Doing semiotics:
An Analysis of a contemporary Egyptian caricature column

Bahaa-Eddin M. Mazid, Ph. D. [*]

Abstract. *The paper investigates the semiotics of caricature, paying attention to the interplay of verbal and visual codes, modality, intertextuality, paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, and denotation and connotation. The data of the study comes from a contemporary Egyptian caricature column - ten sample texts are analyzed. The analysis reveals a central opposition between the verbal and the visual, an exploitation of the connotations of certain verbal signifiers, and significant transtextual relationships. The authors of the column seem to mock both the traditional rhetoric of romantic love and the contemporary corruptions of love and marriage relationships in the Egyptian society.*

KEY WORDS: semiotics - caricature - modality - intertextuality – incongruity – paradigms and syntagms - denotations and connotations.

Introduction

A contemporary extension of the basic tenets of structuralism, semiotics seems to be more relevant than traditional, and even critical linguistics, to the investigation of contemporary media texts. Such texts combine more than one code: visual, verbal, auditory and so on. One contemporary discourse genre that is amenable to semiotic analysis is caricature. Caricature is a regular section in most magazines and newspapers today. Just like a purely verbal text, the caricature text reflects socio-cultural values and dominant ideologies in a given society. However, it has received very little research attention. The literature on humor is still biased towards verbal humor and the studies on print caricatures still favor 'the political cartoon'.

(*) Lecturer of Linguistics, Dept. of English, Faculty of Arts, Sohag, South Valley University.

The present study provides a semiotic analysis of a contemporary Egyptian caricature column – '?al ḥubb huwa' (love is) – by Ahmad Ragab and Mustafa Hussein. The study proceeds from an overview of semiotic theory, to a discussion of the major tools and steps of semiotic analysis, to a discussion and a partial review of the literature on humor in general and caricature in particular. The practical part of the study starts with a description of the data and the methodology used. The analysis based thereon provides some general remarks on the sample texts, a zero- level explanation of each text, a discussion of modality, intertextuality, paradigmatic/ syntagmatic relations and denotative and connotative meanings in the texts, followed by some concluding remarks. The sample texts are given in Appendix 2, following endnotes, references and the phonetic alphabet used in transcribing the verbal parts of the texts. The following section is an overview of semiotics.

1. Theory and Framework
1.1. Semiotics: An Overview

At the end of the 19th century, the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce described a study which he called "semiotic", and in his <u>Course in General Linguistics</u> (1915), the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure proposed a science which he called "semiology": the study of signs and sign functions.

In addition to Saussure and Peirce, the key figures in the development of semiotics are Charles William Morris, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Christian Metz, Julia Kristeva, Algirdas Greimas, Roman Jakobson and Michael Halliday. Semiotics, especially in its formal parts, is difficult to disentangle from structuralism whose major exponents include Saussure in linguistics, Claude-Levi Strauss in anthropology and Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis (Chandler, 1994, WWW).

The scope of semiotic analysis is not limited to explicit systems of communication such as language, the Morse code, and traffic signs and signals; "a great diversity of other human activities and productions – our bodily postures and gestures, the social rituals we perform, the clothes we wear,

the meals we serve, the buildings we inhabit, the objects we deal with – convey common 'meanings' to members who participate in a particular culture, and so can be analyzed as signs which function in diverse kinds of signifying systems" (Abrams, 1993, p. 275).

Probably because linguistics is more established than the study of other signifying systems, and because of the influence of Saussure, semiotics is most closely related to linguistics and it makes frequent use of linguistic concepts and models. However, the relationship between semiotics and linguistics is not unproblematic. For Saussure, as is obvious from his famous definition of 'semiology', linguistics is part of semiotics; for other semioticians, like Barthes, semiotics is part of linguistics, "et non l' inverse" (Baylon & Fabre, 1990, p.8). Barthes seems to have justified his position on the basis that "tout systéme sémiologique se méle de langage": one cannot analyze any signifying system without using language. (Ikbaal, 1996). One further reason for these two different positions is that Saussure seems to have been interested in the social function of signs while Barthes was interested more in signification, or modes of signifying (Baylon & Fabre, 1990, p. 8).

Modes of signifying are becoming more and more complex with the advances in information technology and forms of representation. Meaning is now made in more ways than ever imagined before and the manipulation of sound, image and script in most media has made difficult not to shift to semiotics as a broader and more comprehensive approach to text analysis (where text means any combination of signs that gives meaning). Semiotics, Turner (1992, p. 17) argues, provides a unifying conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms which can be used "across the full range of signifying practices: gesture, dress, writing, speech, photography, film, television, and so on".

In the following sections, the main concepts and tools in semiotics are presented, in addition to the major steps and procedures in semiotic analysis. This is the necessary theoretical basis of the analysis of caricatures in the second part of the study.

1.1.1. Signs and Codes

Signs are at the heart of semiotic analysis. A sign is a meaningful unit which takes the form of a word, an image, a sound, a gesture, or an object (Chandler, WWW). For something to qualify as a sign, Turner (1992, p. 17) notes, "it must have a physical form, it must refer to something other than itself, and it must be recognized as doing this by other users of the sign system".

In the basic Saussurean model, a sign consists of a signifier (the form which the sign takes) and a signified (the concept which the sign represents). For Saussure, the signifier is a "sound–image" (image acoustique) and the signified is a mental concept (Chandler, WWW).

While Saussure regards a sign as "a self–contained dyad", Peirce argues that a sign consists of three components:
(1) The *Representamen*: the form which the sign takes;
(2) An *Interpretant*: the sense made of the sign;
(3) An *Object*, to which the sign refers (Chandler, WWW)
Nöth (1990) provides the following version of Peirce's model of the components of a sign:

> Sign vehicle: the form of the sign;
> Sense: the sense made of the sign;
> Referent: what the sign stands for (p. 89).

Two important points should be stressed here. First, there is not necessarily any logical relationship between the sign vehicle and the referent. Signs are arbitrary and conventional. Of course, there are exceptions to this generalization. One linguistic example of these exceptions is *onomatopoeic* words, e.g. "tick.. tick". Second, the referent is not an obligatory part of a sign; there are signs that refer to abstract ideas and concepts. In addition, signs are characterized by multiplicity in the sense that one signifier may have more than one signified (as is in the linguistic examples of polysemy and homonymy) and one signified may be expressed by more than one signifier (as is in the linguistic case of synonymy).

Based on the ideas of Peirce, three modes of relationship between sign vehicles (signifiers) and their referents (concrete or abstract) are referred to:

1- Symbolic: a sign which does not resemble the signified but which is arbitrary or purely conventional, e.g., a red traffic light, a national flag, a number;

2- Iconic: a sign which resembles the signified (e.g., a portrait, a cinematic image, a diagram, pantomime, onomatopoeia, sound effects);

3- Indexical: A sign which is directly connected in some way, causally or existentially, to the signified, e.g., smoke, foot print, fingerprint, clock, knock on door, pain, pulse rate, thermometer, and so on. (Hawkes, 1977, p. 129; Chandler, WWW; Baylon & Fabre, 1990, pp. 4-5).

The three modes of relationship identified above are obviously not mutually exclusive; a sign can be an icon, an index and a symbol at one and the same time. For example, a map, Danesi (1994, p. 77) argues, is *indexical* (it indicates where places are), *iconic* (it represents places in topographical relation to each other) and *symbolic* (its notational system must be learned).

Umberto Eco (1976) offers another important distinction between sign vehicles and the distinction relates to the linguistic concept of *types* and *tokens.* (In a linguistic text, a count of the tokens would be a count of the total number of words used, while a count of the types would be a count of the different words, regardless of repetition or recurrence). Eco identifies the following kinds of sign vehicles:

1- Signs in which there may be any number of tokens of the same type, e.g., exactly the same model of car in the same color;

2- Signs whose tokens possess a certain quality of material uniqueness, although they are produced according to a type, e.g., a word spoken by different people;

3- Signs whose tokens and types are identical, e.g., an original oil painting (Chandler, WWW).

In addition to their variation as to the modes of relationship and the realization of types in tokens, signs differ in the functions they perform, depending on their relation to the components of their discursive space.

Two classic models of the functions of signs – specifically linguistic signs - are often quoted: Jakobson's (1973) and Halliday's (1978). In Jakobson's 'poetics', language performs

six major functions: referential (context) metalingual (code), poetic (message), conative (addressee), emotive (addresser) and phatic (addresser-addressee). In Halliday's sociosemantic model, there are three functional components, which he calls "metafunctions": the ideational (experiential and logical), the interpersonal and the textual. In fact, these two models are too widely known to merit any further elaboration.

Whatever the function, or functions, signs perform, they do not 'signify' in isolation, but only in relation to each other. The meaning of a sign depends on the code where it is situated. Sometimes used as a synonym for language, variety, or dialect, a code is a sign system, or "a systematic set of rules which assigns meaning to signs"(Wales, 1989, p. 71). For Jakobson, code is one basic aspect of human communication. The message sent from an addresser to an addressee requires a context and a code: "the system of meaning which structures it". Code-oriented utterances, it may be remembered, have a metalinguistic function. For Halliday, codes are regarded as "types of meaning or cultural values generated by the social system " (loc. cit.). Summarizing a large number of semiotic studies, Chandler (WWW) provides a tripartite framework of the types of codes:

Social codes:
- verbal language;
- bodily codes (bodily contact, proximity, physical orientation, appearance, head nods, facial expressions, gesture, posture, eye movement and contact);
- commodity codes (fashion, clothing, cars);
- behavioral codes (protocols, ritual, games, role-playing);
- regulatory codes (e.g., the Highway code, professional codes of practice).

Textual codes:
- scientific codes, including mathematics;
- aesthetic codes (poetry, drama, painting, music, sculpture, etc.);
- genre: narrative, exposition, argument and so on;

- mass media codes (televisual, photographic, filmic, radio, newspaper and magazine codes, both technical and conventional, including format).

Interpretative codes:
- perceptual codes, e.g., of visual perception;
- codes of production and interpretation: codes involved in both encoding and decoding a text;
- ideological codes, e.g. freedom, individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, progressivism and 'scientism' and gender stereotypes.

Obviously, there is a great deal of overlap between different codes in Chandler's typology. The typology, however, attests to the richness of the concept of code and its value in any semiotic analysis. Moreover, any of the codes identified above is an umbrella term for many subcodes, e.g. language subsumes phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, semantics and para-, pragma -, and non-linguistic features.

The analysis of semiotic codes and messages exploits some tools that are largely derived from structuralist linguistics, functional grammar, pragmatics and discourse analysis. The following section provides a brief definition of the analytical tools most frequently used in semiotic analysis.

1.2. Tools of Semiotic Analysis
The tools of semiotic analysis are those aspects of the text that the analyst focuses on. In this section, a brief definition of each of the following tools is given: modality, intertextuality, paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, denotation and connotation. (Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list of all possible semiotic analytical tools.)

1.2.1. Modality
Modality is a semiotic system which "provides for varying authority, certainty and appropriateness to be allocated to particular representations of the world". "That which has definiteness, certainty, and lack of ambiguity is said to have *high modality*. That which is less definite, possible rather than certain is said to have *low modality*"(Graddol, 1994, p.137, original emphasis).

The analysis of modal devices has an established and central place in pragmatics, text analysis, and critical discourse analysis. In these disciplines, the analysis has usually focused on hedges, certainty markers, attributors and other verbal modal devices (for a hybrid model of these devices and an application thereof, see Mazid, 1999). Since semiotic analysis is not concerned with linguistic features only, the traditional concept of modality has been expanded to include the verbal as well as the visual. Thus, the semiotic analysis of modality may address any or some or all of the following features:

<u>Formal Features:</u>
- 3D (tri-dimensional) – flat,
- detailed – abstract,
- color – monochrome,
- edited – unedited,
- moving – still,
- audible - silent.

<u>Content Features:</u>
- possible – impossible,
- plausible – implausible,
- familiar – unfamiliar,
- current - distant in time,
- local – distant in space (Chandler, WWW).

Hodge and Kress (1988) prefer the term "modality cues" in relation to visual texts. In cartoons, some figures and characters are drawn "more realistically" and in more detail than others: "a 'dense', detailed image can stand for realism or proximity, which can stand for present time, which can stand for factuality. An image lacking in detail and denseness can stand for unreality or distance, which can stand for past time, which can stand for fictionality" (p.134).

1.2.2. Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a very rich concept introduced by Julia Kristeva and later elaborated by Gerard Genette. Genette (1982) proposed the term transtextuality as more comprehensive than Kristeva's term. Both terms are used to mean "the multiple ways in which any one literary text is inseparably inter–involved with other texts, whether by its

open or covert citations and *allusions*, or by its assimilation of the formal and substantive features of an earlier text or texts, or simply by its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are 'always already' in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born "(Abrams, 1993, p. 285, original emphasis)

The comprehensive model of transtextuality provided by Genette is summarized by Stam et al. (1992) as follows:

- *intertextuality*: quotation, plagiarism, allusion and a text's allusions to itself;

- *paratextuality*: the relation between a text and its paratext that which surrounds the main body of the text: titles, headings, prefaces, epigraphs, dedications, acknowledgements, footnotes, illustrations, dust jackets, etc.;

- *architextuality*: designation of a text as part of a genre or genres;

- *metatextuality*: explicit or implicit critical commentary of one text on another text; and

- *hypo-* or *hypertextuality*: the relation between a text and a preceding hypotext, e.g., parody. This last class is hard to distinguish from metatextuality (pp. 206-210).

One important intertextual relation in media texts is the relation between the verbal and the visual. Citing Roland Barthes (1977), Chandler (WWW) discusses the concept of 'anchorage': "linguistic elements can serve to 'anchor' (or constrain) the preferred readings of an image, and conversely the illustrative use of an image can anchor an ambiguous verbal text".

1.2.3. Paradigms and Syntagms

One important distinction widely used in structuralist poetics and semiotics is that between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations - a distinction developed by Roman Jakobson. Paradigmatic relations are those 'vertical' relations between any single sign and other signs that are phonologically, syntactically, semantically or visually similar, which can be substituted for it. Syntagmatic relations, on the other hand, are those "horizontal" relations which determine

the possibilities of putting signs in a sequence so as to make a meaningful, well-formed text or unit (Cf. Abrams, 1993, p. 106). In doing semiotic analysis, the concepts of paradigms and syntagms must extend verbal relations to include such relations as those between image and caption, shots in a film, the temporal and the spatial in narratives, paired concepts, e.g., static vs. dynamic, figure and ground, schemata and their instantiation, e.g., narrative grammar, different items in the 'garment system', and so on (Chandler, WWW).

1.2.4. Denotation and Connotation

The denotation of a sign is its "literal" signified or interpretant. Its connotation is its personal, emotional, social, cultural, and ideological associations. The word 'mother' for example, denotes an animate, usually human, female parent, and connotes love, warmth, protection and so on. Hayward (1996, p. 310) provides an interesting, nonlinguistic example: a photograph of Marilyn Monroe. At the denotative level, this is simply a photograph of the movie star. At the connotative level, the photograph is associated with glamour, beauty and sexuality, with the myth of Hollywood, the dream factory, but also with Monroe's depression, drug taking and death.

The analysis of denotation and connotation is inseparably related to the analysis of metaphor, metonymy, pun and ambiguity. In a metaphor, "a word or expression which in literal usage denotes one kind of thing or action, is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing or action, without asserting a comparison" (Abrams, 1993, p. 67). In metonymy, "the literal term for one thing is applied to another with which it is closely associated". Metaphor is vertical while metonymy is horizontal (pp. 68-69). A pun, on the other hand, "is a play on words that are either identical in sound (homonyms) or very similar in sound, but are sharply diverse in meaning" (p. 173). Ambiguity, or multiple meaning or plurisignation, is applied to "the use of a vague or equivocal expression"(p. 9).

1.3. Steps in Semiotic Analysis

The basic ideological linguistic model proposed by Thompson (1987) may be elaborated and extended to the

semiotic analysis of media texts. The model consists of three major parts:

(1) situating the text in its sociohistorical context,

(2) analysis of formal and content features, and

(3) interpretation of those features. This model may be elaborated to cover the main semiotic aspects of a text. This is a possible elaboration:

1- Content:

1) Define the text;
2) Describe the medium used;
3) Describe its genre;
4) Describe the context in which it originated;
5) Describe your objective/s and motives.

2- Analysis:

1) Type – token relations
2) Important signifiers, their meanings and codes;
3) Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations;
4) Major oppositions in the text;
5) Inter – and transtextual and generic aspects;
6) Author – reader rapport, if any;
7) Metaphors, metonymies, puns, and connotations;
8) Modality.

3- Interpretation:

The meaning/s of the text, or its preferred reading. It is naive to hope for a single meaning. It will be only a possible meaning thereof.

This is a very skeletal model, after all, and there seems to be no end to what may be said about a text. On the other hand, the analysis in the present study does not follow the model religiously; it exploits the relevant features only, given its scope and objectives.

To move from theory to practice, it is necessary to discuss the discourse genre of caricature, which provides the data used in the study.

1.4. Caricature

The New American Desk Encyclopedia (1989) defines a caricature as "a sketch exaggerating or distorting characteristics of its subject for satirical purposes" and cartoons as "related to, and often containing, caricature. Originally meaning a preparatory sketch, the term derives from a series of architectural 'cartoons' parodied by Punch magazine in 1843. Today it also includes the comic strip, the political cartoon and cartoon animation"(p. 226). For the purposes of the present study, 'cartoon' is used to mean the comic illustration only, while 'caricature' is used to mean both the illustration and the caption.

Caricature belongs to the very large category of humor which subsumes verbal humor, wisecracks, satires, parodies, plays on words, puns, paradoxes, quips and so on. Humor has been extensively researched mainly from a psychological point of view, specifically in its relation to relief theory and incongruity (e.g., Gregory, 1994; Nerhardt, 1976; Monson, 1994) and in its use as a teaching/ learning strategy (e.g., Teslow, 1995). Deckers and Buttram (1990) provide a useful review of empirical support and theoretical considerations for an incongruity theory of humor. One prerequisite for an application of the theory is an understanding of the concept of schema: "A schema is a cognitive structure for representing generic knowledge in memory. A schema represents stereotypical concepts of objects, situations, and behavior sequences Dinner at a restaurant is an illustration of a schema". "A schema also contains variables, which are place holders ready to be instantiated, that is, to assume different values" (pp. 53–54). An incongruity theory suggests that "the detection of an incongruous instantiation of a portion of a schema is necessary and in some cases also sufficient for the occurrence of humor" (p. 45). Incongruity may occur between:

1) the expected value of a variable and its actual instantiated value, or
2) different instantiated schemata.

Thus, Deckers and Buttram (1990) identify two types of incongruity:

1) within schema: when an actual event does not fit within the expected instantiation of the schema variable, and
2) between schemata: when two activated schemata are opposite or incompatible with one another.

One example of this is the doctor–visit joke taken from Raskin (1985):
- *"Is the doctor at home?"* the patient asked in a bronchial whisper.
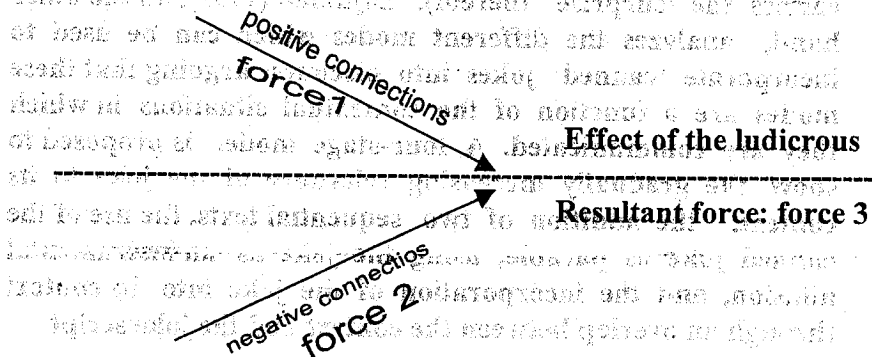- *"No"*, the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. *"Come right in."*

The doctor visit schema is instantiated first, then the lover schema is activated by the trigger "come right in" (pp. 60, 54).

The linguistic interest in humor, on the other hand, has been manifested mostly in the study of verbal humor, with occasional and marginal references to caricature and cartoon. Goldstein (1990), in an attempt to "vindicate the claim that an investigation of verbal humor brings to light aspects of language that have either been completely overlooked by or have only recently come to the attention of linguists and philosophers of language"(p. 37), addresses such areas of linguistic research on humor as neuro-phonetics, suprasegmental analysis and the anti-objectivist semantics known as 'experientialism'. The humor devices that Goldstein explores are phonetic interference, semantics of the juncture, and antiobjectivism or ambiguity.

Hetzron (1991) examines the structure of verbal jokes and the logical devices used in their punchlines (the punchlines is the last 'pulse' in a joke, the one that normally carries the 'surprise' thereof). Zajdman (1991), on the other hand, analyzes the different modes which can be used to incorporate 'canned' jokes into discourse arguing that these modes are a function of the contextual situations in which they are communicated. A four-stage model is proposed to show the gradually increasing relevance of the joke to its context: the addition of two sequential texts, the use of the canned joke as parable, using the joke as an instrumental allusion, and the incorporation of the joke into its context through an overlap between the context and the joke script.

An earlier interest in verbal humor focused on jokes from a conversational analysis point of view (e.g., Sherzer, 1985; Tannen, 1989). Sherzer's short study of puns and jokes provides a useful definition of jokes. The term 'joke' refers to "a discourse unit consisting of two parts: the set up and the punch line (sic). The punch line contains an element of surprise vis-a-vis the set up; it is this surprise relationship between the set up and the punch line that is the source of humor. The element of surprise typically involves an actualization of the set up, and 'getting' or understanding the joke consists of relating the punch line to the unstated assumptions. In addition, the punch line often reframes the point of view established in the set up" (p. 216).

Tannen (1989) argues that humor is "a common function of repetition with variation", and that repetition is not only a source of humor but also a means of making a listener appreciate it (pp. 63-64). Tannen's focus on repetition with variation as a means of creating and 'savoring' humor stems from the primary interest of her book – the interest in repetition, dialogue and imagery in conversational discourse. Another source of humor is discussed in Hayakawa (1974): "the use of a metaphor, simile, or allusion that is very obviously inappropriate to the subject at hand. The result of the incongruous comparison is a feeling of conflict, a conflict between our more obvious feeling toward that which we are talking about and the feeling aroused by the expression" (p. 113). The mathematical diagram, which Hayakawa uses in representing the conflict, may be simplified as follows (p. 114):

Positive connections
force 1
Effect of the ludicrous
Resultant force: force 3
negative connections
force 2

Hayakawa's argument seems to be an earlier version of the incongruity theory of humor (e.g., Deckers& Buttram, 1990)

One category of jokes has received considerable research attention in its own right and in relation to other types of humor – the 'dirty' or 'sick' joke. Making a case for the dirty joke as "a technical object worth attention", Sacks (1974) provides an analysis of a dirty joke "eventually leading up to a theory of some of the business of dirty jokes"(p. 249). In his analysis, Sacks notices the temporal and sequential organization of the joke, the cohesive devices therein, the concurrent coincidences it contains, and the behavior of its characters. One aspect of dirty jokes is that the punchline contains "an idiom, a proverb, a rule that has a properly obscene interpretation"(p. 263).

Sherzer (1985) regards the dirty joke as "a most interesting type of joke", and argues that its primary characteristic is that the punchline "presupposes and actualizes knowledge considered by the society to be taboo, usually having to do with sexual matters " (p.217).

Chiaro (1992) states that sex is a "western joke universal" and argues that in 'civilized' societies, dirty jokes are "considered amusing especially if they concern new–weds or sexual initiation". However, dirty jokes vary from one culture to another: " In many countries, male prowess and penis size are a common feature of 'dirty' jokes, while in others, seduction, adultery and cuckolded husbands appear to amuse and 'lavatorial' jokes are common, too (pp. 8-9). Chiaro also discusses the use of catchphrases in the 'doing it' formula of dirty jokes, e.g., "Teachers do it with class"(pp. 64-65).

At present there is a remarkable interest in humor. Jokes and caricatures are published regularly in almost every newspaper and magazine and some magazines are entirely devoted to humor, e.g., Caricature in Arabic and Punch in British English. There is at least one international society and one international conference on humor research – the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS) and its annual conference in addition to its international journal Humor, which still focuses on verbal humor and its socio-

psychological aspects. There is still a remarkable gap in research on the semiotics of print caricatures.

There is a vast literature on caricatures in their relation to the political system and social values mostly from a content analysis perspective. Press (1981) argues that cartoon depends on the political system. In totalitarian systems art must praise the system and denounce its enemies (pp. 52-53). In a western democracy during peace-time, cartoonists are 'watchdogs', keeping power holders 'honest and accountable' (pp. 56-57). Press' general conclusion is that cartoons are low satire, ridiculing individuals or parties (p. 77)

Morris (1989) supports the generalization that cartoonists focus on office holders and aspirants whom the public can hope to defeat in an election or a popular uprising (pp. 124, 128).

The semiotic of print caricatures, however, is still under-researched.

2. Practice
2.1. Data and Method
2.1.1. Data: Selection, Description and Context

The data of the present study consists of 10 caricature texts from the regular caricature column "?al hubb huwa .." (Love is...) published daily, except on Fridays, on the last page of the daily Egyptian newspaper Al-Akhbar (lit. 'the news'). The caricature column, which has one caricature per day, is the joint work of Ahmad Ragab, the famous contemporary Egyptian satirist, and Mustafa Hussein, the famous contemporary Egyptian cartoonist (caricaturist) – the idea and the caption are by Ragab and the comic illustration is by Hussein[1]. An anthology of (?alhubb huwa) appeared in 1990, so 5 caricature texts are taken from Al-Akhbar[2] and 5 from the anthology which is incidentally entitled '?al hubb huwa'.

Hussein is a very prolific caricaturist who, in addition to many joint works with Ragab, is the editor of the monthly magazine Karikateir (Caricature). Ragab, on the other hand, is an outstanding Egyptian satirist who contributes four daily columns to Al–Akhbar, where he works, one of them is (?al hubb huwa):

1) 'Nuss Kilma' (half a word) – a short satirical comment on current affairs which usually consists of a set-up and a short, humorous punchline;

2) 'Mutrib il ?axbaar' (Al–Akhbar singer) – a daily front page caricature stereotyping a bad pop singer, famous for his 'qafa' (nape, back of the neck) and butts which receive 'the slings and arrows' of 'outrageous' listeners, and

3) A daily caricature on the last page of Al-Akhbar where he makes satirical comments on current issues, and where he has already produced some of the finest character types in the history of Egyptian humor, e.g., 'ʕabbaas il ʕirsa' (Abbaas, the weasel), 'Kamboura', 'ʕabdu – llumanji' (Abdou, the convict), '?il kuhheiti' (the destitute, miserable).

To the weekly issue of Al–Akhbar, Ragab contributes a front-page satirical column, '?il–fahhaama' (the comprehension device), quite similar to ' Nuss Kilma', and an interior caricature, 'fallaah kafr il hanadwa' (the farmer from the hamlet of 'Indians') – a revival of the pharaonic tale of the outspoken peasant where a clever peasant meets the present Egyptian PM, or President of the People's Assembly, and makes satirical comments on contemporary Egyptian politics, specifically the behavior of parliament members.

Except for Nuss Kilma and ?il–fahhaama, all of these contributions are in collaboration with Mustafa Hussein. In addition, Ragab is the author of some satirical books:

(1) 'Tuuta–Tuuta' (an idiomatic expression in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic that signals the end of a story, roughly meaning 'the end' 'the story is finished'), 1997;

(2) 'Suwar Maqluubah' (inverted portraits) – pervert and corrupt character types in the contemporary Egyptian society – 1997;

(3) 'Darba –f- ?albak' (a hit in your heart),1993;

(4) ?il ?aghaani lil ?arjibaani (lit. Songs by ?il ?arjibaani): while the second word is a play on the name of the author himself, the first is a modern parody of the classical ?il ?aghaani by El-Asfahaani, 1991;

(5) '?ay Kalaam' (nonsense), 1990;

(6) 'Nuss Kilma' (half a word), 1993: an anthology of the daily column with the same title, and

(7) 'Kambuura fil barlamaan' (Kambuura in the Parliament), 1991: an anthology of the Kambuura caricatures, with Kambuura as the incarnation of corruption and abuse of political power.

All of these books were published by the Akhbar Al-Youm Publications, Cairo. The cover cartoon and the illustrations in all of them are by Mustafa Hussein. One major theme in these books, specifically in 1, 3, 4 and ?al hubb huwa, is man–woman love and marriage relationships. The various perversions, pretences and deceptions are uncovered and the pompous rhetoric of platonic love is satirized.

2.1.2. Method

The previous section already contains the first step in the analysis, namely, a description of the data. In the next section, there is a general description of the layout, field, topic and linguistic level of the ten caricatures. Next, there is an explanation of the zero level meaning and visual components of each text. The explanation contains a transliteration and a translation into English of each caption. Beyond this explanatory level, the analysis addresses verbal and visual modality, paradigmatic/syntagmatic relations, intertextuality and denotations and connotations in the ten texts. The general findings of the analysis are given in a conclusion.

2.2. Analysis
2.2.1. General

The five 'love–is' caricatures taken from Al-Akhbar are tokens of one and the same type. The frame of each is a rectangular line intervened by a smaller rectangle at its top. The smaller rectangle is not complete. The middle part of its bottom line is absent so that it 'flows into' the larger rectangle. The smaller rectangle always contains the matrix segment '?al hubb huwa' which is at once a title of the caricature and part of a clause to be completed below. Within the larger rectangle, there is always a cartoon below which there is a caption. The caption is the complement of '?al hubb

huwa'. Thus, the caricature always combines at least two codes: the verbal and the visual.

The field of the caricatures is man–woman relationship, more specifically their love relationship. In the visual grammar of the caricatures, the obligatory constituents are a man and a woman in love. Not both of them appear in each caricature, however. Sometimes, one of them disappears from the caricature, but is still present in the background.

One major difference between the <u>Akhbar</u> 'love–is' caricatures and those taken from the anthology relates to their design and layout. The cover page of the anthology contains a central opposition. Within a frame of roses and flowers, there is a cartoon, below the title, the signature of Mustafa Husein and the name of Ahmad Ragab. The cartoon depicts a primitive man carrying a cudgel and 'pulling' a naked woman, reproducing the masculine myth of the man as a hunter and the woman as a hunt – a myth that all feminists are strongly against. Thus, the elegance and refinement symbolized by roses and flowers are opposed to the primitiveness in the cartoon. The caricature texts in the anthology retain the flowery and rosy frame with two differences. First, the frame of each text is monochrome while the frame of the cover is colored. Second, there is far less decorum in the frame of each text. Moreover, the rectangle–within–rectangle design is absent from the caricature texts. In each of them, there is one block in the middle with ?al <u>h</u>ubb huwa at the top, the caption at the bottom and the cartoon in-between.

As regards the language variety used, all the caricature texts use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), as described by Badawi (1973): nominal clauses are more common than verbal clauses, diacritics never appear in any of the sample texts and case-marking is unimportant for an understanding of any of them. When we treat '?al <u>h</u>ubb huwa', not as a title, but as part of an entire caption text, all the verbal parts of the caricature texts turn out to be nominal clauses where '?al <u>h</u>ubb' is the theme and 'huwa' in addition to the caption below the cartoon is the rheme.

2.2.2. Zero Level Analysis of the Texts

In this section, following the order of the caricatures reproduced in Appendix 2[3], each cartoon is described and each verbal text is transliterated and translated into English. The <u>Akhbar</u> caricatures are treated first.

<u>Caricature 1:</u>
<u>(a) Visual:</u>
The cartoon depicts a couple in a quarrel, against a blank, empty background. Frowning, open–mouthed, each is strangling the other with one hand and about to punch him/her with the other. The woman is kicking the man with her right foot and holding herself on the ground on her left tiptoes. The impact of her kick is shown by some small scribbles, while the movement of the about–to–punch hands is indicated by two short slightly curved lines behind each hand so that the woman's left fist and the man's right fist are surrounded by a double bracket. Small drops and dots behind each one of the 'fighters' indicate sweating, foaming, spitting and swearing. Apparently, this is a domestic quarrel; the man wears pyjamas except for its shirt. (Taking off the shirt or 'gallabiyya' is a typical preparation–for–a quarrel step among males in many areas in Egypt.) The woman, on the other hand wears a short one–piece dress that reveals her thighs and below and her shoulder and the upper right part of her back. Being longer, the hair of the woman is more apparently disheveled than the man's.

<u>(b) Verbal:</u>
' ḥayaa muθiirah'
(an exciting life)

<u>Caricature 2:</u>
<u>(a) Visual:</u>
Slightly silhouetted, angry, open–mouthed, apparently shouting, the woman beats the helpless man with a high–heeled female shoe and holds his hair with her left hand. She is standing on a sofa – the only background in the cartoon – and slightly bowing toward the man. The woman wears the

same dress as described in (1) but her hair is far less disheveled. The man in his pyjamas is raising his right hand trying to defend himself, and his right leg, wriggling and coiling in an attempt to escape. Thin curved and short lines are used in the cartoon to indicate the movement of the shoe and the effects of beating.

(b) Verbal:
"?an tuʕṭiih ?akθar mimma ta?xuthii"
(to give him more than you take [from him])

Caricature 3:
(a) Visual:
The woman does not show up in this cartoon. It depicts the man, silhouetted, walking and slightly bowing, in diagonally striped pantaloons and a sleeveless shirt. The most important aspect of this cartoon is that the man has the head and the back neck of a donkey – or the head and the back neck of a donkey have the body of a man.

(b)Verbal
"?an yaʕrif daa?iman ?aṭṭariiq ?ilayki"
(that he always knows his way to you)

Caricature 4:
(a) Visual;
The cartoon depicts an abnormally fat couple, facing camera, so to speak, and sitting adjacent, with drops and dots around their faces and shoulders indicating their feeling of heat. The man is using a handkerchief to dry his sweat, while the woman, almost fainting is relaxing her hands on the sofa, one of them holding an overused handkerchief.

(b) Verbal
"shu ʕuur mutabaadal biddif?"
(a mutual feeling of warmth)

Caricature 5:
(a) Visual:
This is a reverie cartoon, where the man sees (part of) the woman in a dream. His hair standing on end indicates that he is scared. The two bubbles are a typical symbol of dreaming in caricature. What does the man dream of? The right hand of the woman holding a high–heeled female shoe and the heel is ready to hit him.

(b) Verbal:
"?an taraaha fi ?ahlaamik"
(to see her in your dreams)

Caricature 6:
(a) Visual:
This is the first of the caricatures of the anthology which are larger in size and depict bigger figures than the Akhbar caricatures. In this cartoon, we have the man, the woman and a salesman. The woman is selling some clothes and two pairs of shoes to the salesman. The salesman wears a gallabiyya and a hat and on his head carries a box, which is labeled "robabikya" (used things). The man, half hidden behind the door, is in his underwear, astonished yet helpless, watching the transaction at the door where his clothes and shoes are sold as 'robabikya.'

(b) Verbal:
"?an turghimak ?ala –l– baqaa? bi jiwaariha"
(that she forces you to stay with/ beside her)

Caricature 7:
(a) Visual:
The woman does not appear in this cartoon. There is only the man carrying a bunch of keys, looking back, scornful and triumphant, at the door of his (and his wife's) apartment tightly closed with three heavy locks.

(b)Verbal:

"?ashshuʕuur biθθiqa fiiha"

(lit. to feel confidence in her: to trust her)

Caricature 8:
(a) Visual:

There is an apparent visual anachronism in this cartoon. Against a background of high, most probably cemented buildings, and a TV receiver (arial), and walking side by side with a modern dressed, combed and high–heeled woman, there is a primitive, 'natural' man half–naked, leather–dressed in animal hide, hairy and uncombed and bare–footed.

(b)Verbal:

"?al iʕtizaaz bi ?annahu ţabiiʕi wa basiiţ"

(that you feel proud that he is natural and simple).

Caricature 9:
(a)Visual:

While the obese woman is gluttonously devouring a chicken leg, the man is enviously watching, virtually reduced to a skeleton from starvation, having sacrificed himself for her sake for so long.

(b)Verbal:

"?an tunkir thaatak min ?ajliha"

(that you deny yourself [your basic rights] for her sake).

Caricature 10:
(a)Visual:

A 'long shot' of the woman sitting relaxed and unaware of what is going on behind the curtain. There, the man is holding an available maid servant – the scarf, the apron, and the duster are typical symbols of a female servant in Egyptian caricature – and about to lip-kiss her.

(b) Verbal:

"?an turaaʕi mashaaʕ iraha"

(to take her feelings into account)

2.2.3. Modality

The ten caricatures described and translated above are in black and white, which means that they are diachrome. On the other hand, they are all flat rather than 3D, given the absence of shade and the blankness of most of the backgrounds. For example in Caricature 1, a single horizontal line represents a ground or a floor. Most of the cartoons are generally lacking in denseness and detail, except when details are of particular importance, e.g., the close up on the four about-to–kiss lips in Caricature 10. Pieces of furniture are absent except when they have a role, and so are the equipment and the components of the apartment. The sofa in (2) is used to physically support the dominance of the woman/wife, and to intensify our sense of the obesity of the couple in (4); the bed is a necessary part of the dream scene in (5); the door separates the 'jailer' from the 'prisoner' in (6) and (7) – in the latter, the three locks reinforce the sense of imprisonment; the long–shot buildings and the receiver help establish the visual anachronism in (8); the chicken and the eating table are a crucial part of the *mise–en–scene* of an obese person in (9), and in (10), the curtain blocks the already unaware wife from the love scene going on behind it/her.

As regards the other parameters of formal modality, the ten caricatures are still and silent, unlike a movie or a TV serial. The couple, or either of them, is caught in the middle of a scene and the reader has to imagine the causes and the effects of the single, still shot. On the other hand, the caricatures are unedited, again, unlike a montaged film, or even a strip cartoon. Of course, the protagonists, the main theme, and the basic oppositions are the same but each caricature is an independent text.

The content modality of the caricatures is more difficult to analyze. All the captions are possible, familiar and plausible in the rhetoric of romantic love. The cartoons are possible and familiar, especially in an urban area in Egypt; it

is very unlikely, although not impossible, to have such female-dominated encounters in Upper Egypt. On the other hand, most of the cartoons are current in time, a contemporary outcome of the changing family structure and the deteriorating ideals of marriage and love relationships.

2. 2. 4. Paradigms and Syntagms

Several paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations may be identified in the caricatures. First, there is a paradigmatic relation between '?al ḥubb huwa', the cartoon and the caption in each caricature. The cartoon intervenes between the topic and the comment – between '?al ḥubb huwa' and the rest of the definition, or the caption – forcing the reader to rethink the definition of love in each caricature text. Second, there is a syntagmatic relation between the ten captions and the definitions.

All the captions are comments on the same topic : '?al ḥubb huwa'. The captions are all likely to be found in the rhetoric of romantic love, in newspaper agony columns and how–to–achieve–marital–happiness guides and manuals and love recipes. Third, there is a syntagmatic relation between the ten cartoons. The main signifiers are the man and the woman. They appear together in: (1), (2), (4), (6), (8), (9) and (10). In (3) and (5), the woman is deleted, but is referred to in the captions and in the metonymic high–heeled shoe.

This is the case also in (7); in (6) and (10), a third party shows up: the salesman and the maid respectively. In (1), there is a quarrel between the couple, while in (2), the man is being beaten by the woman. In (3), the man is moving in the woman's direction, while in (4), both are helplessly sweating. In (5), the man dreams of being beaten by the woman; in (6), the man is a powerless observer of the transaction where his clothes and shoes are being sold. In (7), he is imprisoning her and in (8), they are walking together, while in (9) he is the powerless self–denying skeletal observer. Finally in (10), he is the dishonest husband and she is the deceived wife.

The presence of the man and the woman is realized morphologically in the captions. Thus, the main participants in the caption clauses are:

(wife) **You** (husband)

he
(husband)

she
(wife)
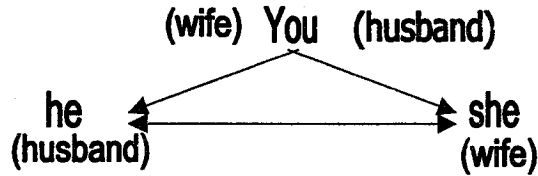
In Caricature (1), the caption is a noun phrase (noun+ adjective), but the implicit meaning is that 'you – husband and wife - have an exciting life'. In (2), the woman is the *agent* and the man is the *patient* of her beatings, while in (3), the man is the *senser* of the mental verb 'yaʕ rif (to know), while the woman is pronominalized into the clitic 'ki' which is part of a prepositional phrase.

In (4), the two are the helpless *sensers* of the feeling of warmth or heat while in (5), the man is again the *senser* of the mental action of dreaming. In (6), the woman is again the *agent* and the man is the *patient* of the action in 'turg̱himak' (she – forces – you).

The clauses in (7) and (8) are both mental and the man and the woman are the *sensers* – the man feels confident, and the woman feels proud. The cartoon in (9) depicts an active 'eater' and passive observer – the woman and the man, respectively; in (10), they exchange roles, with the main difference that the woman is not observing.

The most important paradigmatic relation in the ten caricatures, however, is the relation between the cartoon and the caption in each. The relation is paratextual: either can replace the other. But the combination thereof suggests at least three definitions of love in each caricature:
(1) the definition in the cartoon – a satire of modern love;
(2) the definition in the caption – the traditional rhetoric of love;
(3) the definition based on the combination of the caption and the cartoon.

The visual definition of love in Caricature 1 states that to love means to quarrel with the loved one. The verbal definition is ambiguous because of the adjective 'muθiirah', The root 'θ – w – r' in Arabic is the origin of 'θawrah' (revolt,

28

revolution) as well as '?iθaarah' (excitement). Thus, the caricature ridicules both modern love and marriage relationships and the traditional rhetoric of romantic love. The interpretation of the caption together with the cartoon uncovers the source of humor and the central opposition/s in each caricature.

'Tuʕtiih' (you give him) in the second caricature means both 'give' and 'beat'. The colloquial equivalent of the verb – 'yiddi' (to give) – is commonly used to mean 'beat', e.g., in '?iddiiluh' (lit. 'give him' = 'beat or hit him'). The central opposition in the third caricature is between 'yaʕrif' (to know) and the head of the donkey.

The donkey is stereotypically associated with stupidity – at least in the Arab world. The visual message seems to subvert the verbal definition. On the other hand, there is too much warmth in the cartoon in the fourth caricature that the word 'dif?' (or warmth) should be properly replaced by 'heat'; it is so hot that the man and the woman are 'tahganiin' (unable to bear any more). The cartoon in the fifth text suggests that to love someone means to see him/her in your dreams. The word 'dream' and its Arabic equivalent 'hulm' are overloaded with romantic associations, and to see someone in your dreams suggests that you are obsessed with him/her. Yet, the cartoon subverts the dream, transforming it into a nightmare.

The same subversive effect occurs in the sixth caricature where the verbal definition states that love is that one feels obliged or forced to stay with his beloved (because she is irresistably lovable). In the cartoon, the henpecked husband is forced to stay beside his domineering wife simply because she sells his clothes and shoes.

In the seventh caricature, the cartoon conflicts with the caption. The cartoon suggests that the husband does not have the least trust in his wife. On may go so far as to say the husband does not have confidence in his wife's morality.

The next caricature draws on the basic meanings of 'tabiiʕi' (natural) and 'basiit' (simple). The husband is simply depicted as brutal and uncivilized. The positive reading of the caption is that the husband is spontaneous and far from

29

artificial or overly formal, but this reading is in opposition with the cartoon.

In caricature (9), there is an apparent visual hyperbole: the husband is so altruistic (and the woman so selfish) that he has now become just a skeleton. The flagrant exaggeration indicates that it is not really self-denial on the part of the husband; it is the selfishness and dominance of the wife and the subsequent helplessness of the husband that are behind this fantastic scene.

The element of fantasy is not present in the last caricature. Kissing the maid in the presence of the wife is very inconsiderate; kissing her behind the curtains is less inconsiderate, but the act itself is an act of dishonesty wherever it is performed; in fact, the husband is only paying 'lip' service to his marital obligations. In the rhetoric of modern love, it seems, to be considerate means to be dishonest but in secret.

Thus incongruity and opposition between the romantic meaning of the caption and the pragmatic meaning of the cartoon is the source of humor in most of the sample caricatures. This incongruity is a characteristic feature of '?al ḫubb huwa' column in general. The texts, moreover, manipulate as well as create associations of the major signifiers therein. This aspect is elaborated below.

2. 2. 5. Denotations and Connotations

The two main signifiers in the texts, apparently not iconic, unlike photographs, denote a human adult male and a human adult female united in marriage. Because of their behavior and their visual representation, they are endowed with ideological and cultural connotations.

Thus, the cartoon in Caricature 1 connotes lack of mutual understanding, uncivilizedness and violence; in (2) it connotes female dominance and male submissiveness; in (3) it connotes the husband's stupidity and gullibility.

The cartoon in (4), in contrast with the captions, exaggerates the denotative meaning of 'dif?' – which is somewhere between cold and heat; the caption draws on the connotations of the word – emotional warmth and affection. In the cartoon in (5), there are two significant signifiers, in

addition to the man: the man's hair standing on end and the (woman's) high–heeled shoe.

These are what they are or what they appear to be, but the first is *indexical* of fear and the second is *metonymic* of the woman's beating tools and *symbolic* of her dominance as well as her vulgarity. To these, the cartoon in (6) adds the act of selling the man's clothes and shoes – part of his identity, freedom and social status – which is an indication of the woman's control and materialism. The reverse of this is true in (7): the locks and the door concretize the man's control as well as his sense of the woman's uncontrollability.

The cartoons produce similar effects in the rest of the texts: the clothing of a primitive man – an element of fantasy in (8), the woman's eating behavior, the meat on the table – and on the chair, and the man's skeleton – another element of fantasy – in (9) anchor the interpretation of the captions in a direction quite opposite to their rhetorical, romantic meanings.

In the last text, the scarf, the apron and the duster, are commonly associated with female servants in the Egyptian mass media and the curtain symbolizes the man's deception and the woman's ignorance of his actions. The cartoon invokes a multitude of female aphorisms and wise sayings about man's abuse of woman's trust and about his innate deceptiveness in the Egyptian society.

This is a common theme in Egyptian caricatures. Other aspects which (?al ḥubb huwa) has in common with caricature in general are discussed the following section.

2. 2. 6. Intertextuality

The ten caricatures analyzed above belong to the discourse genre of print caricatures. This generic affiliation instantiates some intertextual obligations: a minimal requirement is the comic illustration, or the cartoon. The caption is optional; many caricatures have a no comment

label – "biduun taʕliiq" (lit. without a comment).

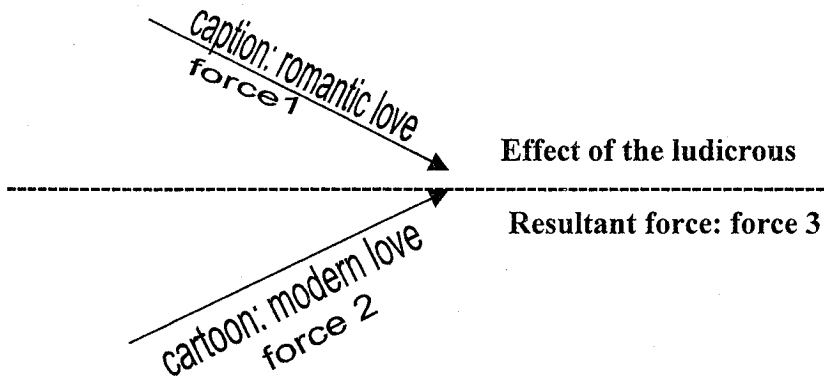The verbal part in caricatures is in one of the following forms:

(1) an authorial caption,

(2) one turn by one character, or

(3) an adjacency pair where the second part contains the punchline .

There is no dialogue in ?al ḥubb huwa – no dialogue between the characters. The verbal part is always an authorial caption in the form of a definition of love. Of course, there is an implicit rapport between the author and the implied reader as well as between the author and the two main charters in the caricatures.

There are other transtextual features that connect the sample texts to the discourse genre of caricatures. One such feature is the existence of conflict or incongruity (see 1. 4.) The conflict is always between the cartoons and the romantic meaning of the captions.

An adaptation of Hayakawa's (1974) simplified scheme already discussed in the section on caricature may be:

Caption: romantic love
force 1

Effect of the ludicrous

Resultant force: force 3

cartoon: modern love
force 2

Force 3 remains hypothetical because it is part of the decoding of the text by the reader. The resolution of the caricature by the reader should involve a re-reading of the caption (punchline) based on the thematic phrase ?al ḥubb huwa and the cartoon (the set-up).

On a narrower scale, the ten caricatures belong to the already established caricature column of ?al ḥubb huwa, the major characteristics of which have already been discussed in the analysis. Moreover, the caricatures are part of the joint work of Ragab and Hussein. The cartoons resemble all other cartoons by Hussein and the captions resemble Ragab's other satirical treatments of. love and

marriage in contemporary Egyptian society. Ragab has already stereotyped marriage as an act of stupidity, husbands as gullible, irrational, dominated and sometimes cuckolded, and wives as domineering, brutal, deceptive and materialistic.

On the other hand, the sample texts architextually belong to contemporary Egyptian caricature in general. The cartoons therein contain visual signifiers that recur in other caricature columns, e. g.,

1- The head of a donkey, connoting stupidity;

2- The hair standing on end, connoting fear;

3- The scarf, apron and duster, metonymic of a maid;

4- The primitive man, connoting vulgarity and lack of refinement;

5- The high heeled female shoes, a tool and an index of female dominance, and so on.

The sample caricatures are transtextually related to a totally different discourse genre, however. The verbal parts thereof parody a rhetorical form most frequently used in scientific discourse, namely, definition. According to Trimble (1985), there are three types of definition: formal, semi-formal, and nonformal. A formal definition usually contains the term being defined, the class to which it belongs, and its distinctive features - those which set it apart from other members of the class. A semi-formal definition, on the other hand, only gives the distinctive feature of a term, whereas a nonformal definition may give a synonym thereof (pp. 75-76). ?al hubb huwa texts always begin with the defined- ?al hubb – always followed by 'huwa' which is equivalent to "is" in a similar definition in English. The term always occupies a thematic position - in fact, love is one of the most recurrent themes in Ragab's satirical works. The captions that complete the definition usually contain an action, behavior, feeling, or mental state indexical of love in traditional romantic rhetoric. The cartoon replaces the non-linear material that may accompany a scientific definition. The interpretation of the sample caricatures as a parody of scientific discourse is not unjustified. Given the contemporary widespread discussions of the "chemistry of love", it seems (to me) that Ragab launches his satire against any attempt to rationalize human

33

emotions, against the modern recipes and how-to manuals on love and marriage.

He does not trust the pompous rhetoric of romantic love either. We have already seen that he attempts to uncover the mutual deceptions and misconceptions of love and marriage and that he is for a realistic portrayal of these relationships - realistic in a very satirical manner.

Conclusion

Based on an overview of semiotic theory and tools and steps of semiotic analysis and a partial review of the literature on humor, the study has provided an analysis of the semiotics of caricature, using as its data ten texts from ?al ḥubb huwa caricature column by Ahmad Ragab and Mustafa Hussein. The zero level description of the sample texts and the analysis of modality, paradigms and syntagms, denotation and connotation and intertextuality therein reveal a central opposition between a verbal and a visual message which indicates a deeper ideological opposition between the rhetoric of romantic love and the realities of modern love.

The analysis also reveals architextual and transtextual affinities with humor in general, with contemporary Egyptian caricature, the joint caricatures by Ragab and Hussein, the satirical works of Ragab, and ?al ḥubb huwa caricature column in particular, as well as with the scientific discourse subgenre of definitions.

However, the present study remains exploratory and partial in many ways. First, the application is less comprehensive than the theoretical framework. Second, the statements made here as well as in the analysis section are far from universal. More texts in more contexts will lead to more generalizable statements.

In spite of these (and other) limitations, the study provides an invitation to a semiotic approach to media texts, an approach that would be very useful when applied to adverts, films, news reports, T.V. serials and similar texts. It seems that only a semiotic analysis is capable of capturing the meaning making processes in contemporary texts, because only a semiotic analysis is capable of accounting for anything that signifies, anything that has (a) meaning/s.

Notes

(1) An Egyptian irregular magazine, <u>Karikatik</u>, no date, reports Hussein saying that he has been working with Ragab for more than 27 years, that the column of ?al <u>h</u>ubb huwa is 26 years old and that it was originally taken from a 'foreign' newspaper (p. 11).

(2) The first five caricature texts are taken from five July issues of <u>Al-Akhbar</u>, 1999:

       Caricature 1: July 27,

       Caricature 2: July 8,

       Caricature 3: July 6,

       Caricature 4: July 5, and

       Caricature 5: July 13.

(3) The caricatures in appendix 2 were repoduced from the original by Ms. Nahla M. Farouk, Junior Staff Member, Faculty of Education, Sohag. Thanks to her skill and talent, the caricatures could be easily scanned, rather than photocopied.

References

Abrams, M. H. (1993). <u>A Glossary of Literary Terms</u>, 6th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace College publishers.

Baylon, C. & Fabre, p. (1990) <u>Initiation a` la Linguistique.</u> Paris: Edition Fernand Nathan.

Badawi, E.M. (1973). <u>Levels of Contemporary Egyptian Arabic</u> (in Arabic). Cairo: Dar El – Maaref.

Chandler, D. (1994). <u>Semiotics for Beginners</u>. [On–Line] Available: http://www.aber.ac.uk/~dgc/semiotic.html

Danesi, M. (1994). <u>Messages and Meanings: An Introduction to Semiotics</u>. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Deckers, L.& Buttram, R. T. (1990). Humor as a response to incongruities within or between schemata. <u>Humor, 3(1)</u> : 53-64.

Eco, U. (1976). <u>A Theory of Semiotics</u>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Goldstein, L. (1990). The linguistic interest of verbal humor. <u>Humor, 3(1):</u> 37 – 52.

Graddol, D. (1994). The visual accomplishment of reality. In D. Graddol and O. Boyd–Barrett (Eds). Media Texts: Authors and Readers (pp. 136–160). Cleverdon: Open University.

Gregory, T.C (1924). The Nature of Laughter. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). Language as Social Semiotic. London: Edward Arnold.

Hawkes, T. (1977). Structuralism and Semiotics. London: Routledge.

Hayakawa, S. I. (1974). Language in Thought and Action, 4th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Hayward. S. (1996). Key Concepts in Cinema Studies. London: Routledge.

Hetzron, R. (1991). On the structure of punchlines. Humor, 4(1): 61–108.

Hodge, R. & Kress, G. (1988). Social Semiotics. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ikbaal, M. (1996). Semiology and its approach to synonymy (in Arabic). Aalam Al – Fikr, 24(3): 189–206.

Jakobson, R. (1973). Functions of language. In J. P. B. Allen and S. Pit Corder (Eds.). The Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics, Vol. 1: Readings for Applied Linguistics (pp. 53–57). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design. London: Routledge.

Mazid, B. M. (1999). Ideology and Control in Some Speech and Newspaper Genres: A Politicolinguistic Approach to Discourse Analysis. Ph. D. Thesis. Cairo: Ain Shams University, Faculty of Arts.

Monson, J. A. (1994, Sept./Oct.). Getting serious about humor. Gifted Child Today: 14–40.

Morris, R. (1989). Behind the Jester's Mask. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Morris, R. (n.d.). Cartoons and the political system: Canada, Quebec, Wales, and England. [On–Line] Available: http://www.cjc-online.ca/BackIssues/17.2/morris.html

Nerhardt, G. (1976). Incongruity and funniness. In A. J. Champan and H. G. Foot (Eds.). Humor and Laughter:

Theory, Research and Applications (pp. 55–62). London: John Wiley Sons.

Nöth, W. (1990). Handbook of Semiotics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Press, C. (1981). The Political Cartoon. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Rosenbaum, R. A. (Ed)(1989). The New American Desk Encyclopedia. New York: Penguin.

Sacks, H. (1984). Some technical considerations of a dirty joke. In J. Schenkein (Ed.). Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction (pp. 249–269). New York: Academic Press.

Sherzer, J. (1985). Puns and jokes. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.) Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Vol. 3: Discourse and Dialogue (pp. 213–221). New York: Academic Press.

Stam, R., Burgoyne, R. & Filtterman–Lewis, S. (1992). New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics. London: Routledge.

Tannen, D. (1989). Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Teslow, J. L. (1995). Humor me: A call for research. Educational Technology Research and Development, 43 (3): 6–28.

Thompson, J. B. (1987). Language and ideology: A framework for analysis. Sociological Review, 35: 516–536.

Trimble, L. (1985). English for Science and Technology: A Discourse Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, G. (1992). British Cultural Studies: An Introduction. New York: Routledge.

Wales, K. (1989). A Dictionary of Stylistics. London: Longman.

Zajdman, A. (1991). Contextualization of canned jokes in discourse. Humor, 4(1): 23 –40.

Appendix 1
Phonetic Alphabet

? ء	hamza	Voiceless glottal stop
θ ث	thaa	Interdental voiceless fricative
j ج	jeem	Voiced palatal fricative
h ح	haa	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative
x خ	khaa	Voiceless uvular fricative
th ذ	thaal	Interdental voiced fricative
sh ش	sheen	Voiceless palatal fricative
s ص	saad	Voiceless pharyngealized fricative
t ط	taa	Voiceless pharyngealized plosive
؟ ع	ein	Voiced pharyngeal fricative
gh غ	ghein	Voiced uvular fricative
q ق	qaaf	Voiceless uvular plosive
y ى	yaa	Voiced palatal semi-vowel
w و	wa	Voiced bilabial semi-vowel
---------	--------------	--
a		Front low unrounded
i		Front high unrounded
u		Back high rounded and pushed forward

This is a partial phonetic alphabet, based on the data of the study. Long vowels and geminate consonants are shown by doubling the relevant symbol. Each transcription is immediately followed by a translation into English (in brackets). Square brackets [ ] indicate an intervention or addition by the researcher.

Appendix 2
DATA