Abdulrazzaq Al-Saadi's Twitter Micro-blogging: Saudi Men's Writing the Self in Cyberspace

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Abstract

Abdulrazzaq Al-Saadi is considered the first writer of a Twitter memoir, making his memoir thread a significant area of investigation as a cyber writing of the self and as a microblog. Twitter's microblogging service is considered one of the attainable literary practices, and its various recorded productions of such literary works led to the coining of the term 'Twitterature.' This paper sheds light on the internet memoir of the Saudi Arabian linguist, and it investigates it as a literary work in cyberspace and as a traditional writing of the self. This research debates that Al-Saadi's memoir is loyal to the criteria of Arab life narratives. It additionally argues that the writer practices self-censorship and control over his writing as a sign of social and cultural conformity. This work further suggests that Al-Saadi's memoir thread can be divided into national, familial, and academic categories. Finally, researchers examine the accessibility the memoir achieves as a cybertext and readers' interactions with its different classifications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Abdulrazzaq Al-Saadi, a retired professor of Arabic Language, began 'tweeting' his ongoing, memoir-like thread on March 15th,2023. The primary tweet in the thread has, as of June 11, 2023, 485k views, 260 retweets, 615 likes, 116 bookmarks, and 152 replies. From his main-first tweet alone, we can see those interacting with his thread from what their 'profile bios' and their 'likes' (topics they are interested in) suggest. Many Twitter users with similar careers and overall statuses to Al-Saadi interacted with the primary tweet. People with titles like 'Assistant Professors', writers, or even notable Saudi businessmen commented on his tweets and became involved in the subject matter he introduced. For example, Khalid AlJriwi, a Saudi writer and businessman, Ali Saad AlQahtani, Deputy Editorial Director of the cultural

column of Al-Jazira newspaper, and many others expressed an interest in language, culture, and religious studies. It is safe to assume that many readers are Saudi adults. Users' profiles show that some do not hold a significant social or professional status. Nevertheless, following and interacting with the Arabic linguist and professor suggest their interest in the topics he 'tweets.' The diversity of the readers' interactions, place of residence, age categories, educational levels, and social classes is interestingly significant, which makes it a fundamental part of the discussion in this paper.

The Saudi linguistics professor, Abdulrazzaq Farraj Al-Saadi, specialises in Morphology, Dialectology, philology, and lexicology. He was born in Khalis, a village southwest of AlMadina Almunwwara. Despite his influential presence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most of the infallible information provided in his thread about his life is purely academic rather than personal. His contribution in his 'Twitter thread' introduces us to information we would not be exposed to had he not documented his life experience or micro-blogged it himself. In Al-Saadi's earlier Tweets, he writes about his childhood and education. This paper focuses on the linguist's writings as a reference for analysis. The researchers translated the Tweets unless they stated otherwise. One of the significant events Al-Saadi describes as 'transforming' was when he first moved to Jeddah, the only big and advanced city in the kingdom, in 1965. He owes this transforming experience not only to his move-up in location but also to the reign of King Faisal, who was crowned as King of Saudi Arabia one year before his move to the city, with his efforts to modernise the country.

Al-Saadi explains the rationale of giving his thread the title *From a Tipper Driver to an Academic* by stating that from seventeen to twenty-four, he worked as a tripper driver for his need to work. Simultaneously, he highlights an important era when Saudi Arabia witnessed significant economic and political transformation. His return to school was immediate; he documented it by age twenty-two. It needs to be stated when exactly he dropped out of school. Still, one could assume that returning to high school in one's twenties is not something extraordinary but more inevitable to his generation. His memoir describes different stages of his academic life, some of his instructors, and subjects he liked most. He further illustrates scenes from his university events at KAU – A university in Saudi Arabia, Jeddah, that is ranked the first university locally and in the Middle East and 101 globally, according to the university's official website[1] – he acknowledges those years as "اجمل مراحل حياتي" "Most marvellous times in my life" (sa2626sa, 2023). His dilemma there signifies the suffering of his generation and uniquely shapes his character.

Al-Saadi founded the blog 'Almajma3.*BlogSpot' Majma'a Al-Lugha Al-Eftiradi* (Arabic Language Virtual Academy) in 2012[2]. This blog's aim is to "serving the style and dialects of the Arabic language." Through his blog, many Arabic Language academics from the Arab world get to '*post'* their essays and articles concerning Arabic-related topics from literature to linguistics, where people of interest read them in the most accessible fashion. The blog has its official Twitter account, run by Al-Saadi himself, where he takes a more interactive approach as his tweets focus only on dialects. Each tweet begins with 'Kalimat Al-Yawm' (Today's Words) and brings forth an Arabic word with its definition. Without requesting his followers, they share their national and regional backgrounds before revealing their usage of the Arabic term. With many participating from Africa to the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula, the Twitter handle is the same as the blog's (@almajma3). Along with his digital contribution, Al-Saadi published eleven journal articles, wrote four columns in different newspapers, and had five manuscripts. He published four books, which all have been published by the university where he worked and graduated from (IUM) with a Master's degree and a Ph.D. degree as well. His latest work, *Al-Saadiat,* is an independently online published book – a collection of essays on history and genealogy.

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[1] https://www.kau.edu.sa/Home.aspx?lng=ar
[2] http://almajma3.blogspot.com/2018/03/blog-post.html?m=1

On Al-Saadi's account, his memoir-like microblog seems to take over his profile. His tweets about Arabic linguistics have decreased after prioritising his memoir thread. He posts two to five times a day, and despite his subscription to Twitter Blue, which allows him to type up to four thousand characters, he does not go beyond three hundred characters. Given this fact, it would be difficult for his followers and any Twitter user to read a tweet with a speculated 571 to 1000 words. If Al-Saadi does exceed the limit of what unsubscribed users are used to, then readers would be less likely to keep up with his lengthy thread.

1.1. Research Questions

This research poses inquiries concerning the features that qualify Al-Saadi's microblog to be classified as a memoir. It also questions the writer's outspokenness in describing his life events. The paper further questions Al-Saadi's knowledge of his readers, their different categories, and their rationale for reading his memoir. Finally, this work wonders about the themes and events in the memoir and how far these narrations will continue to be articulated on Twitter.

1.2. Statement of the problem

This paper debates that Abdulrazzaq Al-Saadi's Twitter thread is a memoir-like micro-blog, and it examines the memoir's conventions as a type of writing of the self. This research argues that Al-Saadi practices self-censorship while writing his tweets. Thus, this research suggests that Al-Saadi, like most Arab writers, avoids depicting his personal life and focuses on his success story and his transformation from a Tipper Driver to an Academic, precisely as he titles the primary tweet of his thread. This work debates that Al-Saadi's Tweets about himself and his life mainly focus on social, national, and cultural aspects and how such elements have crafted his character and success academically and intellectually.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Self-Censorship

Life documentation, especially self-written ones, is the personal recording of historical events and the account of life experiences, often shared – intentionally or unintentionally – to reflect on personal growth. Some memoirists and autobiographers devote their texts to historical, political, national, social, and cultural observations. This can be linked to Satchidanandan's (2001) assertion that "Autobiography is a point of view on the writer's past life; awareness of the nature of self-being is essential to the full autobiographic art: the autobiographer is aware of himself describing himself in the past and is aware that this awareness is his present view of reality —and is aware of this awareness too" (p. 8). Sometimes, commentary on what they have witnessed is designed to expose the reader to a novel perspective and a different angle concerning a particular historical event or time. Spender (1980) suggests that an autobiographer "may be writing about himself because he is a part of history and his own best historian. Perhaps he thinks that the contribution he has made to politics or thought in his time should be recorded and that, being closest to it, he is the best person to record it" (p. 117). Placing an internal standpoint within an external context could enhance the understanding and significance of a text. With historical context brought into the picture of life narratives, a reader will not doubt the authenticity and truth in the text; in fact, historical contexts further prove validity and truthfulness.

Authenticity is a commonly challenged aspect of life narratives. This research does not aim to distinguish between true and false narratives. Still, it highlights methods that could lead a memoir or an autobiography to be the target of accusations of falsehood. Howarth (1974) proposes that strategies in autobiography writing lead readers to question its truthfulness. The first strategy is 'Oratory': the idealized version of the writer (p. 367). The second is 'Drama,' which dramatizes one's life (p. 371). The two strategies seem to adjust the truth rather than change it mainly. Nevertheless, it is not the absolute truth. A third aspect that can challenge

authenticity in an autobiography is memory and its unreliable nature and effect on the accuracy of life stories. Hence, autobiography and memoir readers should only sometimes expect the absolute truth from their authors. Fallibility in depicting one's life is done intentionally and unintentionally.

The term 'self-censorship' denotes the act of censoring oneself. The practice has existed throughout history and continues in various forms and contexts. Self-censorship is "a compromise act of creative personality's internal will to suit to the conjectural context of power so that it can always be "correct" with the daily politics" (Çipuri, 2015, p.77). Fundamentally speaking, 'self-censorship' is intentionally withholding or suppressing one's thoughts, opinions, or ideas to prevent backlash or consequences from social, cultural, and political exteriors. Safety for oneself is not always the primary purpose of self-censor; in many cases, it is also done for the consideration of others. "Others may choose to self-censor because they consider some topics off-limits, as being either damaging to their own identity, offensive or damaging to others" (Stroińska & Cecchetto, 2015, p. 181). This can apply to journalism or any act documenting a matter in which the writer is not personally involved. A journalist, a writer, and any individual with a voice can use this form of 'self-censor' to be mindful of others by adjusting words and actions to avoid harming and offending them.

Self-censorship is a common practice in life narratives. Authors might omit details or experiences from their stories to conform to societal, cultural, and in many cases, religious and political norms to avoid judgment and criticism. With autobiographers and memoirists, 'self-censorship' may be implemented in their works to save face and grace. "In autobiographical writing where traumatic situations are recounted, an author may choose to silence or modify in some way the facts associated with a memory that may be inconvenient, painful, shameful, or dangerous" (Stroińska & Cecchetto, 2015, p. 181). Although they recount events and experiences that made up their journey as individuals, they are unregulated to include every detail of their lives. Predominantly, they are free to choose and select what to include or exclude. An author's memoir or autobiographical account lacking personal and individual detail may reflect the writer's personality. Spender (1980) signifies that life narratives are considered a 'depersonalized autobiography' where the authors' sole method is to recollect their external surroundings but never speak of it internally (p.117). Self-censorship is accomplished in various forms. It can go unnoticed by readers and be counted as a stylistic choice for aesthetic purposes.

Self-censorship can limit the accuracy and credibility of written and spoken information, potentially compromising the truth. It can undermine trust by hindering open communication and lead to the withholding of valuable information. Readers may question the authenticity of a self-censored account by proposing that the omission of events and details is not only applied to personal information but also to historical accuracy. The argument of autobiographical accounts as historical documentation is then challenged, and if the author is accused of self-censorship, then their narrative is no longer entirely trustworthy. Yet, it is essential to understand that individuals have the right to choose what they express publicly, especially when speaking on safety measures; they should be allowed (anticipated even) to self-censor for their welfare and to secure their communities.

Self-censorship in Arab life narratives comes from adhering to the social and cultural norms of the region and being wary of the taboos and their consequences. Arab writers, following Arab scholars lead, quit the inner-self information and pay attention to their struggle for success stories. According to Sherif Hetata, an Egyptian physician, author, and activist:

> The reluctance to reveal oneself is particularly powerful in the Arab region. Autobiographies by authors from Arab countries are usually meant to win a battle (often political) with someone, to give a different account of events, and

to describe the author's prowess in one or more areas of life. The author's self remains carefully hidden. The self, the inner, secret self, is something a man (or a woman) in our region does not write about. (p. 124).

Modern Arab life narratives, precisely those written by men, documenting their success stories, and avoiding private personal struggles, can help defend their masculinity against threats. Hence, self-censorship might be heavily practiced for physical protection and social and mental security.

2.2.Twitter Microblogging

As a platform that people employ for diverse kinds of writing, Twitter was founded in 2006 to broadcast short posts, also known as tweets. Posts or tweets can include texts, images, videos, and GIFs tweeted separately or combined. Twitter's unique service that gained its most global popularity, is microblogging. Yardi & Boyd (2010) highlight that "Twitter affords different kinds of social participation. In the same way, a reader has to skim the front page of a physical newspaper to get to the comic section, most Twitter users will be exposed to varied slices of news" (p.26). This exposes many readers to "diverse conversations" and to "participating in topics they otherwise may not have" (Yardi & Boyd, 2010, p. 26). This indicates that Twitter is a service that introduces its users to vast areas – from political topics to literary ones. Blake et al. (2010) additionally emphasize that "Twitter is an innovative use of existing communication media technology allowing users to 'micro-blog'" (p.1257). Hence, Microblogging can be described as a short type of content that shares updates, thoughts, and opinions. One may raise the question of microblogging as a feature attached to Twitter: Would that make every Twitter user a 'micro-blogger'? the answer is yes, they are. With the beginning of social media platforms, blog sites were the first to conquer the internet, and with the launch of Twitter, the purpose was to replicate blog sites. Still, the difference was to shorten the posts, calling Twitter a microblogging service. Twitter users use this platform to consume its brief and concise posts that allow them to post or tweet quickly and easily at any time or space.

Another feature that fits with microblogging is Twitter's 'thread.' 'Threads' were introduced by Twitter in 2017, which helped users express more of what the character limit (280) can allow. According to X Crop, "A thread on Twitter is a series of connected Tweets from one person. With a thread, you can provide additional context, an update, or an extended point by connecting multiple Tweets together" (n.d). 'Twitter thread' significance lies in allowing users to 'tweet' more in-depth material to be shared in an organized manner; the series of tweets tied in a thread would make it easier for followers to read and access the platform.

Employing 'Twitter threads' can be used for real-time microblogging and to enhance the literary quality of tweets if literary devices, such as metaphor and allusion, were implemented. But before declaring the unique relationship between Twitter and literature, we must identify the possible use of threads to writers' advantage, especially storytellers. Writers can utilize the serial and episodic quality of 'Twitter threads' in writing fictional or nonfictional stories. "Social media genres are inherently episodic, consisting of posts, comments, and updates published over time: the environment par excellence where seriality might flourish" (Page, 2013, p.36). The ' Twitter thread ' presents a sequential narrative parallel to the seriality of social media genres, while the tweets attached to the thread are episodic. The seriality of stories is not a new concept in the literature scene, as novels in the 1800s to mid-1900s were published in series. A difference in 'Twitter Threads' is the length of tweets. Nonetheless, both presentations are indistinctive.

The First Twitter novel to ever exist is by the American writer and TwitLit Pioneer Nicholas Belardes's *Small Places*. The Twitter novel was first tweeted on April 25th, 2008, and

ended on March 8th, 2010, with almost 30K words. According to Belardes's website, "the Twitter novel had gone viral globally, reaching a height of No. 73 in global Twitter rankings. No marketing or press releases were involved" (n.d). Belardes's TwitNovel gained little academic acknowledgement for its unorthodox medium of publishing his novel in 'tweets.' However, the novel attracted the attention of many newspapers and websites that approved Belardes's introduction of a new novel culture. It is crucial to remember that 'Twitter threads' were launched nine years after the publication of his story. This means that he could not allocate a thread on his account for the novel but had to sign up with an account dedicated solely to posting his novel in serial form. To this day, the novel is available on Twitter with the same handle name as the title: @SmallPlaces, while author Blardes has an active presence on the platform in his account with the handle @NickBelardes.

There has yet to be an official agreement on the origin of the coined term Twitterature. Still, its first documented and most famous appearance is in Alexander Aciman and Emmett Rensin's book *Twitterature: The World's Greatest Books in Twenty Tweets or Less* (2009). The text reimagines the protagonists of classical literary works narrating their literary universe as 'tweets.' Twitterature is a portmanteau of Twitter and literature that uses Twitter as a medium for literary publication for existing literary genres such as poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Some mistake Twitterature as a new literary genre. Poets and authors publish their literary works on the platform to use the accessibility and episodic nature of the tweets, as previously mentioned. Twitter can be considered a new publication method for artistic purposes as it is the medium that provides a feature that publication companies and regular prints do not, which the next point projects.

Real-time interaction is one of the eminent phenomena that social media provides for its users. Twitter interaction comes in four major modes: retweets, replies, likes, and quotes. The significance of the interaction on Twitter compared to other interactive platforms is that each interaction technique listed above will pop up on the writers' profiles and their followers' timelines. Consequently, these forms of communication on Twitter assist the exposure of users. As this paper suggests, Twitter poets and literary authors have readers from broader backgrounds. This interaction guarantees total accessibility and straightforwardness of literary microblogging on Twitter. For Twitterature purposes, writers can get a humane and short assessment of their work instead of the traditional reviews and papers of literary works. Finally, Twitter's availability to people from different classes and social and educational backgrounds made evaluating literary texts and creative works accessible to common people who were rejected by traditional critical methods.

3. DISCUSSION
3.1. Twitter as a medium for memoirs

The memoirist's unique way of presenting his life experiences on Twitter qualifies his documentation as the first memoir written on the platform. He informs his readers of the method he employs to revisit his memories. He denies that his micro-blogging aims to construct an 'autobiography.' He further explains that his autobiography will be documented somewhere else – in a collected diary named *Harf Illa* (*a Vowel*). Thus, this research examines the writer's tweets and debates that they are a detailed account of memories. Al-Saadi attempts to clarify the complications concerning the nature of his tweets. First, he explains that his 'Twitter thread' presents a memoir that registers the times that have shaped his individuality: "In my tweets, I dig in my memories and write glimpses of my life" (sa2626sa, 2023). In another tweet, he further announces: "I narrate all events and experiences that remained engraved in my memory, ones that influenced me and changed the course of my life. As well as telling some of my observations, impressions, successes, and failures" (sa2626sa, 2023). Upon reading his 'Twitter Thread,' readers can witness how Al-Saadi's individuality is constructed in the series of tweets he posts. He tackles familial, national, and, most importantly, academic aspects that

have contributed to the growth of his character. Renza (1977) explains the importance of narrating memories from the past by stating that this process helps a writer to "elucidate his present rather than his past" (p. 3). Al-Saadi documents in his 'Twitter Thread' memories and details that made him the man he is today. He achieves that by narrating his life from childhood in rural Saudi Arabia to adulthood as a well-respected and ambitious academic.

Correspondingly to his personal growth, Al-Saadi presents a historical and social record of national events from the sixties to the mid-eighties. As a Saudi man who lived his childhood in the sixties and his twenties in the eighties, Saudi readers, and even non-Saudi Arabs expect a true-life account as they now view him as a witness of an evolutionary time in the kingdom, which is precisely what Al-Saadi does in his 'Twitter thread.' His act of documenting that time in Saudi Arabia comes in the form of recollecting memories. This narration of the self justifies calling Al-Saadi's Twitter thread a memoir. The description of the social and historical contexts exposes readers from different nationalities to the past of the Saudi Kingdom. Hart (1979) explains that memoirs do not only serve to narrate a person's life story but "they are "really" of an event, an era, an institution, a class identity" (p. 195), which is similar to the case in this Twitter thread. Al-Saadi, like traditional memoir narrators, reveals with his tweets some information that, although personal to him, represents a larger community. In several tweets, he discloses that during his teenage years, he preferred to work rather than receive an education, admitting that this is a decision of many of the youth of his generation (sa2626sa, 2023). AlSaadi personalises the history of Saudi Arabia by telling stories that reveal historical events through employing a platform that is reachable by Saudis and Arabs from different nationalities. Spender (1980) indicates that "In literature, the autobiographical is transformed. It is no longer the writer's own experience: it becomes everyone's. He is no longer writing about himself: he is writing about life." (p.117). This makes Al-Saadi the prototype for many of his generation and a historian for people who may lack knowledge about that generation.

Twitter's most prominent feature that users actively utilise is 'microblogging.' Tweeting their everyday lives, opinions, and thoughts briefly and quickly makes it easier and faster to read and interact. Twitter's best medium for memoirists is the platform's 'thread' feature that provides a sequential style of posting tweets. This can be one of the reasons that motivated Al-Saadi to choose microblogging on Twitter instead of other blog sites or even to publish it as a book. Another feature that makes microblogging appealing to writers like Al-Saadi, is its new format, allowing writers to share their stories creatively and on a wide scale. An effective trait of Twitter thread sequential tales is that they can even engage readers by allowing them to interact and comment on any part of the text. However, threads are not the only way to create a series of tweets that could serve as a memoir. A user or a memoirist can create a new solo account for the sole reason of revisiting and sharing memories on Twitter. Writing them down makes a lasting record, which enables a memoirist to share personal stories, insights, and struggles and to connect with readers and fellow authors on the platform. This shows that the accessibility of Twitter's microblogs can be one of the rationales for Al-Saadi to employ it to post his narration of his life and his country.

3.2. Self-censorship in Al-Saadi's Twitter Memoir

Al-Saadi's microblog memoir does not mark a considerable diversion from traditional Arab life narratives despite standing out as a Twitter thread with high accessibility and interaction. Like many Arab memoirists, Al-Saadi practices self-censorship by overlooking the narration of personal, private, and emotional illustrations and tweets. Instead, he focuses on the description of collective social and historical events. This motivates the researchers to investigate the relationship between Arab memoir-writing and self-censorship. Al-Saadi 'tweets' memories that express cultural, social, academic, and national subject matters but rarely personal details. This can be illustrated in one of Al-Saadi's in tweets in 2017, where he

demonstrates his perception of Twitter – a platform were linguists and students share knowledge about language and academic interests (@sa2626sa). Therefore, the memoirist adheres to regional and local cultural and social norms that prohibit disclosure of discussions about family or explicit personal information, which makes his Twitters posts mostly professional or national. Additionally, Al-Saadi articulates topics that describe Saudis as a whole and provides aspects that Arabs can relate to collectively rather than depicting his personal life freely and without control. As a result, the writer's narration about himself is restricted to representations of his academic life or his adaptations of national events or emotions, which illustrates his conformity to social and cultural rules. Whenever the memoirist describes his own life, it mostly focuses on the professional or educational aspects of the author's private life:

ثلاث سنوات ثقيلة أمضيتها دون إجازة، سوى إجازات العيد، كنت أعمل من الفجر إلى العصر وأجلس في الليل على مقاعد الدراسة، ومما خفّف قسوة العمل في القلاب أنني كنت مديرَ نفسي، فلما اقتربتْ امتحانات السنة الثالثة التي نسمّيها (التوجيهي) منحت نفسي إجازة شهر لَتحقيق الحلم، كان حلمي الجامعة

> I spent three heavy years without any break, except for the Eid ones. I used to work from dawn until afternoon, then sit at night on study benches, and what eased the hardship of working in the tipper truck was that I was my own boss. When the exams were approaching in my third year – we used to call it the orientation year – I awarded myself with a one-month break to achieve my dream, which was university. (@sa2626sa, 2023)

The tweet additionally demonstrates Al-Saadi's struggle between employment and education, a story that represents other people's persistence to succeed during that time in his society. Hatata (2003) describes the culture of writing the self in the Arab world:

> Most, if not all, male authors of autobiography avoid writing about the inner self. Men in a patriarchal society divided by class are accustomed to exercising power, to controlling, to constructing, to bringing order to chaos, to concealing weakness or replacing it with strength, and to molding things to their will. (p. 124)

Hence, Hatata's (2003) quotation reveals the politics that govern the writing of the self in the Arab world and the restrictions. Arab male writers face in disclosing details about their personal lives.

Writing memoirs or autobiographies on social media platforms makes these writings accessible to regional and cross-national audiences, which might motivate writers to practice self-censorship more excessively. Being a well-known university professor and a Twitter user with many followers – 88.3 thousand as of June 2023 – must have made Al-Saadi more uncomfortable and watchful in documenting his life freely on Twitter. Moreover, available translation services on social media platforms can provide non-Arab readers with a complete understanding of the writers' private lives and personal details, which justifies Al-Saadi's caution about what he writes. Miller et al. (2016) explain the effect of writing in cyberspace and its effect that it can be described as "an obligation rather than an opportunity" (p. 203). They further suggest that the "increase in visibility provides not only opportunity, however, but also anxiety and a burden" (p. 203). It is apparent in Al-Saadi's tweets that he refrains from expressing personal opinions – a behaviour that complies with Arab social norms – which grants him social approval and helps him avoid readers' rejection. In 2014, he tweeted that his writing on Twitter caused him to gain 'rivals'. He further adds, "Perhaps, most of the opponents that I have gained in my life are on Twitter" (@sa2626sa). This demonstrates that Al-Saadi is aware of the hostility that he is exposed to because of his writings on Twitter, his becoming known and famous, and his achieving accessibility to a wide range of readers. This also

demonstrates that regardless of the medium an Arab man writes his memoir, they will always abide by the fixed conventions of Arab life narratives.

Al-Saadi's choice of title might hint at the rationale for selecting microblogging as a medium for writing his memoir. The memoirist showcases a story of struggle that results in the writer's success due to his hard work, patience, and effort. Yet, the author never attempts to gain readers' sympathy. This can be due to two reasons. The first is to ensure self-respect and supremacy, which are requirements for manhood in patriarchal societies. The second might be to avoid social criticism due to the importance of preserving masculinity – a notion contradicting weakness and sympathy. Wang (2016) illustrates the stress a writer can face due to the judgmental attitudes of the vast number of online readers: "Regardless of what kind of social rules one follows, as long as there are 'others, ' the risk of 'losing face' always exists, and sometimes the uncertainty of who is watching online exacerbates the anxiety" (p.114). A few times, Al-Saadi expresses his happiness and emotional excitement, writing them beautifully by his profession.

قادني طموحي وشغفي بالعلم إلى أبواب المرحلة الثانوية.. جاءت لحظة التحوّل الحاسمة في صباح يوم العيد الأضحى من عام 1402هـ، في بيت بخيت سعد، قلت له: سمعت أن ثانوية الشاطي ستفتح المسار الليلي هذا العام، سأعود إلى الدراسة، كان قرارًا عاجلًا ومفاجئًا، أدهش زملائي، ولم يلبثوا أن حذوا حذوي..

> My ambition and passion for education led me to the gates of high school. The moment of critical transformation was set on the morning of Eid al-Adha of the year 1402 AH, in the house of Bakhit Saad. I told him that I heard that Al-Shati High School will hold night classes this year. I will go back to studying. It was an urgent and surprising decision. My mates were amazed and soon followed in my footsteps. (@sa2626sa,2023).

Here, Al-Saadi expresses his joy and pride in being the first of his mates to pursue education in Saudi Arabia when many young men and boys gave up going to school for the sake of employment. Nevertheless, he does not express negative emotions towards those difficult times in the country. Rather, he portrays his story of struggle as an adventurous journey towards success and passionate ambitions. His narrative represents the pride of reaching a milestone. Al-Saadi addresses readers on the collective social level and claims that he owes that to his respect for regional and cultural norms that have shaped his personality. This makes his writings relatable for many readers despite their lack of emotional or psychological depth.

Although Al-Saadi mentions his family in his microblog memoir, he still practices self-censorship. He describes his mother and her significant role in helping him succeed professionally. Hatata (2003) illustrates women's importance and role in Arab life narratives: "If women are mentioned in an autobiography, it is almost always as loving mothers nurturing their children. Occasionally, a wife may crop up as a faithful appendage, but generally, men do not speak of their wives in an autobiography." (p.124). Al-Saadi illustration of women in his memoir is similar to Hatata's description. His mother died at forty-one from sickness while he was a middle school student. It is reasonable that he only projects her from a child's perspective. Her kindness and wisdom are two prominent traits the reader is introduced to. However, in conformity with Hetata, even if she were well and alive in his adulthood, he most likely would not change how he writes about her.

Al-Saadi's practice of self-censorship may not only come from his identity as an Arab but also as a well-known personality in his field. As mentioned, Al-Saadi is a Saudi Linguistics professor with a Twitter account with his full name and personal picture. His previous and present students, colleagues, friends, and even his rivals will know him through his unsheltered account. This exposure on social media platforms, specifically Twitter, makes him aware of his narrative and behaviour, especially in disclosing personal matters. It can probably lead him

to limit his articulation of thoughts or feelings to maintain a level of properness suitable for his reputation and his prestigious figure. One highlighted aspect in his memoir thread is his success from a labourer to an academic. His proud portrayals of his achievements and experiences are inspiring to his readers. An example of this is when he speaks about his relationship with his students:

أتعامل مع طلابي في الدراسات العليا وكأنهم زملائي وأندادي وأصدقائي.. وأُحفّزهم على التنظير والتفكير الخلّاق، ولا تزعجني مخالفتهم.

> I treat my postgraduate students as if they were my colleagues, peers, and friends. I encourage them to consult theories and practice creative thinking. I am never bothered when they oppose me. (@sa2626sa, 2022)

Al-Saadi does not brag about his success, although other Arab autobiographers tend to do. Writers seem to highlight struggles that eventually lead them to triumph, which motivates readers to overcome challenges.

As part of practicing self-censorship, Al-Saadi's tweets mainly discuss Arabic linguistics. Many followers follow him for their interest in his simplified tweets about Arabic linguistics, literature, and dialects. This makes him cautious about what to include in his memoir to avoid disappointing his followers and eventually losing them. Hence, his readers obligate him a socially suitable content to maintain engagement. It is essential to note that Al-Saadi's followers – in the third part of the Discussion, this research scrutinizes and provides a detailed assessment of followers – come from various intellectual backgrounds. Some are regular people, while others share the same profession as the author and come from diverse Arab countries. Although vulnerability and exposure to sensitive life aspects may attract more readers, Al-Saadi refuses to take the risk of unveiling his private life unconditionally on an internet platform. Despite the restrictions and self-monitoring that the author practices in his memoir, he sometimes includes alight tweets that show his indecisiveness as a young adult through narrating a humorous incident:

سحبتُ ملفّي من الجامعة واتجهت إلى كلية المعلمين بمكة، وفي اليوم التالي سحبتُ ملفّي ورجعتُ إلى الجامعة، وبعد يومين سحبتُ ملفّي من الجامعة ورجعتُ إلى مكة، ثم ندمتُ وسحبتُ ملفّي ورجعتُ إلى الجامعة، غضب د. مازن بليلة، وقال لي: أنت تلعب؟! إن سحبتَ ملفّك لا عاد اشوفك!

> I withdrew my application from the university and headed to the Teachers' College in Makkah. The next day, I withdrew my application and returned to the university. Two days after I withdrew my application and returned to Makkah, I regretted it and returned to the university. Dr. Mazin Balilah – the University president at that time – reproached me, saying: Are you playing?! If you withdraw your application, never let me see you again! (sa2626sa, 2023)

This shows that Al-Saadi's memoir reveals informal and private information about the author's life if it does not violate social or cultural rules.

3.3. Self-censorship Determined by Social Engagement

This part of the research focuses on the classification of Al-Saadi's Tweets and on evaluating the reactions of the followers of his Twitter thread. The Investigation of the tweets reveals that since June 11, 2023, the memoirist has tweeted 204 tweets for his memoir thread. They can be divided into national, familial, and academic categories. This work evaluates the readers who interact with the Twitter thread based on their interaction, BIOs, likes, retweeting, professions,

geographical regions, and overall tweets – since they constitute the audience and the society that motivates the author to practice self-censorship. Classifying Al-Saadi's tweets into three was achieved by categorizing the thread into national, familial, and academic sets. To be accurate and precise, a new Twitter account was created for the sole reason of organising his tweets: his national tweets were 'bookmarked', his familial tweets were 'liked', and his academic tweets were 'retweeted'. The percentages of the categories were calculated after summing up the total number of tweets in Al-Saadi's memoir thread, to be 204 tweets, as of June 11th, 2023. Accordingly, users who interact with Al-Saadi have been evaluated by the information on their Twitter accounts and their reactions to the writer's tweets. This sheds light on 'who' is on the receiving side of Al-Saadi's memoir. A significant observation made is that Al-Saadi does not adjust his memoir tweets based on the engagement of his readers. This suggests that there are missing opportunities to connect with more audiences if the author was to consider audience interest more.

3.3.1. National Tweets

Al-Saadi's national tweets are the ones that shed light on collective political, economic, and social experiences that relate to citizens and residents of Saudi Arabia from the sixties to the eighties. National tweets in Al-Saadi's memoir are 28, making up 13.73% of his memoir thread. The tweets depict the era as one that has had an impact on the advancement of Saudi Arabia. The memoir thread additionally emphasizes the role of Saudi kings at that time because they sponsored the country's rebirth and development throughout that remarkable age. A good example is his description of the economic prosperity during the reign of King Khalid:

كانت الطفرة الأولى في عهد الملك خالد سببا في تركي الدراسة أنا وكثيرٌ من أبناء جيلي، لم نقاوم إغراء الأعمال الحرة، ولكن القرار الأخطر في حياتي كلها جاء ضحى اليوم الأول من أيام عيد الفطر عام 1401هـ حين اتخذت قرار العودة للدراسة من بوابة ثانوية الشاطئ الليلية بجدة

> The first economic boom that took place during the reign of King Khalid caused me and many people of my generation to drop out of school. We could not resist the temptations of freelance jobs. However, the most vital decision of all my life was on the first day of Eid Al Fitr morning in 1401 H (01/08/81), when I decided to go back to high school education during the night shift of *Ashati* school in Jeddah. (sa2626sa, 2023)

The memoir sheds light on some prominent political figures in the kingdom and the Arab world, such as King Faisal. These Tweets also focus on Al-Saadi's moving from his rural hometown to the city, the jobs he occupied and their income, and the Saudi currency. As of June 11th, 2023, these tweets have gained this number of interactions: 523 likes, 103 retweets, 40 replies, and views from 3k to 37k. Users with commonality in profession or field with Al-Saadi – such as assistant professors of Arabic linguistics, faculty members, poets, authors, program hosts, business owners, and graduates or teachers of Arabic linguistics/literature – mark a recurring interaction with the memoir thread. Upon inspecting their profiles, most of them seem to be Saudi citizens. Yet, some users are from Jordan, Syria, Morocco, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt. As for gender, female users make up 25% of interacting users in this section. This suggests that male users are more interested in national topics, indicating patriotic feelings. However, it is significant to note that not many readers are interested in this type of tweets.

3.3.2. Familial Tweets

Al-Saadi's tweets about his family reveal information about family life, family members, his social class, the financial stability of his household, and the author's upbringing. The research indicates that this category consists of 38 tweets –18.63% of the memoir thread – that disclose information about his parents, siblings and some heartwarming moments from

his childhood. Tweets in this division include information about the death of members of Al-Saadi's family: his mother, brother, and sisters. They also include illustrations of his father's support and encouragement – praising him for his hard work. Tweets in this division have the following number of interactions: 738 likes, 104 retweets, 103 replies, and 3k to 21k views. Many users who interact with national tweets also interact with familial tweets. However, familial tweets are more interacted with since they have additional users interacting with them and more responses and reactions to them. An example of this type of tweets is:

<div dir="rtl">

امّي تقول لي: أنت زَرْم (زَرم على وزن فعل صقة مشبهة) أي تشيل هموم الدنيا على رأسك, ومن همومي الامتحانات -قبل أن يغيروا اسمها الى الاختبارات- كانت تخيفني, وأنا افهم المدرّس ويشقّ علي الحفظ.

</div>

> My mother would say: "You are a Zarm" (an adjective pronounced Za'rim), Meaning: Carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. One of my concerns was "*Alimtihanat*" tests – before they changed their name to *Ikhtibarat* exams. They scared me, for I was able to grasp the lessons, but I struggled with memorization. (@sa2626sa,2023).

While analyzing the users' engagement with this division and as a result of inspecting Al-Saadi's interactions' taps, that display each interaction feature with a list of users who 'liked', 'quoted' and 'retweeted, researchers had several observations: Firstly users who interacted with this category of tweets represent a more comprehensive range of professional backgrounds and social statuses than those who reacted to national tweets – detailed statistical information provided in each part of the third section of the Discussion. Secondly, users interested in this category are ordinary people who feel compassionate toward Al-Saadi's family matters and personal life. This can lead to several inferences: The first can be that family matters have considerable significance in Arab culture. The second is that regular Twitter users and memoir readers – versus more educated and specialized users – are more interested in personal details about authors' lives. The third is that tweets that included information about the death registered many reactions. This indicates that ordinary people tend to sympathize with memoirists when sad news about family loss is involved. Thus, it is common sense that Al-Saadi's familial tweets have gained more attention and replies. Despite the attention they gain, Al-Saadi's familial/childhood tweets are very general and concise, which indicates that they still fall under self-censored information.

3.3.3. Academic Tweets

The last division of the memoir thread is the set of academic tweets. There are 138 tweets out of 204, constituting 67.65% of Al-Saadi's thread, the most significant part of the memoir. The tweets in this section are considered academic because they narrate his educational journey from elementary school to the doctorate.

<div dir="rtl">

في كلية الآداب بالجامعة العزيزية تفتّحت لي أبواب المعارف، أبواب اللغة والأدب وتعرّفت على أدبيات البحث العلمي ومناهجه، ورأيت مزيجًا متنوعًا أشدّ التنوع من الأكاديميين المؤثرين في اللغة والنحو والأدب والنقد والاجتماع وعلم النفس.. انغمست في بحر المعرفة حتى.. ثملت وطربت!

</div>

> In the Faculty of Arts at Azizian University, gates of knowledge, language, and literature opened before me. I became familiar with research methods. I witnessed the diverse mixture of influential academics specializing in language, morphology, literature, criticism, sociology, and psychology…I was immersed in the sea of knowledge until I was…intoxicated and euphoric! (sa2626sa, 2023)

Starting from the memoir's title, Al-Saadi mainly depicts his success as a scholar. Users interested in and interacting with academic aspects are the same users responding to the national posts. Based on the inspection of the memoir thread, interactions are as follows: 865 likes, 164 retweets, and 66 replies. Views range between 19k and 700k. The comparison

between this category and the two before is unfair since Al-Saadi devotes most of his efforts to portraying academic achievement. Even when he depicts his humble initial job, he uses it to describe how it has served as a transition before he reaches victory:

ولعل أقسى مراحل عمري (وأخطرها وأجملها أيضا) أيامُ ثانوية الشاطئ الليلية، كنت على ظهر القلاب في النهار وعلى مقاعد الدراسة في الليل، كان عمري 22، وكان كتاب الأدب والنصوص رفيقي في القلاب لأحفظ ما قرّره أستاذنا السوداني من قصائد جاهلية وخطبة قس بن ساعدة الإيادي

> Perhaps the most critical times in my life (most dangerous and beautiful) were my times at *Ashati* night high school. I would drive the tipper truck in the morning and sit on school benches at night. I was 22 years old. The literature and anthology book was my companion in the truck to memorizing Al Jahiliya poetry and the speech of Quss bin Sa'idah Al-Eiyadie that our Sudanese teacher had assigned us. (sa2626sa, 2023)

Yet with this number of tweets taking up more than half of his memoir, it is noticeable how unapproached and unviewed this section is. This is another chance to stress that Arab life narratives excessively implement their professional success stories and overlook personal details of the author's life. Readers' reactions do not motivate Al-Saadi to provide more personal tweets to satisfy the interest of his readers – since his memoir is published on Twitter, an interactive platform. Oppositely, he resumes the heavy microblogging of his academic memories despite the small number of interactions with this kind of tweets. Al-Saadi's determination to maintain this type of tweets may indicate many aspects: Firstly, it reflects the author's more significant consideration for followers that share his field and profession. Secondly, it shows that the memoirist separates himself from the personal social level and readers interested in it. Thirdly, Al-Saadi breaks the rule of tailoring his memoir to increase his' readers' satisfaction and, consequently, the number of followers. Finally, the writer seems to maintain the traditional Arab memoir writing style.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper studies Al-Saadi's Twitter memoir thread, which is accessible to local and regional audiences. Technological advancement – specifically immediate translation – can make the memoir thread available to international readers. The research focuses on the followers of the memoirist – their likes, responses, interactions, or simply viewing his life details that fluctuate between academic, national, and personal information about his life. By categorizing Al-Saadi's tweets into three different types – academic, familial, and national – this work suggests that the writer practices self-censorship in his tweets and avoids exposing personal details about his life. Instead, he focuses on revealing facts about his profession and nation. This indicates that he complies with social and cultural requirements. Further, this study sheds light on the significance of writing the self on a social media platform in terms of openness to readers on a national and cross-national level. Finally, this work suggests that readers of memoirs and autobiographies can be interested most in the author's personal life.

Al-Saadi's Twitter memoir provides a novel yet challenging and problematic way of producing literature. To be more explicit, researchers might find it difficult to examine a memoir that continues to grow and evolve during the study. For instance, one of the difficulties that can occur due to this factor is the changing style of the author. Al-Saadi's writing style undergoes alterations and updates in his Twitter memoir. At the beginning of this research in April 2023, there were some changes in the author's writing style. For instance, despite the writer's practicing self-censorship, his academic journey can still be perceived as a lens to the private side of his childhood and adulthood. Eventually, Al-Saadi became more in control of his writing, and viewing any part of his personal life details in the memoir became harder. In his recent updates of his memoir, his approach went from memory recollection to curriculum discussion. Thus, he describes the courses he took as an undergraduate student, his instructors, and his classmates in detail. Additionally, changing the memoirist's writing techniques makes

it difficult to describe or analyze them as they continue to evolve. Thus, it was challenging to examine the memoir thread in an inclusive and final manner in June – knowing that it is still developing.

Literature in microblogs has yet to gain enough academic attention or acknowledgement. It is still considered unusual and unacceptably revolutionary. Thus, it frequently needs to be taken more seriously. Yet, many researchers seem sceptical about examining or focusing on it academically. Part of this suspicion stems from the fact that the internet has made writing and publishing available for everyone, regardless of their eloquence or talent. This makes it obligatory to be selective and inspective when examining a literary work written and published in cyberspace. A researcher should select a significant text that a prominent or promising author writes. Meanwhile, it is hard to deny that texts in cyberspace are considered part of the future of literary studies, cultural studies, and literary criticism. That is because they transcend time, geographical space, and culture. Cyberwriting has a significant impact on the transformation of literary communities and aesthetics. Another advantage of cyber texts is their reliance and focus on readers. In this new medium, readers become vitally interactive, and, in some cases, they participate in the text's formation and influence its content. Examiners must realize that a text on a social media platform is a public discourse beyond its author, society, or culture. Hence, it can undergo many alterations in interpretations and understanding depending on the culture it is explored in and the reactions of its diverse audience.

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