人认为，汉语成语的翻译可以作为通向中国文化的突破点，但是在翻译过程中免不了遇到一些困难，本文着力于探索那些困难，并从中获得新的心得，从而对中阿文化交流、翻译活动做出贡献。

美国语言学家、翻译家、翻译理论家奈达提出了动态对等理论，我们可以使用此理论看待成语翻译的问题。本人认为该理论最注重翻译的交际目的，要求目的语读者对译文的接受和理解程度完全与原文读者对原文的理解与接受程度基本上是对等，所以可以说该理论以目的语读者为导向，这和以原文为导向的早期翻译理论有所不同。因此，译者翻译的时候应该更多考虑目的语读者对译文的反应，从而，目的语读者成为整个翻译过程中最值得关注的环节。该理论的最直接的结果就是，翻译活动不再受原文的限制，也不再过度追求词汇、语法结构、文化因素等的严格对应，而是可以适当加以改动以达到最终的结果，既是让译文在目的语读者眼中变得更自然更完美更亲近，同时保持原文读者读原文时的感受与反应。可以说，动态对等趋向于目的语读者，以读者的接受程度为基础，因此，一个成功的翻译作品应该具有与原文信息最自然的对等，而这种自然性就是翻译活动最主要的要求。为了达到这种自然性，译者要做到尽可能的流畅，不受原文的约束。

动态对等理论强调意义对等优于形式对等，但是，如果能够两种形式都能保持下来那是最好，只不过这种理想的状态很少有的，这是所谓的“套译法”，本文下面会提到。把动态对等理论用到成语翻译中可以使阿拉伯语读者又充分理解汉语成语意义，又对成语的比喻、结构和文化意象也有一定的了解。

归化和异化是美国著名翻译学家韦努蒂提出的两个关于翻译活动的术语，尤其是文学作品的翻译。所谓的归化是以目的语文化为导向的翻译，也就是说以译文读者习惯的表达方式阐述原文所表达的意思。在翻译活动中，译者就要考虑目的语读者，尽可能提供通顺的译文，使整个译文看起来就像是用目的语写作的原文，没有翻译的痕迹或翻译痕迹不那么明显。

而异化就是在翻译过程中服从原文的语言特点，接纳原文的表述方式。异化要求翻译的时候尊重并保持原文作者的安排，尽量传达原文所要表达的内容。翻译的时候，译者一定要保留民族文化以及原文的语言风格和文化特色，尽量让目的语读者靠

近原文的思路。这种做法可能会造成译文的不流畅，但是有助于保留原语的文化价值。

## 2.汉语成语的定义与特点

在汉语中，成语这个术语是大家所熟知的，很长时间以来人们广泛使用该术语，但是，成语的定义一直有不同的看法，没有定论，有的学者指出，成语可以宽的包括所有的谚语、俚语等，而严格的定义只包括从古代传到现代的一些短句，尤其是四个字的短句是成语，其他的都不是。那么，汉语成语的定义可以总结为：“汉语成语为定型的词语或短语，一般都有出处，有些成语从字面上不难理解，如小题大做等，有些成语必须知道来源或典故才能懂得其意思，如朝三暮四，杯弓蛇影等。成语是语言中经过长期使用、锤炼而形成的固定短语。”<sup>1</sup>

汉语成语的特点可以归纳为四个，一是，定型性，二是习用性，三是精练性，四是民族性。

定型性指的是成语无论在形式还是在意义上都相对固定的，形式主要是以四个字为主，而且其格式不能用其他的同义词取代，其构成的词语顺序不可以换。成语在意义上也具有定型性，它的意义并不是字面意思简单叠加，而是根据其整体的意思去理解。

成语的习用性指人们一直广泛使用成语，其用处非常广泛，用法也非常灵活。

成语的精练性可以让语言更为简洁，加入不使用成语就要费更多的词语表达同一个意义。

成语的民族性指成语具有很明显的民族特征，成语往往具有民族习惯、风俗与历史的因素，这就是成语所包含的文化因素。

## 3.汉语成语的翻译方法

很多阿拉伯译者以为，翻译只是把原文翻译成译文就可以，却不知道翻译，尤其汉语成语翻译有很多不同的方法与技巧，下面会总结一下汉语成语几个常用的翻译方法，并说明每个翻译法的优点与缺点，该注意的是，本文并不支持其中这个翻译方法或排斥那个翻译方法，而是下面的阐述就会停留在阐述与分析层面，不会支持其中一个翻译方法。

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<sup>1</sup> -[https://www.baidu.com/link?url=VHJpAUEBQVZ9djoI0saJd0J91fuvzerofWsalgkd0rWXogfv-Bql7NBBANVW3zShti8tO-QmBKUCSvpa4dfqXTy96A8Pt9sGutoE4r6arC3sl4PSS8yEJRLx\\_qAcXtmu&wd=&eqid=976568dc0012cbf600000066176ab51](https://www.baidu.com/link?url=VHJpAUEBQVZ9djoI0saJd0J91fuvzerofWsalgkd0rWXogfv-Bql7NBBANVW3zShti8tO-QmBKUCSvpa4dfqXTy96A8Pt9sGutoE4r6arC3sl4PSS8yEJRLx_qAcXtmu&wd=&eqid=976568dc0012cbf600000066176ab51)  
<https://tjhss.journals.ekb.eg/> <https://www.buc.edu.eg/>



### 3.1直译法

直译法是最基本也是最主要的翻译方法，可以说，是翻译活动的基础，在此基础上可以扩展其它的翻译方法。直译法的最终目标是在保留原文原汁原味内容的同时，尽可能地保证原文的语言规范和形式不变，给译文的读者带来新的文化色彩。

当然，由于人类的语言认知在某些方面具有共性，所以在汉语成语翻译成阿拉伯语的过程中，译者可以在译文语言中找到与原文功能意义相同的表达方法时就可以采用直译法。例如：

(1) 知足常乐。

可以翻译成：

- من عرف القناعة عاش سعيدا.

这样不仅保留了原文中的原汁原味的语义、结构、表达方式、同时给译文读者带来言外之异国文化色彩，直译法的优点在此得到充分的表现。可以说使用直译法的优点是，保留原语的异域文化特点，这样，目的语读者可以欣赏原语文化的别致与优美，理解原文的真正含义，感受到原文原有的文化色彩与表达手段。

这么说就会有人认为，直译法是一种万能的手段，采用之就能解决翻译过程中的一切问题，但是事实并没有那么完美。直译法也有其缺点，例如：

(2) 班门弄斧

这是一个汉语成语，成语中的“班”指中国古代著名的木匠鲁班，该成语来自一句诗歌“鲁班门前弄大斧“，其语义为在行家面前卖弄本领。

采用直译法把这个成语翻译成阿拉伯语就可以翻译成：

- كمن يصنع فاسا أمام باب لويان

显然这个翻译虽然可以猜得懂其字面上的语义，但是又不太清楚，缺乏确定性。阿拉伯人又无法知道“鲁班”是谁，他的地位是什么。这样目的语的译文失去了翻译最主要的特点，既是“达”，从而使整个翻译失去了其最终的目的。

再例如

(3) 指鸡骂狗。

如果用直译法就可以翻译成：

- يشير للدجاجة ويسب الكلب.

和上述的例子一样，成语中的每个词都正确地翻译成阿拉伯语，，虽然如此，读者能否明白其言外之义是一个未知数，可能会猜得懂，也可能不会。

本人认为，虽然直译可以保留原文的文化色彩、历史背景和修辞手段，这也算该翻译法的最主要的优点，但对于部分文学翻译来说，很多时候直译法并不能完全实现。有的时候直译法的效果无法符合目标语读者的表达习惯，反而过度拘泥于形式上，导致言辞僵硬，结果无法达到交际所需要的效果，最后造成目的语读者的理解困难，使读者不明白作者想要表达的语义与观点，这样的翻译当然不合格。所以，在选择直译法之前需要谨慎考虑。在直译的同时，还需要保持译文通顺、清楚明亮并可以被阿拉伯读者接受，阅读之后，阿拉伯读者的感受应该与汉语读者尽可能相同。这样也就不会违背动态对等理论的原则。

### 3.2直译加注法

直译加注法，顾名思义，是直译之后加上一点备注来对其原文的成语的内涵进一步说明，让读者更容易其真正的语义。可以说，该翻译法是对上述提到的直译法的一种扩展和延申，可以在一定的程度上弥补直译法的缺点，

这是因为汉语有一些成语，虽然直译法可以基本表达其内涵，但是仍然可能会造成阿拉伯读者的误解，因为有些成语“其中的形象直译后虽不会产生文化冲突，却会造成语义失误，译文读者不能理解其含义”。在这种情况下，译者需要在直译成语的字面意义之后，另外用自己的表达手段加上注释，说明出其隐含意义，帮助读者更清楚地理解原文内涵。

例如

(4) 班门弄斧

用直译法翻译成

-كمن يصنع فاسا أمام باب النجار لوبان

这是上述举过的例子，如果在此基础上加一点说明，例如：

- "لوبان هو نجار مشهور في التاريخ الصيني، والمثل يضرب للدلالة على التباهي بمهارة ما أمام أهلها- المترجم"

这样既可以让阿拉伯读者完全理解成语在原文中的含义，又可以保留原文的表达手段及文化因素。使用此方法要注意，加注必须说明这是译者自己加的部分，原文没有的。

再例如

(5) 指鸡骂狗。

如果用直译法就可以翻译成：

- يشير للدجاجة ويسب الكلب.

然后在此翻译的基础上加下列的说明

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<https://www.buc.edu.eg/>

- يسب هذا الشخص لكنه في الحقيقة يقصد شخصا آخر- المترجم

上述的说明的语义是“表面上骂这个人，实际上骂那个人”，加了这个说明以后，读者就可以一目了然成语的含义，虽然说采用直译法翻译这个成语也可以让读者明白其比喻义，但是还是存在一定的模糊性，加了说明以后就可以完全消除这种模糊性，让读者百分之八确定自己猜到的语义，可以说，这里的说明起了增加确定性的作用。

显然直译加注法解决了直译法的主要缺点，既是阿拉伯读者可能不会完全理解直译后的成语，同时还保留了直译法的优点，既是保留汉语成语的文化因素、结构和修辞手段。但是，该说明的是，直译加注法也要谨慎使用，虽然它表面上保留了优点又铲除了缺点，但是它本身带来了新的缺点，既是，增加了译文的篇幅，如果原文中的成语过多，如文学作品，那么加太多的注释既会增加译文的篇幅，又会反复切断读者的思路，这可能会让译文失去其游乐的作用。所以在小范围之内，直译加注翻译法可能是很理想的选择，但是范围大了就没这么好说。

### 3.3 意译法

由于中阿文化和语言都存在着显著的差异，译者在翻译某些汉语成语的时候，有可能找不到与原文完全相似的表达手段。此时，译者应该采用意译的方法，既是抛弃原文成语的字面意义，忽略其构成的词语，直接译出其比喻义或隐含义，从而再现原文作者在特定语境下的交际意图。例如：

#### (6) 班门弄斧

用意译法翻译成

-التباهي بالمقدرة أمام أهلها-

这个阿拉伯语句子的字面意思就是“在行家面前卖弄本领”，这正好是汉语成语“班门弄斧”所表达的比喻意义，这样的翻译法就可以表达原文作者所想表达的语义，让翻译质量提高得很多，而且它还能够保持译文顺畅，不切断也不加上一些模糊成分。

再例如

#### (7) 指鸡骂狗。

如果用意译法就可以翻译成：

-يسب هذا الشخص لكنه في الحقيقة يسب شخصا آخر-

这句话的意思是“指这个人，实际上骂那个人”，这个也就表达了汉语成语的比喻义，换一句话，这个翻译法基本上是把比喻义翻译成阿拉伯语，而不是对成语本身进行翻译。

本人把此翻译法的优点总结为：正确性很高，表达方式清晰，不影响译文的篇幅。虽然这样看起来很完美，但是此翻译法依然存在一些缺点，例如：虽然它能否把

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语义表达得很清楚，但是我们上面提到过，成语不仅仅用来表达某一种语义而已，它还包含着一种很浓厚的文化因素，这个文化因素在这个翻译法中完全丢失，所以，采用这个方法的时候必须要谨慎使用，译者要有敏锐的判断力衡量文化因素在汉语成语中的重要性，看看能否忽略，这个也需要译者对阿拉伯读者和阿拉伯文化有充分的了解，才能有把握地使用此翻译法。

### 3.4 套译法

阿拉伯语中有些成语的含义与某些汉语成语的含义很相近，此时译者可以采用套译法，套用意义相似的目的语成语来翻译相应的汉语成语，使译文既能传达原文作者的意图，又让译文读者无需付出不必要的处理努力，就能准确理解该成语的含义，例如：

#### (8) 班门弄斧

可以用套译法翻译成：

- كمن يبيع الماء في حارة السقاءين

这个阿拉伯语成语的字面意义是“在卖水人居住地卖水”，表达的意思与汉语成语“班门弄斧”相同，既是“在行家面前卖弄本领”，因为在古代家里没有自来水，所以有人专门去河边打水，装皮袋中，再送到家家户户卖，当然这个行业随着时代的变化和生活水平的不断提高几乎完全消失了，但是其文化因素依然留在日常生活的成语中。

再例如

#### (9) 指鸡骂狗。

如果用套译法就可以翻译成：

- الكلام لكي يا جارة.

这是阿拉伯语成语，特别是埃及方言的成语，它的比喻义与汉语的成语的比喻义相同，只是字面上的意义不相同而已。

比起其它的翻译法，套译法似乎是最完美的一种成语翻译法，它既能解决语义的问题，又能用有文化因素的表达方式把原文的成语的语义表达出来。但是，该方法的使用条件还是很有限，因为阿拉伯语中也不会有那么多与汉语成语一一对应的成语，再说，虽然说该方法也有文化因素，但是文化因素不一样，原文的成语有中国文化因素，而目的语的成语有阿拉伯文化因素，这有可能会给阿拉伯读者产生疑惑，“难道中国人也会有和我们阿拉伯人类似的成语吗？”，从而产生误解或误导的结果。

## 4.翻译汉语成语的关键问题

汉语成语的阿拉伯语翻译是两种语言之间的翻译活动，所以它除了汉语成语本身的问题，也关系到阿拉伯语本身的一些问题，本人在本文中把两种语言中所存在的问题总结如下：

### 4.1 翻译汉语成语的文化理解障碍

#### 一、从汉语的角度来简析障碍

上述说过，成语是一种语言 and 文化的精华，是一个典故的减缩版，又是个大故事的结晶，因此它所蕴涵的文化因素和内容很多时候无法只用一两句来体现。加上语言本身不存在一一对应的现象，一般来说，找一句话翻译个成语是一件非常困难的工作。所以不管用的是直译法也好、意译法也罢、套译法也好，也不一定能找出最满意的一句话表示汉语成语的原意。

翻译过程中，如何保持原有的语义和文化色彩是阿拉伯译者最大的挑战。

#### 二、从阿拉伯语的角度来简析障碍

阿拉伯语和汉语有相似之处，既是，两种语言历史很悠久，中华民族和阿拉伯民族都经历了漫长的历史，语言在长期使用中自然会形成很多典故，然后两个民族的人民把典故提炼为成语，所以，汉语和阿语都有着大量的成语。不一样的是，阿拉伯地区分为 22 个国家，又分为几个方言区，每个方言区在日常生活中所使用的方言和标准的阿语区别很大，结果，人们脑海中的典故与文化历史都用方言记载，而方言一般不用到书面文献中，结果，日常生活中常用的成语基本上都是方言的，标准语中不一定存在对应的成语，反而标准语中的成语在日常生活中没有得到充分发挥，这给成语翻译工作带来了新的挑战，原来的问题是如何把用套译法正确地把汉语成语翻译成阿拉伯语，而后来问题变成如何在阿语中寻找又是标准语的又是群众易懂的成语对应。

## 5.结语

汉语成语是汉语熟语的一个重要组成部分，它具有很丰富的表现力，而且在口语和书面语中的应用都非常流行。所以，全面、详细、深入地总结汉语成语的阿拉伯语翻译问题，就能更准确的翻译成语，使阿拉伯读者在更好的理解原文的语义，更清楚的了解中国文化。

在跨语言文化交际过程中，成语一直是语言学习及语言教学的重点和难点。本文立足于翻译这个角度对汉语成语阿拉伯语翻译问题进行研究，想办法找出两种语言的相通之处，最终的目的是为语言学习、为两种语言的交互发展做出一点贡献。

本文浅谈了汉语成语的阿拉伯语翻译问题，论文中有两个不同的研究方向，第一，着力于寻找并总结汉语成语的不同翻译方法，而且举例说明，从而使得翻译工作

更为清楚，更为简单、更为地道，为中阿交流提供一点便利。第二，描述并总结目前两种语言本身存在的一些问题，虽然没有提供那些问题的解决方案，但是为下一步的研究工作奠基石了，可以说千里之行始于足下，而本文只做了千里之行的一个小步而已。

上述所提到的翻译法是通过本人亲自经历的翻译困难，加上前人研究成果总结出来的，可以说本文的价值在于把理论与实践二合为一，想办法把理论弄得简单一点，把实践弄得具体一点。而上述的阐述与说明就意味着翻译活动，尤其成语的翻译具有高度的主观性，也有一定的客观性。主观性体现在译者如何选择与运用上述的翻译方法，而客观性体现在成语本身所包含的无法改变的语义与文化背景。翻译的质量由译者对客观性与主观性比例的掌握来决定的，这也是机械翻译在文学翻译中无法取代人工翻译的一个原因。

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# Visual Analysis: Representational and Interactive Meanings in The Remarried Empress

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## Abstract:

Following the trendy visual designs, webtoons are a recent industry of arts that flourished as webcomics. They are broadly available with innovative stories in various genres. The visual elements in webtoons are vivid and prosperous in a way they can attract a linguist to shift away from interpreting the usual verbal content to the investigation of meanings beyond these non-verbal designs. For that purpose, this study aims to apply Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework to discover meanings beyond panels from *The Remarried Empress* webtoon. Six panels from the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of this webtoon are analyzed in two dimensions: representational and interaction. The paper discusses how are the main characters represented, and in what way they are interacting with the viewer in these panels. The findings show that *The Remarried Empress* webtoon is like any other literary story that intends to be dynamic through narrative representational processes. Moreover, it builds relations with the viewer through gazes and gestures drawn by the creator, framings, and angles within the panels and proves the reliability of these relations by indicating high values of modality markers.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background on the Topic

Meanings are embedded in everything around us. They are not supposed to be only in linguistic elements as the non-linguistic ones can deliver them too. Accordingly, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) asserted that "it is possible to pretend that the meaning carried in the image is there only in the eye of the beholder, something that it would not be possible to assert about verbally realized meanings" (p. 20). Consequently, images and pictures, as visual domains, tend to communicate messages with the viewers and imply meanings without the necessity for verbal content to be elaborated. For instance, webtoon is a recent digital type of comics nowadays that tends to communicate meanings through various artistic elements. The visual elements inside a webtoon imply ideas beyond the expressive and aesthetic representations of these items. They depict meanings through numerous aspects of representations and interactions. Their meanings are delivered visually and participate in the social interactions and communicative dimensions within society (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Thus, in this research paper, webtoon panels will be tackled as a domain to highlight

their visual elements under two dimensions of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of visual designs.

## **1.2 Aim**

This research paper tends to apply Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual designs to six panels from the first episode of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon. The visual elements of these panels will be analyzed under two visual dimensions. Then, the meanings of these elements would be discussed in representational and interactive aspects according to Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar.

## **1.3 Structure of the Study**

This study will be conducted into four sections:

- The first section will introduce the topic of this research, its aim, and its structure.
- The second section will present Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework which will be used as a tool in the analysis of this paper, and it will review some previous studies that tackled the topic of this research in their discussions. Then, the research questions, upon which the study will be conducted, will be also included.
- The third section will describe the methodology of this paper by putting a description for the data used, identifying tools used in the data analysis, and highlighting the procedures followed from the starting point of collecting data from sources till the steps followed in stating these data in this research paper.
- The fourth section will discuss an inclusive analysis and its results for six panels from the first episode of *The Remarried Empress* under the representational and interactive dimensions of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) perspective.
- The fifth section will involve a conclusion summarizing the study of this research paper, showing its limitations and further implications for future research.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual designs is based on Halliday's (1978) three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual of the social semiotic theory of communication. It is stated that visual domains have a grammar that describes how their elements and structures communicate intended messages through their representations in a visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Therefore, intended meanings delivered by visual modes in a visual design are highlighted in three dimensions: representational, interactive, and compositional under Kress and van Leeuwen's framework.

#### **2.1.1 The Representational Dimension**

This dimension is based on the ideational metafunction of the language which deals with the representations of things and their relations in the world around us (Halliday, 1978).



According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), elements and items in visual works and designs are introduced as “participants”. These participants are divided into two groups: “represented participants” which are people, things, objects, or places that are placed in visual domains (e.g., characters in comics), and “interactive participants” the ones who produce or create these domains or the ones who view these work of art (e.g., the creator of the comics and the viewers) (p. 47-48).

Moreover, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) highlighted another type of participants in representational processes as “Circumstances” the secondary participants connected to the main ones but not by vectors (p.72). Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) framework explained Circumstances as “participants which could be left out without affecting the basic proposition realized by the narrative pattern, even though their deletion would, of course, entail a loss of information” (p.72). But they will not be tackled in the analysis because the focus will be on the main characters; participants only. Henceforth, under this dimension, these participants have two types of representations: narrative and conceptual representations.

### ***2.1.1.1 Narrative Representation***

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) claimed that narrative representation is about the dynamic processes that involve unfolding actions and events in which participants are engaged in doing something to or for each other. It has various kinds of processes that differ in the kind of vector (e.g., the verb in the language) they have and the number of participants they involve. These narrative processes are action, reactional, speech, and mental process (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

First, the “action process” is a narrative process that involves the “Actor”; the represented participant who forms the “Vector;” the action that is received by the “Goal” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.59). In this process, Vector is represented as an act, or an action made by the Actor and received by the Goal, the receptor of the action. Action process can be represented in two different structures: “transactional structure;” when the goal is present and “non-transactional structure;” in which the actor only exists in the process (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 63). Further, the representation of an action process where the Goal only exists without any Actor is called an “Event” that indicates something is happening without identifying the initiator or the source that caused this thing to happen (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 64).

The second process is the “reactional process” in which Vector is represented as an “eyeline or a direction of a glance by a represented participant” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.67). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) tend to introduce the represented participants in this process as “Reacter”; the participant who glances or looks at, and “Phenomenon”; the participant who or which receives the gaze. Like the action process, the reactional process can be in a transactional structure where the Phenomenon exists or a non-transactional structure where only the Reacter is present (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Moreover, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduced “speech process and mental process” as types of narrative processes similar to the transactional reactional process where <https://tjhss.journals.ekb.eg/> <https://www.buc.edu.eg/>

the phenomenon exists with a vector represented in “the content of the comic strips” (p.68). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the comic strip appears in form of a “thought bubble” connected to the viewer in the mental process. While, in a speech process, the content of a “dialogue bubble” is connected to the viewer (p.68). Yet, the analysis of this paper will be only conducted on the visual modes inside the visual domains rather than the verbal ones. Participants in these two processes are the viewer who is connected by the content and the Reactor who becomes “Speaker” in terms of speech process. and “Senser” in terms of the mental process (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 68).

### ***2.1.1.2 Conceptual Representation***

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduced the second type of representation; conceptual representation as a static representation with no vectors which “represents participants class, structure or meaning” (p.59). In other words, participants in conceptual representation tend to act more stable instead of being dynamic like those of the narrative representation. Conceptual representation has three types of processes: classificational, analytical, and symbolic, but this paper will concern with the symbolic process in its analysis for the main characters of a fantasy webtoon instead of the classificational process which deals with taxonomies, and the analytical one which is preferable for maps and economic domains to be stated analytically.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), conceptual symbolic processes are represented by two participants: the “Carrier” who or which holds one or more symbolic values or attributes that define its meaning in the process, and the “Symbolic Attributes” the meaning given to the “Carrier” and the attributes that identify it (p.105). Symbolic attributes are mostly characterized by salient representations placed in the foreground as exaggerated size, delicate details, sharp focus, or glaring color and tone. They also seem somehow odd among the other participants in the same frame, have symbolic values, and are detected by a gesture (e.g., facial expressions) in the process of symbolization (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

### **2.1.2 The Interactive Dimension**

The second dimension is based on the interpersonal metafunction of the language which deals with the interaction between the creator of the domain and its receptor (Halliday, 1978). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduce the interaction in the second dimension focusing on the relations between the creator of the visual domain, the viewer; the interactive participants, and participants depicted in the visual designs; represented participants. Therefore, this dimension discusses three types of relationships between the involved participants: relations between represented participants, relations between interactive and represented participants, and relations between interactive participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These relations are illustrated by Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) framework and embedded within these four categories: gaze, social distance, angles, and modality.

### 2.1.2.1 Gaze

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) acknowledges that gaze implements an imaginary connection between the represented participant; the gazer and the interactive one; the viewer. This interactive relation between both participants becomes the vector that may be accompanied by a gesture in the same way as a further vector. Henceforth, images with gaze are called ‘images of an act’ in which the represented participants are demanding something from the viewer (e.g. to act in a certain way) in an imaginary relationship with him/ her performed by the gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.116). Demanding relations between the represented participants and the interactive ones; the viewers depend on the vector between them represented as the gaze and gestures, if they are present, of the represented participants within the visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The Demanding relations between represented and interactive participants differ based on the type of gesture performed as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

#### *Gestures and their Types of Demanding Relations*

<b>Gestures</b>	<b>Demanding Relations between represented participant and viewer</b>
<b>Smile</b>	Asking the viewer to be in a social affinity relationship
<b>Cold stare</b>	Asking the viewer to consider the participant as an inferior where he/ she becomes superior.
<b>Seductive pout</b>	Asking the viewer to desire the participant.
<b>Finger pointed at the viewer.</b>	Asking the viewer attention to come closer
<b>Defensive gesture</b>	Asking the viewer to have a distance.

**Adopted from (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 118)**

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) asserted that represented participants may have no connections with viewers. Instead, they have “offer relations”, where the represented participants in a visual domain tend to introduce information, detached from any relations with the viewer, and present important parts within the visual design (p.11

9). These demanding and offer relations play a crucial role whether in bringing the viewer closer to the represented participant or keeping a distance between them (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

### 2.1.2.2 Social Distance and Framings

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), social distance is associated with the frame size within the analysis of the interactive meanings of the represented participants in visual designs. This category indicates relations between the represented participants and the viewer in terms of allowing the viewer to be engaged or detached from the participants socially (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Further, the engagement and the detachment relations

between participants are represented through different framings pointed out by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as:

- “Close-ups” where only the head and the shoulder appear.
- “Big/extreme close-up” where anything less than the shoulder and the head of the subject appears.
- “Medium close shot” where the subject is cut off at the waist.
- “Medium shot” where the subject is cut off at knees.
- “Medium long shot” where the full subject is shown.
- “Long shot” where the subject occupies half the height of the frame with space around it.
- “Very long shot” anything wider than that of the “Long” one (p.124).

These various framings depict distinct kinds of social distance represented in; “Close personal distance,” “Far personal distance,” “Close social distance,” “Far social distance,” and “Public distance,” as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Framings, Social Distances, and Social Relations*

<b>Framings</b>	<b>Social Distances</b>	<b>Social Relations</b>
<b>Close-ups</b>	Close personal distance	Participants have intimate relations with each other and communicate physically.
<b>Medium-close shots</b>	Far personal distance	Participants discuss personal interests without any physical contact.
<b>Medium-long shots</b>	Close social distance	Participants discuss impersonal issues and business.
<b>Long shots</b>	Far social distance	Participants discuss business in a more formal and impersonal way than that of the close social distance.
<b>Very long shots</b>	Public distance	Participants behave like strangers.

**Adopted from (Hall, 1964, as cited in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 124-125)**

*2.1.2.3 Angle (point of view)*

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) defined angle as the point of view or the perspective which creates relations between the represented participants and the viewer. These interactive relations between participants are achieved by two types of angles; the horizontal angle relates to relations of involvement or disengagement between represented participants and the viewer and the vertical one indicates relations of power between them (Kress & van

Leeuwen, 2006). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), horizontal angle depicts “the relation between the frontal plane of the image-producer and the frontal plane of the represented participants” (p.134). The relation between the frontal planes of both the creator and the represented participants has two perspectives:

- A horizontal frontal angle: in which the frontal planes of the creator are parallel and aligned with that of the represented participants to indicate involvement relations.
- An oblique angle: in which the frontal planes are not aligned and not faced with the ones of the represented participants to form detachment relations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify the vertical angle as the relations of power between represented and the interactive participants. From a vertical angle, the represented participants are viewed from three different perspectives. First, the represented participants are viewed from a high angle to be depicted as inferiors while the interactive participant; the viewer are superiors to them and have power over them. Second, represented participants are viewed from a low angle to be depicted as superiors for the interactive ones and in turn have power over them. Third, represented participants are viewed at the same eye-level angle as that of the interactive participants where they are equal and no power relation is involved (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

#### ***2.1.2.4 Modality***

Modality is the final category in this dimension. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), modality questions the creditability of messages in which people, places, and things, represented in a visual design, communicate and it detects their degree of reliability. Their value of truth is judged and marked by eight represented cues. These cues are introduced as ‘modality markers’ and represented as color saturation, color modulation, color differentiation, brightness, contextualization, representation, illumination, and depth that indicate the modality value of messages in the visual domain (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.160). Further, the degree of reality of the depicted messages is indicated in terms of a continuum; a scale running from the higher modality value to the lower one as in (e.g., color saturation) continuum in which high modality is indicated with the representation of full and saturated colors, and lower modality is indicated with the abstraction of the represented colors. Therefore, the greater value is indicated by a modality marker, its high modality value is achieved and vice versa as shown in Table 3 (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

**Table 3**

#### ***Modality Markers with High and Low Modality***

<b>Modality Markers</b>	<b>High Modality</b>	<b>Low Modality</b>
<b>Color saturation</b>	Full saturation (Various and intensive colors)	Low saturation (only black and white)
<b>Color differentiation</b>	A maximum diverse range of colors	Monochrome (displays only one color)

<b>Color modulation</b>	A shaded color	A plain color
<b>Contextualization</b>	A crowded and detailed background	A plain background or an abstract setting
<b>Representation</b>	Detailed representation of foreground participants	Abstract representation for the foreground participants and reducing them to a minimal degree.
<b>Depth</b>	Deep perspectives of strong convergence of vertical lines e.g., fish-eye perspective	Absence of depth
<b>Illumination</b>	Full representation of bright and shade	Absence representation of bright and shade
<b>Brightness</b>	Maximum degrees of brightness	Two degrees of brightness of the same color e.g., dark grey and lighter grey

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**Adopted from (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.160-162)**

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the degree of realism of the same modality marker may differ from one visual domain to another based on some values and beliefs coded by specific social groups. For instance, contextualization; detailed background in photographs depicts high modality where photography tends to achieve naturalism. On the other hand, in scientific blueprints and labels, contextualization depicts a low modality value where labels and diagrams tend to be easily read (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Henceforth, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argued that there are sets of reality principles called “Coding orientations are sets of abstract principles which inform how texts are coded by specific social groups, or within specific institutional contexts and they are distinguished as the following: technological as in blueprints, sensory as in food magazines, abstract as in academic contexts, and naturalistic as in photographs” (p.165). Moreover, it is stated that one visual domain can have more than one type of coding orientation principle which means that the same visual domain can be ‘sensory’ in terms of one modality marker and ‘abstract’ in terms of another. Therefore, the assessment of reality in the visual domain will depend on the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 165).

Since the analysis of this research paper would be on a fantasy webtoon which is neither photographs nor scientific labels and blueprints, modality markers in this webtoon will be distinguished according to the sensory coding orientation principles. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) stated that these types of principles are led by the pleasure principle in their domains. According to this principle, modality markers achieve their greater degree of modality when colors depict sensual and emotive meanings, and everything in the picture contributes to delivering senses (e.g., touching, tasting, smelling, and feeling). Thus, the more

appealing to the sensory qualities, the higher modality is achieved (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

### **2.1.3 The Compositional Dimension**

This dimension is based on Halliday's (1978) textual metafunction of the language. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) focus, in this dimension, on the "integral meaning of the whole text" (p.177). This dimension tackles participants in a different aspect to show their contributions to the whole and integral meaning of the visual design. Therefore, elements of the representational and interactive meanings are analyzed according to different systems of evaluation: information value, salience, and framing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This dimension and its systems will not be discussed in this paper, since the analysis in this paper would tackle the representational and interactive meanings in the various parts and structures of the visual design rather than the meanings of these parts and structures in the compositional system.

### **2.2 Previous Studies**

Ly and Jung (2015) followed Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework to explore how advertisements contribute their meanings representationally and interactively. Their research paper discussed the advertisements' sociological and multilevel meanings delivered by the representation of image elements in different narrative and conceptual processes. It also found that the advertiser demand of the advertisement quality determined the relationships developed between the viewer and the different modes of the visual designs (Ly & Jung, 2015).

Another research paper by Guijarro and Sanz (2008) combined Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory in correspondence with Halliday's (1978) SFA to present how both verbal and non-verbal elements in a children's story contribute to the integral meaning compositionally. According to Guijarro and Sanz (2008), the representational, interpersonal, compositional, and textual perspectives compose to make the plot of that children's story be easily and simply narrated without any complexities.

Moreover, some researchers have recently applied webtoon to their studies. For instance, webtoon has been used in the analysis of a recent case study held by Norin (2018) to show how the characteristics of webtoons can help in their media conversion into television series and films. This case study reached that the functions of elements of webtoons as telling a story and attracting the viewers should be the main points of evaluation that make any specific webtoon be adapted or not (Norin, 2018).

Another case study, held by Pratama (2017), investigates politeness strategies in the speeches of the main character in *My Pre-wedding* webtoon to see how they affect fan translation. The discourse analysis found that the existence and the omission of these strategies contribute to the main character's traits and influence her personality. Thus, a fan translator should transfer this impact on the cultural values that are attached to the personality of the main character (Pratama, 2017).

Finally, webtoon has been also applied to a study by Prabasari et al. (2018) aimed at distinguishing between both signifiers and the signified in both the visual and the linguistic modes. It explored their roles in the event of the first episode of the *Orange Marmalade* webtoon. The results of the analysis showed that verbal and non-verbal signs work together to integrate meanings through various relationships and convey the ideas of the event in the first episode (Prabasari et al., 2018).

### 2.3 Research Questions

This research paper will use the framework of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* in the analysis of the first episode of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon based on the following research questions:

1. How are the main participants represented altogether in the first episode of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon?
2. What kind of relations are between the main participants of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon and its viewer?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Data Description

According to Wikipedia (2021), webtoons are recent digital comics originally launched in South Korea in 2003, by Daum. They have been published in suitable applications for smartphones and computers. They are in vertical strips which can be easily read by scrolling down the screen. Also, they have recently become exceedingly popular for their free access serial episodes which are now translated into various languages (e.g., Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian, English) (Wikipedia, 2021).

*The Remarried Empress* webtoon used in the analysis of this research paper is an adaptation from a Korean web novel titled *재혼 황후* (*Jaehon hwanghu*) was created, by Alphatart and Chirun, in 2018 and published on Naver web. The English version of the adapted webtoon made by Alphatart and Sumpul (2020) has been released on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 and it is updated every Sunday and Wednesday ("The Remarried Empress", 2020). The version used in this paper is the English one published on the Line Webtoon app.

*The Remarried Empress* is a serial webtoon with genres of fantasy, drama, and romance. The first episode portrays Navier (the Empress of the Eastern Empire) who accepts divorce from her unfaithful husband Sovieshu (the Emperor of the Eastern Empire) who cheated on her, despite their love story since childhood (Alphatart & Sumpul, 2020). The first episode is to be the climax of the whole story. The chosen panels from the 1<sup>st</sup> episode, in this paper, involve innocence of childhood and friendship, love of youth, and imperial marriage faces an end. These panels indicate an evolution in the relationship between its main characters. Further, they support the explosion of the upcoming events and impact their progress along with the plot of the story. Therefore, the following section would illustrate



tools in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework to be applied to six panels from the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of *The Remarried Empress*.

### 3.2 Tools

Panels from the first episode of *The Remarried Empress* would be analyzed only under two dimensions in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of visual grammar. The first dimension would highlight the representational meanings of the represented participants in two aspects. First, the narrative aspect would investigate if the chosen represented participants are dynamic and implying actions or reactions. Then, the conceptual aspect would check meanings behind the static states for both represented participants and circumstances to highlight their symbols (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Secondly, the interactive dimension would take place to figure out the relationships between the represented participants and their viewers that are implied by the author or the creator through different gazes, framing with varied sizes, angles and points of view, and modality makers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

### 3.3 Procedures

This research paper was first held to derive away from the traditional linguistic disciplines to investigate innovative approaches in the linguistics field. Henceforth, meaning-making signs were the main target for searching about theories that can be applied in this field which involves types of modes that compose meaning in a certain culture and among individuals of a certain society. Thus, searching for the two variables of the topic of this research was about reading in different visual theories and finding a domain to apply on.

The first goal was achieved through different prolonged readings in various websites and databases to find out a recent study held by Ly and Jung (2015) which conducted a visual design analysis using the theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and applying it to two advertisements. This recent study became the inspiration for this current study which aims to apply the same framework of visual grammar to a new different domain that has not been mentioned in the context of visual analysis. In finding this new domain to be discussed, webtoons came to be the first suggestion for being a fan of drama series.

Then, an exhaustive search was held to distinguish if this domain has been used before in visual studies, in general. The answer was supported by a recent case study by Norin (2018) stated that webtoon is a recent type of media that still does not have much focus on it. Additionally, in searching for previous studies in the EKB database, the ELSEVIER database was the only one that provided few research articles on the framework only while there was nothing about the second variable; webtoons.

For the data itself, it was chosen at the first trial to be a webtoon for its success as an entertainment industry. It is a recent digital literary work made to suit modern visual readers nowadays. It is created to be read everywhere and anytime. Thus, it does not consume money or time from its viewers. *The Remarried Empress* was selected for rendering the climax of the

whole story in its first episode. Therefore, impacting the plot of the story and attracting many viewers to follow up its unfolding events.

The analysis of this research paper would be conducted on six panels from the first episode of *The Remarried Empress*. The analysis is held based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework. The visual items in the six panels will be discussed under two dimensions: representational and interactive. These dimensions would be followed in the analysis of panels that are entailing the two main characters altogether, Empress and Emperor, in the events of the first episode in *The Remarried Empress* webtoon.

#### 4. Analysis, Representational Dimension





*How are the main participants represented altogether in the first episode of The Remarried Empress webtoon?*

This research question is going to be discussed in two parts under the representational dimension. The first part will deal with the participants depicted in the above panels. Then the second part is going to investigate processes depicted in these panels under the representational dimension.

#### **4.1.1 Participants**

##### ***4.1.1.1 Represented participants:***

- The Prince and the Princess in panels 1, 2&3
- The Emperor and the Empress in panels 4, 5&6

The two main characters in the above panels are to be introduced as represented participants which are placed to represent some information and play important roles in the plot. Each panel has the same represented participants, but they differ in the representation of their age, appearance, and the shape of their relationship. For instance, panel 1 represents the participants at their childhood stage showing their pure soul and innocence. Panels 2&3 represent their youth and their intimate relationship. Panel 4&5 represent their luxurious appearance in a photo framing their marriage relationship. Then, this photo, in panel 6, has a crack leading to the end of that marriage.

## 4.1.2 Representational processes

### 4.1.2.1 Narrative processes

Process	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6
Action process	Actor: Prince Vector: Putting the wreath of flowers Goal: Princess' head (Transactional action process)			Actor: Emperor Vector: Holding the Empress' back with a hand Goal: Empress (Transactional action process)		
Reactional process	Reacter: Prince Vector: Eye-line (Gaze with a smile) Phenomenon: Princess (Transactional reactional process)		Reacters: Both Prince and Princess Vectors: A gaze with a smile Phenomenon: Both Prince and Princess (Transactional process)	Reacter1: Emperor Vector: Gaze Phenomenon: Empress (Transactional) Reacter2: Empress Vector: staring at an unknown object (non-transactional process)	Reacter1: Emperor Vector: Gaze Phenomenon: Empress (Transactional) Reacter2: Empress Vector: staring at an unknown object (non-transactional process)	Reacters: Both Emperor and Empress Vector: gazing at something unknown for the viewer (non-transactional process)

The represented participants are depicted into two narrative representational processes; action and reactional processes. In panel 1, the action process depicted, is composed of the prince; the Actor, who is putting a wreath of flowers on the princess's head; the Goal that receives the action. Then, the action done by the Actor; putting the wreath of flowers, is to be the Vector. Like panel 1, the action process in panel 4 entails both of the spouses where the emperor is the Actor, the empress is the Goal and the action of holding the empress' back

gently by the emperor is the Vector. Both of the action processes in panels 1&4 are transactional action processes where Goal; the princess or the empress exists.

For the reactional processes, they are represented in panels 1, 3, 4 &5 in which the prince in panels 1&3 or the emperor in panels 4 &5 is the Reacter while his princess or the empress is the Phenomenon. The act of gazing or the eye-line that comes from the prince's or the emperor's side towards his princess or empress is the Vector in these reactional processes. Moreover, the structure of these reactional processes is a transactional one in which the Phenomenon is present. On the other hand, the reactional processes in panels 4, 5&6 are non-transactional ones where the empress is looking at something unknown for the viewer; the Phenomenon does not exist. As well as, in panel 6, the emperor is a Reacter looking at an unknown object.

#### 4.1.2.2 Conceptual processes

Process	Panel 1	Panel 2	Panel 3	Panel 4	Panel 5	Panel 6
Symbolic conceptual processes					Carrier: Empress Symbolic Attributes: exaggerated size, sharp focus on her face, and intense colors and tone.	Carriers: Emperor and Empress Symbolic Attributes: exaggerated size, crack, and blurred details in the photo.

Symbolization is a conceptual process that exists in these panels. It helps in giving significance to the participant within the visual design and highlights things around it. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the symbolic conceptual process consists of the Carrier; the participant tended to be signified with values or attributes and the Symbolic Attributes; traits, values, or features given to the Carrier to be identified. For instance, panel 5 represents a symbolic conceptual process where the empress is the Carrier, and the Symbolic attributes that highlight and signify the empress are the exaggerated size, sharp focus on her face, and the intense colors and tone of her representation. They give her traits of suitability, adequacy, convenience, pride, and a source of admiration to demonstrate her role as an empress.

While in panel 6, there are two Carriers for the symbolic process; the emperor and his empress, and their Symbolic Attributes that develop negative meanings to their marriage relationship. Their Symbolic Attributes are placed in an exaggerated size focusing on the crack in the photo to suggest the idea of their break-up. They, also, represented in blurred

details to depict how sad the atmosphere is between the spouses and to show that their marriage relationship is diminishing and coming to an end.

All that has been presented in this section answers the first research question that intended to discover how the main participants are represented altogether in the six panels of *The Remarried Empress*. The above analysis and its discussion shows that the six panels have represented the main participants in both narrative and conceptual processes. However, the narrative processes are, in these panels, more than that of the conceptual ones. The participants are shown in five reactional processes while they only achieve two action ones to support the idea within these panels. On the other hand, only one conceptual process is entailed in the representation of two panels. The symbolization conceptual process is only used twice. Therefore, these panels tend to be narrative, rather than, conceptual which helps in communicating more meanings in the dynamic representations of its characters. Henceforth, the represented characters work on supporting and highlighting the main purpose of these panels which is a story shaped in a webtoon form for the audience.

#### 4.1 Interactive Dimension

*What kind of relations are between the main participants of The Remarried Empress webtoon and its viewer?*

The above research question is going to be investigated in four categories under the interactive dimension in which the relationship between the viewer and the creator of the visual domain through the represented participants will be tackled. These four categories are gaze, social distance and framing, angle, as well as modality of the above six panels in the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of *The Remarried Empress*.

##### 4.2.1 Gaze

Gaze	Panel 1	Panel 2	Panel 3	Panel 4	Panel 5	Panel 6
Relationships with Viewer	Offer		Offer	Offer	Offer	Offer

Gestures accompanied the gaze	The Prince's and Princess' smiling, laughing, and blushing facial expressions		The Princess' opened mouth and pointing finger & the Prince's gentle smile	The Emperor's gentle smile & the Empress' neutral facial expressions	The Emperor's gentle smile & the Empress' neutral facial expressions	The Empress' neutral facial expressions & the Emperor's lowered eyebrows and tightly pulled lips
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In the above panels, there is no direct contact between the represented participants and the viewer. Thus, these panels are offer ones. Offer images are introduced by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework as they represent the participants to the viewer as a source of information. Every panel represents a message that tends to inform the viewer of the evolving relationship between the two main characters; therefore, the evolution in the unfolding events of the plot. The viewer can receive these meanings through his or her interaction with the reactional representational processes that are found in the above panels.

These reactional processes play a vital role in shaping the relationship, as a sequence of events, between the two main characters from childhood till the present. The reactional process depicted in panel 1 reveals the primitive and pure love that the prince and the princess have for each other and that is represented by their gestures of smiling, laughing, and blushing. For panel 3, it is clear that they have reached the stage of youth and maturity; thus, their love relationship pumped up with trust and self-confidence which are shared and reflected in their eyes' contact with one another. Then, their photo on the wallpaper, which has different representations in panels 4 & 5, shows a decline in the reaction of the empress and her gestures towards the emperor. Finally, in panel 6, both of them show a dull face and a sad one with no reactional processes towards one another, instead, both of them gaze at nowhere indicating that their relationship is to have an end and that they would have a break-up.

#### 4.2.2 Social Distance & Framings

Distances and Framings	Panel 1	Panel 2	Panel 3	Panel 4	Panel 5	Panel 6
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Social Distance	Far social distance	Close personal distance	Far personal distance	Far social distance	Close personal distance	Close personal distance
Framings	Long shot	Close-up	Medium-close shot	Long shot	Close-up	Close-up
Relationships bet. Viewer & participants	Formal & Impersonal	Intimate & Demand	Personal	Formal & Impersonal	Intimate & Demand	Intimate & Demand

The size of the frames in which the main characters of the above panels are represented suggests the social distance between the represented participant and the viewer. Therefore, it is another way of communication between the viewer and the creator of the represented participants. This interactive channel between the viewer and the represented participants used by the creator to conduct meanings that support the arrangement of events in these panels and the main idea of the plot of this *webtoon*.

Therefore, panels 1& 4 are represented with long shots to depict a far social distance between the viewer and the participants. These panels demand the viewer to have a formal and impersonal relationship with the participants. They indicate and maintain their state of supremacy and royalty from a young age as depicted in panel 1. They, as well, put them in the highest ranking in society as they are the emperor and the empress as represented in panel 4.

On the other hand, panels 2& 5 are represented with close-up frames to implicate a close personal distance between the viewer and the represented participants. Both of these panels 2&5 demand the viewer to closely view and investigate the relationship between the emperor and the empress and to compare it now and then. Thus, the close-up, in panel 2, implies an explicit intimate relationship in which the participants are too close to each other while falling in a deep sleep together, yet in panel 5, the close-up frame is represented paradoxically, not for its real purpose, to induce the viewer to investigate and consider the change in their relationship along with the unfolding events.

As well panel 6 is represented with a close-up which does not imply any intimate meaning for its participants' relationship. It puts the spot on what happens between them; the break-up and the crack in their marriage. Moreover, panel 3 is the only panel represented with a medium-close shot to indicate a far personal distance between the viewer and the participants. It is represented as a far distance to remind the viewer of the limitations between him/ her and the participants; therefore, supporting the idea of the high state of these participants. It also indicates a personal one to encourage the viewer to engage with their relationship that entails love, trust, and respect and to share mood and atmosphere of harmony, admiration, and adore with the viewer.



### 4.2.3 Angle

Type of angle	Panel 1	Panel 2	Panel 3	Panel 4	Panel 5	Panel 6
Horizontal angle	Frontal	Oblique	Frontal	Oblique	Frontal	Frontal

All panels are represented in horizontal angles either oblique or frontal plane. Panels 1, 3, 5&6 are represented in a frontal plane horizontal angle which reflects the creator's intention to interact with the viewer and involve and engage him/ her with the represented participants. Hence, the viewer has to investigate the relationship between the participants and their evolution within the events. On the other hand, panels 2&4 are represented in oblique horizontal angles which tend to make the represented participants away from reach, detached, and prefer disengagement from others. It serves as another evidence for supporting the identity of the two main characters within the plot; it introduces their higher hierarchy social state. Therefore, horizontal angles are represented as offer entities in the interaction dimension. They help in proceeding with the events within the plot and provide the viewer the important information supporting the main characters.

### 4.2.4 Modality

Modality Markers	Panel 1	Panel 2	Panel 3	Panel 4	Panel 5	Panel 6
Color saturation	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full
Color differentiation	A diverse range of colors	Diverse (Warm Palette)	A diverse range of colors	Diverse (Warm Palette)	Diverse (Warm Palette)	Diverse (Warm Palette)
Color modulation	Modulated	Modulated	Modulated	Modulated	Modulated	Modulated
Representation	Maximum	Maximum	Maximum	Maximum	Maximum	Maximum
Contextualization	Minimum	Absence of background	Minimum	Detailed background	Absence of background	Minimum
Brightness	Maximal value	Maximal value	Maximal value	Maximal value	Maximal value	Maximal value
Illumination	Low value	Low value	Low value	High value	Low value	Low value
Depth	eye-level point of view	eye-level point of view	eye-level point of view	eye-level point of view	eye-level point of view	eye-level point of view

In these panels, modality is tackled from a sensory point of view as mentioned above in the theoretical background section. All panels are represented in intense colors with full saturation that appears to be pure and real for the viewer. They indicate reliability for the existence and the role of the represented participants. As well, the choice of differentiated warm color palettes (red, orange, and yellow) depicts emotions of harmony, respect, and love between the two main characters in these panels. Also, the representation of modulated colors with different shades supports meaning delivered within the colors and the represented participants altogether. Therefore, these saturated, differentiated, and modulated colors support the atmosphere, in these panels, and depict respect, trust, love, and admiration. They also achieve a high modality value that emphasizes the reality of these themes in the context of these panels.

Moreover, the foreground representation of the represented participants almost has the same high value in the six panels. All panels provide details about the way the participants are dressed in each panel and focus on their facial expressions and gestures that contribute greatly to delivering the representational meanings by the two main characters; henceforth, the plot of the story. Thus, every panel succeeds in representing details for its foreground participants. Therefore, representation, as a modality marker, achieves a high value of creditability for the roles of the represented participants in these panels.

Supporting the representation of the foreground participants, contextualization achieves minimum values in all panels to give the credit to the representational meanings delivered to the viewer through these participants. For instance, panel 1 is contextualized with a pinky and glowing representation for the background to support the lovely childhood memory of the two characters, yet the representation of a clear sky in panel 3 depicts the characters' youth as active, energetic, ambitious, compassionate, and determined. While panels 2, 5&6 are contextualized with plain backgrounds, panel 4 is represented with a fine-detailed wallpaper background. This wallpaper plays a vital role in demonstrating how sophisticated and luxurious the life of the two characters is; considering their high-ranking status in society. Moreover, panels 4, 5& 6 are sharing the same golden frame in their background, but, in panel 6, it is explicitly represented to be cracked, in an exaggerated size, by the empress's hair on the background too. The hair reveals that the empress is the one who ends this relationship; henceforth, it is a supporting detail in the plot.

For the rest of the modality markers, brightness indicates a high modality value in which maximum brightness degrees are applied on the panels by their creator. Yet, panel 6 seems to have the lowest value of brightness among them. On the other hand, the value of illumination achieves low values in all of the six panels, except for panel 4 which has the highest value of representation of shade and light. Moreover, depth in all panels is represented in a high modality value where these panels are created from a central perspective. The viewer looks at these panels from an eye-level point of view. This perspective depicts a high degree of reality for the representations of the two participants and their attached meanings within the context of panels that is guided by the plot of the first episode of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon.

The above analysis and its discussion in this section answer the second research question which investigates what kind of relations exist between the represented participants and their viewers. Therefore, all of the six panels succeeded in presenting the interactions between the viewer and the represented participants in four categories. First, the Gaze between the participants and the viewer constructed Offer relations throughout five panels and claimed panels to be informative. Second, social distances and framings approached the viewer and made him/ her closer to the meanings in these panels. Hence, close-personal distances are achieved with close-ups in three panels, far-social distances are also represented with long shots in two panels, and a far-personal distance is presented in one panel with a medium-close shot. Third, the Horizontal angles were represented in both frontal and oblique perspectives for the viewer. Within the six panels, the viewer feels involved with the represented participants four times and detached only twice.

Finally, Modality markers came to emphasize the truth of the information which was interacted between the participants and the viewer. The creditability of such information and meanings was proved in high values of color saturation, color modulation, color differentiation, representation, brightness, and low values of contextualization and illumination, along with, the eye-level perspective as the depth of the six panels. Therefore, in these panels, the first three categories established relations with the viewer to contact him/ her with the participants, inform and approach him/ her to the intended meanings. On the other hand, the fourth one was represented to investigate how far this communicated information can be true and support the plot within the story of these panels of the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Summary of the study**

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have stated that non-linguistic visual items can deliver meanings, as well as, linguistic ones. Consequently, the visual grammar framework is applied on six panels from *The Remarried Empress* webtoon. The aim was to discover how visual items of a webtoon can communicate meanings under Kress and van Leeuwen's representational and interactive dimensions. Then, the research questions came to investigate in what way the main participants are represented, and how they are associated with the viewer. Consequently, the findings showed that the two main characters were represented in the narrative processes more than that of the conceptual one for the main purpose of this type of webtoon which intends to narrate its story to the viewer. Moreover, it was found that these characters were represented with four categories under the interactive dimension that made the viewer got involved, informed, and engaged in a creditable way with the impeded meanings delivered along the plot of the six panels.

### **5.2 Limitations of the study**

Both the theory used and the data are limited within this research paper. First, the data is a serial webtoon and the 1<sup>st</sup> episode happened to be more than 50 panels. Each panel entails numerous visual elements, yet it is difficult to tackle every single detail due to time restraints.

Thus, the data was limited to six panels to be chosen and analyzed. As well, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework was limited into two dimensions to be used in this study as each dimension has various aspects that need wider time to be applied on every visual item of each panel. Thus, only representational and interactive dimensions were directed to be covered in the analysis of the six panels not letting a chance for the compositional dimension to be engaged. Therefore, conducting a research paper by using a broader linguistic approach, as the visual grammar, and inclusive data, as a webtoon, can limit the points covered in the context of the framework and the data used due to time restrictions.

### **5.3 Implications for future research**

The above limitations show that there are lots of details still uncovered in this research paper. For instance, panels of secondary characters were not mentioned in this paper. Thus, continuing a further investigation about the characteristics of all the visual elements in *The Remarried Empress* webtoon is recommended. Furthermore, bearing in mind the previous limitations would recommend choosing a webtoon character to be tackled extensively under the three dimensions of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework. Otherwise, it would be recommended to choose one point from Kress and van Leeuwen's dimensions, for instance, color as a modality marker, to be applied concisely on the whole episode of *The Remarried Empress* webtoon.

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## Appendix



**Panel 2**



**Panel 3**



**Panel 4**



**Panel 5**



**Panel 6**

## حكي الوجع : " رسائل لن تصل أبدا" منى عاشور " طريقتين لا ثالث لهما

بقلم: أ.م.د. رشا كمال

أستاذ مساعد الأدب الصيني المعاصر والترجمة ورئيس قسم اللغة الصينية بجامعة بدر

عندما تطبق علينا الدنيا بنواتها وأعاصيرها، تقف النفس البشرية بين طريقتين، إما اغراق النفس في الوجع والألم واجتزاز عذابات الماضي وتفصيل مصائب الحاضر، أو اللجوء من الدائرة مفرغة من الهروب بلا بداية وبلا نهاية، إلى بحر التناسي حيث تترك كل موجة منه تحملك إلى عالم مزيف من الابتسام والضحك، يمنعك ويمنع عقلك الباطن من تذكر واقع الأليم.

منى عاشور في مجموعتها القصصية "رسائل لن تصل أبدا" تختار عن عمد الطريق الأول لتأخذ القارئ وتدخل به إلى منطقة ثرية في عوالم النفس البشرية والتي تعلى تقنية سردية محدثة "حكي الوجع" خاصة مع عتبة الإهداء إلى الذين يتخطاهم الموت، فتنزل أرواحهم معلقة بين السماء والأرض وإذا انتبه القارئ لتاريخ نشر المجموعة نهاية عام 2020 وبداية عام 2021، لربما ساند "منى" في اختيارها حيث الكرة الأرضية كلها تتوجع وتتألم على إثر الضربات الشرسة لجائحة كورونا وموجاتها المتتالية التي تركت كل بيت وكل عائلة تتألم لفقد حبيب أو صديق.

في مجموعتها "رسائل لن تصل أبدا" تقافزت منى عاشور على الحدود الفاصلة بين " الومضة " و"القصّة القصيرة جدا" و"القصّة القصيرة"، لتقدم وجبة محدودة المقادير بلا زيادة أو نقصان، وتترك القارئ في معظم الأحيان مسروق اللب سارح في نهايات قصصها والتي جاءت معظمها ذات نهايات مفتوحة تدفع القارئ دفعا ليتأمل في المغزى الذي تسعى ورائه الكاتبة، حتى تلك القصص ذات النهايات المحددة جاءت أكثرها بنهايات غير متوقعة أو لنقل أنها تشعر كمن وكأن مازال هناك كلام لم يقال بعد، مازال هناك أحداث خبئتها "منى" عن قارئها، وكأنها ترسل لنا رسالة: توقع ما لا يمكنك توقعه، لاتأمن لهذا العالم ! لا تأمن حتى لحروف القصص التي أمامك، إنها تنهيك وتسرق عقلك ولو للحظات هنا وهناك.

وقد تفاجئت عند البحث عن المجموعة على محركات البحث أن عنوان المجموعة ظهر كعنوان لعدة مجموعات وكتب أخرى وحتى عدد غير قليل من المنتديات تحمل هذا الاسم "رسائل لن تصل أبدا" وكأن هناك اجماع من أهل هذا العصر على أن الكثير في الرسائل التي تجوب مكثونات نفوسنا قد تضل طريقها إلى مستقبلها ولا تجد غير صفحات الكتب حضنا لها يحميها من ضربات الزمن ويسجلها في ذاكرتنا مهما رفضناها.

المجموعة تضم 17 قصة قصيرة هي " باقى من الزمن دقيقتين"، "الزنزانة المتحركة"، "مر الحلوى"، "رسائل نوفمبر"، "كائن حي"، "المفاتيح النحاسية"، "ساعة صفا"، "حلم عزيزة"، "صيد الربيع"، "وحيد"، "صلوات البحر"، "المرايا"، "جورب نابليون"، "عتاب وحنين" "صرخة"، "حتى بعد"، "يوم من الحرية" صادرة عن مؤسسة حورس الدولية.

عتبة المفتتح ترسخ اختيار الكاتبة لحكي الوجع، وفيها توجه حديثها للقارئ بصيغة أمره "واعلم....." وإن كانت رسالتها لقارئها في المفتتح في تتميز بالوضوح والغموض في آن واحد. فهي تأخذ بيده إلى طريق يتعرف فيه على تفاصيل نفسه ولكن بحرفية، حيث تعمد لأساليب النفي وجمل الصلة فتترك القارئ في حالة رمادية يشعر أنه واعى لكل شيء ولكن في الوقت ذاته يسأل نفسه هل حقاً فهمت قصدها أم أن الأمر أعقد من ذلك؟ فلا يجد مخرجاً سوى أن يسارع في نهم قصصها.

## عرض سريع لقصص مجموعة "رسائل لن تصل أبداً"

في "باقي من الزمن دقيقتان" تنتهي القصة بعبارة "لينطفئ شوقه" لتختصر منى عاشور كل مشاعر الحنين والوجع لشاب يفتقد أمه التي رحلت عن عالمه، تراقبه منى في صباحه الأخير متحسرا على تفاصيل حياته بدون مالكة الحارس؟ لتصفنا على وجوهنا مع أول قصة، فقد أنهت القصة بوفاة الشاب مصدوما بسيارة ليذهب لها "وينطفئ شوقه".

"مر الحلوى" تركيبة القصة تشبه القصة الأولى، حيث تمتعك الكاتبة بوصفها الدقيق لغلام محبوب يبيع الحلوى، ثم تقفل أبواب الابتسام في وجهك عندما تفاجئك أن الساردة استوقفها الغلام لأنه يشبه ولدها الذى غرق قبل 5 سنين. "فقد" ثم "فقد" ثم "فقد" ..... إنها حقا "مر" مثل العلقم.

**رسائل نوفمبر:** لكل واحد فينا قصة لم تنته، مهمة لم تكتمل، رسائل لم ولن تصل أبدا. نعتزل الناس نرفض الاندماج، نتقن دور "الإلتهاء"، حتى تختار الأقدار طريقتها في أن تجبرنا على مواجهة هذه الصرخة التي لم تسكت بداخلنا أبداً.

**كائن حى:** مع العنوان تخيلت خيالات سوداوية ومشاعر مرتبكة لكنها كانت بمثابة محطة استراحة من الفقد والألم والحنين. الراوي كائن سكندري يبحث عن كائن حى آخر يشاركه صباحاته وينتج تفاصيلها، حياته فارغة يشغلها بمراقبة فتاة لطيفة. كقارئ شعرت أنها قد تكون نفسها. "منى"

**المفاتيح النحاسية:** تجربة فقد أخرى ولكنها "عيني عينك" حيث تسجل من خلال السرد بضمير المتكلم تفاصيل فقد بيت العائلة، مرتع الطفولة.

و لأنني دارسة لتقنيات الادب السينمائي، تمنيت أن استطع استخدام تقنية المونتاج وقص بعض التفاصيل المؤلمة التي أصرت الكاتبة أن تصل بها إلى درجة متطرفة من الألم وجدل الذات.

تخطت الكاتبة بنية السرد بضمير المتكلم لتعتمد لضمير الغائب في حوار محتويات البيت التي تتعرض للهدم والهتك، ساعد الكاتبة في سرد حكاية وجع الشابة المالكة السابقة للبيت والتي خرجت مهلهلة المشاعر ترمق بعض المفاتيح النحاسية القديمة.

**ساعة صفا:** أحد أفخاخ منى عاشور، قد تعتقد خطأ أن القصة تسد تفاصيل يومية متكررة، إلا إنها في حقيقتها "حنين ما بعد الفقد" فقد حبيب أو صديق عزيز وجوده بجوارها. ورغم اشتياقها له، فهي مؤلفة تظهر قوة مصطنعة تكتسبها من تفاصيل حياتها اليومية وعملها وإلحاح دار النشر والكثير من المشاغل.

**حلم عزيزة:** عزيزة فقدت زوجها في أحد حوادث القطارات، و الكاتبة تسرد من خلال بنية سردية متلازمة كفاحها لزواج البنات والابن الوحيد تبنى مهمة حماية الآخرين من فقد أحبائهم تحت عجلات القطارات مثل والده. عزيزة تمضى أيامها منتظرة مبلغ التعويض وأملها نار لا تنطفئ.

**وحيد:** لكل انسان نصيب من اسمه، الكاتبة تسرد علينا قصة متكررة بضمير الغائب فهو غائب دوماً و لا محل له من الاعراب، قصة الأباء المغتربين خارج البلاد يتحولون إلى بنوك افتراضية منفصلة عن واقع العائلة و أفرادها. تقود الكاتبة قارئها حتى لا يتعاطف مع البطل الذى أفنى عمره في الغربة ولم يعد لوطنه حتى ليكرم والديه في رحلتهم الأخيرة ليطيع ضغوط زوجته سعيها المحموم وراء الرفاهية. ليكون مصيره خيانة مكررة من زوجته ومحاميه يسلبناه شقى عمره ويظل وحيد وحيداً.

**جورب نيلون:** تقرأها كأنها بوست في أحد صفحات المشاكل الاجتماعية على تطبيق فيس بوك التي تنتظر اقتراحاتنا وحلولنا. الزوجة تحاور نفسها كأنها مجنونة عن شكوكها في سلوكيات زوجها مؤخراً وتجمع الأدلة، لكنها في وسط الاحداث تصدر قرارها "الن واجهه". لتكتشف في النهاية أن الطرف الثانى في الخيانة هى صديقتها المقربة، و تنتهى القصة و القارئ يسأل نفسه "من ستواجهين الآن؟"



يوم من الحرية: الكاتبة تنهى مجموعتها القصصية بحقيقة مُرة مثل العلقم، قد لا نقبل الحرية حتى عندما تُمنح لنا. فمع اعتياد القيود والاسوار يخشى المرء البُعد عنها ويخضع إلى سياسة الطرف المهيمن والمسيطر.

### سرد الجمادات والواقعية السحرية:

منى عاشور عمدت إلى عالم العجائبيات والغرائبيات، واقتربت من عوالم الفانتازيا والواقعية السحرية في بعض من قصص هذه المجموعة، مثل: "الزنزانة المتحركة" و"صيد الربيع" و"صلوات البحر" و"صرخة" و"عتاب وحنين" و"المرايا".

وقد تنوعت أدوات الكاتبة في هذه المحطات: فمرة تبدأ من لقطة واقعية عادية ثم سرعان ما تحوّل الموقف والأحداث إلى أبطال مغايرين تؤثر فيهم الحوادث الغريبة الفانتازية وتحوّل سير الأحداث بالتالي تحوّلًا كبيرًا.

ومرة تلتقط بعض المهمشيين المرتبطين بالخرافات ويميلون لتفسير الحوادث حولهم على نحو غرائبي حتى يصلوا إلى اليقين.

واستدعت خلال ذلك لغة عصرية تبرز التفاصيل اليومية مع ما يصدر على أسنة الناس من ابتذالات وتجاوزات.

وبالطبع اعتمدت على التناص وظهرت ملامح بعض الحكايات الأسطورية وحتى ملامح أفكار من حلقات تليفزيونية.

وربما يكون التجلي الأكبر لعالم منى عاشور الغرائبي وتجربتها السردية ومقاربتها بين الواقعية السحرية وعوالم ألف ليلة وليلة قد اكتملت تمامًا في قصة المرايا، حيث وجدنا ذلك العالم شديد الخصوصية الذي يحوي الخرافات والحكايات الغرائبية وبنيت من خلاله عالمًا شديد الجاذبية والتأثير، لتسرد علينا حكاية الشبح "كورونا" الذي حولنا معه إلى أشباح.

## تودو.. ما أجمل العالم بدون الكبار!

منير عتيبة

مدير مختبر السرديات – مكتبة الإسكندرية

برغم أن رواية "فانوس تودو الأحمر" تتكون من أكثر من ثلاثين ألف كلمة، إلا أنها أقرب لأن تكون "نوفيلًا" أو "قصة طويلة"، بحكم قلة عدد شخصياتها، وتركيزها على فترة زمنية محدودة، وأحداث قليلة برغم تفاصيلها العديدة. العمل تأليف الكاتب الصيني "شيه هوا ليانغ، ترجمة رنا عبده.

منذ البداية يضعك الكاتب أمام الفكرة الرئيسية لعمله، الفتى المراهق؛ تودو، سيكون عليه حل كل المشاكل التي يتسبب فيها الكبار، وسيفعل ذلك بحب، وبرضا يصل أحيانًا إلى درجة السذاجة.

ففي المشهد الأول يرى تودو عنف العم "سان لنغ" الذي يضرب حماره بشدة وغضب، فيساومه حتى يأخذ منه الحمار مقابل قطعة أرض يملكها والد تودو.

ويظل الحمار طوال الأحداث شخصية روائية ساخرة مرحة صبورة عنيفة، قادرة على كشف ما في البشر من عنف وقلة صبر وبخل، أو طيبة ومحبة، فنكتشف شخصيات العم "سان لنغ"، والجد "تشانغ دو فو"، وهما فلاحان متخاصمان ومتنافسان طوال الوقت، برغم أن العم هو زوج ابنة الجد، ووالد حفيدته. وخلافهما يجعلهما يتنازلان لتودو عن الحمار، وعن عربة الحمار أيضًا.

أما والد تودو "تشنين شوي كو"؛ فهو رئيس عمال، يعين أبناء قريته للعمل معه في المدينة، ثم يخدمهم هو ومديره ويختفيان بمرتباتهم. والوالد على خلاف دائم مع أم تودو، يتخاصمان، ويتصالحان، طوال الوقت. ولتودو صديقة في مثل عمره تقريبًا؛ خمسة عشر عامًا، هي "تشانغ تشون ني" ابنة "سان لنغ" وحفيدة "تشانغ دو فو"، وله أخت صغيرة هي "شياو يو".

هذه هي كل شخصيات العمل، وكلها ترتبط ارتباطًا وثيقًا بتودو، لكن تودو لا يحب الارتباط بأحد، فقد اعتاد أن يعيش وحده منذ ترك والداه القرية وذهب الأب للعمل بالمدينة، وهو لا يحب وجودهم معه في القرية، لأنهما يحولان حياته الهادئة المستقلة إلى جحيم من الخلافات والمشادات والخصام، فأول سؤال يسأله تودو لأمه عندما يعود إلى المنزل ويجدها هي وأخته الصغيرة ("متى ستغادران؟"). رفعت الأم رأسها ونظرت إلى تودو وقالت: "لا أعرف." ثم وضعت الحطب في الموقد بقوة، وأردفت: "ربما لن تغادر. حدث شيء ما في موقع البناء، وهرب والدك ورئيس العمال...". لكن الأم لا تتحمل نظرات وحديث أهل القرية حول زوجها الذي سرق عرقهم وجهدهم وهرب، وهم فقراء في أشد الحاجة إلى مرتباتهم الضئيلة، فتهرب من القرية، وتترك البيت وابنتها الصغيرة ليكون على تودو أن يرعاهم وحده.

تعود الحياة أفضل بالنسبة لتودو بدون والديه، يرضى أخته على أكمل وجه، ويعدها للالتحاق بالمدرسة، بل ويذاكر لكل أطفال الجيران، فتساعده صديقه "تشانغ تشون ني" التي تقرر بعد ذلك الذهاب إلى المدينة لأنها لم تعد تستطيع تحمل العيش بالقرية بسبب خلافات والدها وجدها، لكنها مع ذلك تستمر على تواصل مع تودو الذي تحبه وتحترمه، لكنها لا تحب الاستسلام الذي يشوب شخصيته فتسخر منه (ضحكت تشون ني قائلة: "حقًا؟ أنا أيضًا معجبة بطيبة قلبك، لكنني أفقدت إلى ما تملكه أنت من القدرة على التحمل.."). ثم بدأ صوتها يصبح جديًا فجأة وهي تقول: "تودو، أظن أنك مع مرور الزقت تصبح مثل الحمار أكثر، فأنت تعمل بإصرار وجلد دون أن تتذمر، مستعد دائمًا للطاء، مخلص وتتحدى بالإيثار، كما أنك تختلس السعادة!".

ثم تكتشف "تشانغ تشون ني" أن والدة تودو موجودة بالمدينة، وأنها أصيبت بالجنون، وترقص في الشوارع، فينقلونها إلى منزلها رغمًا عنها. ونعرف أن والد تودو في المستشفى، وأن ابنه زاره مرتين ليطمئن عليه، ويعود الوالد أيضًا إلى البيت بما تبقى معه من نقود.

فما الذي فعلته طيبة تودو وصبره في التعامل مع الآخرين كبارًا وصغارًا وحمارًا؟! تغيرت شخصيات العمل عندما نظرت لما يفعله تودو، فبدأوا يتخلون عن طباعهم السيئة، ويصبحون أكثر طيبة ورغبة في مساعدة الآخرين، بتغيير العم والجد، وتعود الأم عاقلة وهادئة، ويقتنع الأب بأن يسدد ما عليه من ديون الآخرين حتى لا يضطر المستقبل لدفع فاتورة الماضي (فقال تودو وهو يحدق في وجه والده: "أبي، إذا لديك أموال إضافية، فقم بسداد المال الذي تدين به للآخرين!"). "لقد حسبت جيدًا كم المال الذي تدين به لأهل القرية خلال العام الماضي. لا يمكن أن نسمح للآخرين أن يلغوننا من وراء ظهورنا، فهذا متعب..." "يعيش الناس حياة صعبة. إذا لم تدفع المال، فسأسدده أنا عوضًا عنك في المستقبل!".

وفي النهاية يتعاون الجميع للاحتفال بأعياد الميلاد، وتعود "تشانغ تشون ني" لتحتفل معهم، فيصبح الكل سعداء. تبدو المشاهد التي يتدخل فيها؛ أو يتصرف الكبار، مليئة بالمشاكل، والتصرفات الحمقاء، والنصب، والسرقة، والجنون، والبخل، والطمع. أما المشاهد التي ينفرد بها الصغار فهي مليئة بالمرح، والحب، وتعلم الجديد، والقراءة،

والأحلام. لكن الصغار؛ المستقبل يمثله تودو، لا يقطع صلته بالكبار، بل يتحمل بعض نتائج أعمالهم، ويصلح نتائج الأعمال الأخرى، ويحاول التأثير فيهم ليتصرفوا بما يؤدي إلى مستقبل أفضل من ماضيهم وحاضرهم. الرواية بها جراءة تقديم الواقع الخشن في القرية، الفقر والحماسة والمشاحنات الكبيرة لأسباب تافهة والسرقة والجنون، لكن تغليفها كل ذلك بأسلوب ساخر وعطوف في الوقت ذاته، وأحداث بها الكثير من المرح، يجعل القارئ لا يصدم بقدر ما يفكر ويتعاطف مع شخصها، وبما يجعله في النهاية ينظر حوله إلى عالم لن يكون جيداً بالكبار فقط، ولا بالصغار فقط، بل بهما معاً، وحيوانتهما أيضاً، والأهم من ذلك بمشاعر وأفكار وقيم أفضل، تنبني على المحبة وتنتظر إلى مستقبل مشرق بانتظار الجميع.