



<https://doi.org/10.16926/trs.2020.05.06>

Data zgłoszenia: 15.09.2020 r.

Data akceptacji: 16.12.2020 r.

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“Going Easily Under”¹: Waguih Ghali’s Diary of Depression²

Abstract: The diaries of the Egyptian Anglophone writer Waguih Ghali (192? – 1969), best known for his novel *Bear in the Snooker Club* (London: Serpent’s Tale, 1987), first appeared in an online archive of his unpublished papers and were edited into two volumes under the title *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali: An Egyptian Writer in the Swinging Sixties* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016, 2017). In May 1964, Ghali started keeping his diary as an attempt to deal with his depression which culminated in his final entry being his suicide note. Ghali’s entries reveal his struggle with bouts of depression, and his inability to write more fiction, documenting his final years of exile in Germany, and then, finally, London. Different expressions of emotions and feelings can be read throughout the diary entries: sadness, disgust, anger, loneliness, and heartbreak. This paper traces the affective outpourings of Ghali’s feelings within the genre structure of the diary in the light of readings by Sianne Ngai and Ann Cvetkovich and Philippe Lejeune’s work on diaries. Moreover, this paper reads the written emotions in Ghali’s entries to trace how his is not only a diary of depression but also of exile. The paper links exile as a state of being to Ghali’s depression by exploring the rela-

¹ The title of the article comes from one of Waguih Ghali’s diary entries in the first volume of his published diaries. He writes on “*Friday, 3rd of June, 1964*”/The fact is, re-reading this Diary, I can see that in essence, the whole theme of this Diary is essentially a struggle. Going easily under, struggling, slightly, submerging, and then, at once relaxing – only to sink again. It is a struggle which I must keep up. It is no use just floating – giving a few strokes [to] reach the surface [...]. No, I must master the element as it were. All. Financial, physical, sexual and emotional. And my struggle shall start today with this resolution to write,” (2016, 49).

² This paper is derived from my Ph.D. thesis, *Representation of the Self in Works by and on Waguih Ghali*, registered at the Department of English Language and Literature at Cairo University, Egypt under the supervision of Professor Hoda Gindi and Professor Hala Kamal.

tionship between his practice as a diarist to his display of such feelings in the text in an attempt to understand how depression and the emotional states that stem from it are a culminate biproduct of his longterm exile.

Keywords: diaries, life-writing, Waguih Ghali, depression, exile, Egypt.

For years, Anglophone Egyptian writer Waguih Ghali (192? – 1969) was primarily known for his one novel, *Beer in the Snooker Club* (1964, Andre Deutsch; 2010, *Serpent's Tail*) until the recent publication of his diaries. Ghali, born in Egypt and schooled there, lived more than half his life in Western Europe. He studied medicine for some time in Paris and writes in his diaries about London being the first city he lived in when he travelled to Europe. Moving from Paris to Sweden then to work as a physical laborer in Hamburg in the North of Germany, Ghali wrote *Beer in the Snooker Club* some time in between these cities. Its publication established him as an Egyptian writer who wrote about a dying cosmopolitanism revealing the effects of colonial education on a subject such as himself. Ghali's novel takes place between Cairo and London; the former to which he could never return. His diaries, however, record the last four years of his life after he finally resided in West Germany and travels from there to other cities in Europe when he is permitted to travel. While first appearing as part of an online archive of his personal papers, *Waguih Ghali's Unpublished Papers* (2013), his diaries have been edited into two volumes by May Hawas and published by the American University in Cairo Press. *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali: An Egyptian Writer in the Swinging Sixties Volumes 1&2* (2016, 2017). The published diaries have come to play the role of a much awaited second work by Ghali after years of his only novel acquiring larger readership since its republication in the 80s. With a photograph of a smirking Ghali's on the cover of the diaries, the six notebooks are edited in two volumes starting in 1964 and ending in December 1968 when he committed suicide; he passed away in the early days of 1969. While the playful smirk on Ghali's face matches the humor, cynicism and eye for detail present in the diaries, it does not prepare the readers for the verbal descriptions of depression in Ghali's diary entries. However, the knowledge of his suicide does. This paper attempts to trace the feelings Ghali writes to describe his depression within the genre structure of the diary taking into consideration that his diary is not only a diary of depression but also of exile.

Waguih Ghali's Life and Writing

Ghali's life and suicide have become topics of interest to fans who have read *Beer in the Snooker Club*, which has come to be read as an autobiograph-

ical novel. Much of Ghali's life was not known to his readers up until Diana Athill (1917–2019) published a memoir, *After a Funeral* (1986), about her friendship with Ghali and the years he spent living in her house in London until his suicide. Details in Athill's memoir of his upbringing, his education and social class and family allowed for readers to make the connection between Ghali himself and the protagonist of his novel, Ram, who appears to belong to a social milieu similar to the one in which his author was born. While there is not one clearly known timeline of Ghali's life preceding the diaries in '64, what is known is that he lived in some materialization of exile in Europe. It is not certain at all what happened to his Egyptian passport, but Ghali was using a West German document when he started to keep his diary. The diaries tell of his life as a published author living in Rheydt, where he was residing, prior to '64; a clear time line of when he went to Paris to study medicine, when he dropped out and travelled to Sweden and thereafter lived in Hamburg doing manual labor. However, it cannot be discerned from either Athill's memoir or from Ghali's diaries what happened to his Egyptian passport making it difficult to underpin when exactly this state of being in exile begins.

The diaries tell of a certain timeline of Ghali's last years: they start in Rhedyt and end in London. Although very different in genre and in tone, Ghali's diaries as a second work of literature by the author of *Beer in the Snooker Club* shine a light on the historical and cultural moment and locations. Perhaps it is not correct to compare such different genres, yet readings of the novel as autobiographical allow for such a distinction to be made, specifically to note that the diaries are determining of how readers come to understand the years preceding Ghali's suicide. Ghali's diaries are a rare document, which can be read generically and thematically, for readers, archivists, and academics. As a specimen of a genre, the diaries are available in manuscript and in totality, allow the possibility to study them in form, and to study the various ways in which they can be read, edited and presented to audiences. Thematically, Ghali's diaries represent an honest and beguiling expression of the Egyptian writer in the 60s, a time when Nasser's regime 'silenced' many. Ironically, Ghali's diaries cannot be read solely as a political manuscript although he writes against Nasser's regime vehemently at times such as the Six Day War with Israel. Ghali's diaries are a document of life writing full of the metaphors, aesthetics, patterns and rhythm of a diary: a narrative about himself and his life. Nasser and his politics and Ghali's views on Israel do not take center stage.

The diaries once edited and published have become available for the reader to purchase and consume. As an ordinary reader with no research purposes in mind, my first thought after reading the published diaries (and

not the manuscript) was 'how depressing'. It is a diary that ends in suicide; all Ghali's fans know that. Taking first impressions further, this paper tries to probe into Ghali's diary as a diary of depression. The fact that it is that is not refutable but rather what are the delicate workings of such a subject of life writing that make it the composition that we read as Ghali's diaries. What I try to assess and examine in this paper is the language of bad feelings in Ghali's diaries and read them within frames such as exile and materiality. To do so, this paper starts at the position that "emotion talk must be interpreted as in and about social life rather than as veridically referential to some internal state."³ However, I work from the inward to the outward, moving through feelings Ghali writes in his diary to examine how they could possibly connect to other larger social constructions. Can the state of depression Ghali experiences and writes about in his diaries then be read as an extension of the pains and pangs of homelessness which he has experienced in his childhood and which have continued in his adulthood through exile? How does the diary, as a form, contribute to understanding Ghali's feelings in a written narrative? Rather than consider this paper a work in progress (it is part of a larger work in progress), I think of it as opening a trajectory of reading Ghali's diaries and touching the surface of his feelings.

Diaries as Delicate Writings

The private nature of the diary collides with readers' curiosity about Ghali's life; curiosity about his suicide, his life, and his writing are inevitable emotional pathways that every reader unconsciously or consciously take as they delve into his inner world between 1964 and 1968. Philipp Lejeune describes diaries as "a piece of lacework or a spider web," that is "apparently made up of more empty space than filled space."⁴ Ghali's diary is a doily of dailiness that is left for us as readers to examine, turn around and make sense of. Within these threads are verbal constructions of how he experienced depression and how his depression shaped the way his needles took the threads. The empty spaces in diaries Lejeune refers to are almost as readily accepted by readers as if they were holding a lace doily: a piece of delicate writing. Yet the diary is not a doily, far from it, it is an unruly web that grows from a thread that is the first diary entry even when it has a first entry and a final one that ends with Ghali's life. Nor does it end without leaving a thread

³ Lila Abu-Lughod, and Catherine A. Lutz, eds., *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

⁴ Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary* (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 181.

behind; for even with Ghali’s diary ending with suicide, there remains much trace of the writer and the self in the seemingly clean-cut ending of his life. This can be read in the arising curiosity about him, manifested in filmmakers wanting to probe further into his work, academics such as myself and translators making his Anglophone narrative available for readers in Arabic and of course the readers who read essentially on a basis of curiosity.⁵

Images of diaries as delicate objects such as lacework or doilies preserve much of the delicateness with which a text such as Ghali’s should be read, especially considering his textual articulation of his depression. The way Ghali describes his pain, his grief and depression can offer clues that make the experience of reading his diary more than just curiosity as to why he killed himself on Boxing Day of ‘68. The intimacy of the practice of diary writing is in ultimate paradox with the revealing nature of readers consuming the diary in many forms, whether as manuscript or edited/published text. Specifically because of the diary being an intimate writing process where the diarist does not have to worry about readership on most occasions, the readers of someone else’s diary becomes subject to the most personal and perhaps the darkest sides of the diarist. The diary is a continuous pouring of the self to an audience of sorts, the primary reader being the diarist himself in the possible recurring event of rereading the text at hand. As a diarist, Ghali rereads his diary many times and comments on the rereading process in diary entries right after this act noting how his diary is essentially a text of ‘feeling bad’. While the furtive and at the same tantalizing pleasure of reading diaries of favorite authors made available ultimately precede any reading of Ghali’s diaries, let us not forget that his diaries offer a sincere chance for readers to come close to an understanding of the ugliness of mental illness gone unacknowledged, untreated, and remaining a direct source of shame to its subject.

Ghali begins his diary in West Germany, specifically in Rheydt. The moment he begins the diary can be seen as a pivotal point knowing how the story/the diary/his life end: “*Rheydt, Germany, Sunday 24th May 1964/Going*

⁵ Much attention has been given to Ghali’s works and life in the past years that take different trajectories. Ghali’s letters and his pieces published in *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Guardian* between 1957 and 1965 were translated into Arabic by Waeil Ashry and published in January 2020. An Arabic translation of *Beer in the Snooker Club* was published in 2013 by Dar El Sherouk, translated by Iman Mersal and Reem El-Rayes. Egyptian filmmaker Adam Makary was granted the rights to the novel by the late Diana Athill before her death and is working on adapting it into a feature film. Adham Yehia, an Egyptian filmmaker, is currently working on a documentary on Ghali’s life and his novel. It was announced in spring 2019 by Al Kotob Khan publishing house that they were translating the diaries edited by Hawas and published by the American University in Cairo Press.

mad, as I seem to be going, perhaps it'd be better to keep my Diary [...] if only for a streak of sanity."⁶ This initial moment of madness can be understood by readers later on as they proceed in reading the diary as an extended moment of depression, a word Ghali uses in the text to describe his state. Ghali states his purpose of keeping the diary, and readers who approach it are aware of how the diary ends with his suicide which situates the diary as an exercise in life writing that is born out of his struggle with mental illness. In Ghali's first entry there is the indication of how the diary functions as being a writing space where he can suspend the feeling of "going mad" or write about it. This places the diary on a trajectory of the self: that of Ghali's depression which culminates in the final entry being his suicide note.

In the first pages of Ghali's diary, he writes about his state of depression in an array of expressions all repeating in some way or another 'bad feelings'. By bad feelings, I specifically refer to the verbal constructions which Ghali produces in the immediacy of writing a diary entry. He writes on "*Wednesday 27th May 1964/Manic depressive, that I am,*"⁷ connecting the madness that prompts him to write the diary to depression. Two days following this entry, Ghali writes: "*29th May 1964/Woke at eleven, depressed and miserable.*"⁸ His depression continues to surface and resurface in the entries that follow making the diary seem like a written narrative of a self, suspended between daily happenings and a constant state of depression, that is manifested in verbal constructs such as being "miserable". The first part of his diary in '64 is devoted to his love affair with Lisolette which associate his feelings of depression, which at times he writes about as being an inherent state, to his love interest: "*2nd June 1964/The idea of seeing Lisolette depressed me –anticipating the humiliation and frustration.*"⁹ The predictable and anticipated thought of seeing Lisolette creates a feeling of depression. Depression, however, is here not only a feeling but a state that abounds in other bad feelings such as "humiliation and frustration." The following day he writes: "*3rd June 1964/My love is again all consuming this morning. It is not love at all, it is a terrible passion. Yesterday at work I sat for half an hour sticking forms together and suddenly realised what I had arrived to, at my age: regret not having finished my medical studies, regret my madness, my irresponsibility. The worst thing that can ever happen at my age.*"¹⁰ It is possible to trace the links between

⁶ Waguih Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali: An Egyptian Writer in the Swinging Sixties 1964–1966* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016), 23.

⁷ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 24.

⁸ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 24.

⁹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 27.

¹⁰ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 27.

depression, love, passion and another bad feeling: regret. Ghali does not only regret choices he has made in life but writes that he regrets his own madness. The idea that madness or depression are conscious acts that can be controlled, and thus, regretted, works against the possibility of suicide as a choice.

The same day he writes, "Home, very depressed. Finished reading *A New Life* by Bernard Malamud, then started on *Black Spring* by Henry Miller. Again this injection of life – the rejuvenation of feeling. What petty meanderings are my sickly depressions and lovesicknesses...reading him, I want to jump up, throw my measly job, leave this flat, run away but AWAY from this terrible mediocrity, this stifling middle-class ideal and these deadly feelings."¹¹ There appears a strange relationship between Ghali and writing, whether his own failure at writing or his reflections on works by other writers. Here, for instance, Miller's text fills him with a surge of good feelings to which he compares his own bad feelings, belittling them in their disagreeability. This impulse to choose life elsewhere is not merely a wish at a geographic relocation but – and his capitalization of "AWAY" is quite telling – specifically to escape his own bad feelings elsewhere: a different reality from his own. To quote Ngai on ugly feelings,

Like rage and fear, ugly feelings such as envy can be described as dysphoric or experientially negative, in the sense that they evoke pain or displeasure. They can also be described as "semantically" negative, in the sense that they are saturated with socially stigmatizing meanings and values (such as the "pettiness" one traditionally associates with envy); and as "syntactically" negative, in the sense that they are organized by trajectories of repulsion rather than attraction, by phobic strivings "away from" rather than philic strivings "toward."¹²

Writing such as Miller's entices words like "rejuvenation" from Ghali, while his own "petty meanderings" are something to turn away from, as Ngai describes. Ghali's "repulsion" from his own bad feelings is apparent and written out every time he rereads the diary, layering the effect of the feeling: once felt, written out, reread and felt again, resulting a new web of affective turn-aways and the desire to escape in more ways than one.

The practice of keeping the diary, therefore, traps Ghali in a certain 'self' which is written out and which he can return to by rereading, the 'self' readers come to know through his diaries who is largely shaped by him feeling bad and writing about it. Culley writes that "all diarists are involved in a process, even if largely unconscious, of selecting details to create a persona."¹³

¹¹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 27, 28.

¹² Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 11.

¹³ Margo Culley, ed., *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1985), 12.

The selection process is tricky while writing a diary because not only does it depend on how the diarist views themselves but also on the preoccupations that emerge with the impulse of writing. Does depression induce the diary entry or does the diary entry trap depression in a written space that makes it inescapable? The diary itself becomes a part of the self; Ghali writes on “Monday, 22nd November 1965/I haven’t been able to write at all, the idea of facing my Diary, these pages of misery and moans, I can’t face.”¹⁴ The diary of his depression oscillates between being a reflection – a written record – of the self which he can no longer tolerate and a confidant to whom he can speak all the misery to: “Friday, 17th December 1965/There is nothing I welcome more than death at the moment, or this very instant...here and now. How can I put it and to whom? How can I relate, put in words, express what I am going through to anyone but myself?”¹⁵ Ghali’s diary is the vessel for communicating the incommunicable facets of the self that come through in all messiness within the pages of his diary notebooks.

Ghali’s writing about his depression in the diary transforms the particular reality of living with mental illness to a written text. The dailiness of the diary and the imperative urge to write about what has taken place that day or days earlier as well as record his feelings about it, envelope his depression in the repetitiveness of the practice. If, however, he writes the diary to ward off depression and madness to use his term, then how does the very form of the diary force itself on his feelings? The diary as a genre is built on repetition; the act of writing an entry in the same notebook is repeated and so are the general circumstances surrounding the self writing the entry. So that if Ghali’s diary starts with the hope of putting off suicide and other bad feelings, the repetitive writing about them places him on a ‘hamster wheel’ where he tries to escape his feelings with this everyday practice. Bruce Merry writes that the “form of the Diary remains ideal for the development of obsessive preoccupations, where the reigning melancholy can alternate with critical or personal passages and recur as part of a chain with conflicting and contrasting links.”¹⁶ Connecting the repetitiveness of form to repeated feelings then would allow us to understand perhaps the way in which Ghali’s feelings feature in a diary that begins as an attempt to postpone suicide and ends with it.

¹⁴ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguhi Ghali* (2016), 197.

¹⁵ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguhi Ghali* (2016), 206.

¹⁶ Bruce Merry, “The Literary Diary as a Genre.” *The Maynooth Review/Revieú Mhá Nuad*, vol. 5, No. 1 (May, 1979): 12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20556925>.

Writing Depression

In his first notebook, Ghali writes: "Read an article in the *Observer* about depression. Fits me."¹⁷ While Ghali does not seek medical help, he seeks assurance of his illness from outside sources. In this entry, there is not outside cause for his depression; it is a thing that exists on its own within him. He goes on writing, "There is also this element of disgust in myself, disgusted with myself. And I feel a terrible failure."¹⁸ As a feeling, disgust is not one to be shared with others, especially disgust with the self. There is a paradox in writing about the self in a genre such as diary and in the feeling of being disgusted with oneself. He does not leave the article he read at that but continues: "This article in the *Observer* mentions 'hate' as an integral part for my love. Perhaps it is this hate I have often felt for my mother. And it is also this hate, because she didn't love me, that turns all my relationships into a macabre fiasco with all the women who have loved me or whom I have loved."¹⁹ Perhaps there is the cliché of love and hate being two sides of the same coin but what is significant is how a state such as depression, once confirmed by an outside source, releases possibilities of feelings that coexist within the self: hate, disgust and love. Feelings work with associations. Later, Ghali writes on "9th June 1964/According to this article I read in the *Observer*, a person is much stronger once he has conquered a depression. Of course it's my writing which is depressing me. There seems to be no future in it, and so there is no future in me either."²⁰ He associates himself with the article, with the mental illness, and associates the illness with writing and the writing to the self. Ironically, he writes this while engaging in an act of writing about the self he finds so hopeless.

The paradox of his realization of how suicide is inevitable and also the reason he continues to go on living is all part of the inevitable end of the diary, suicide, which we readers already know of. He writes: "*Sunday 30th May 1964/What kind of insanity is this, I don't know. To go and see a psychiatrist would be only a joke. I know, deep in me, that I am [a] prospective suicide – strangely enough, it is the only thing that keeps me going. The fact or rather the knowledge, that I can end it all at any time.*"²¹ Ghali mentions the desire to commit suicide in entries where he is terribly depressed even when in London: "This morning I felt terrible. And again had the idea of 'Alright then,

¹⁷ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 26.

¹⁸ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 26.

¹⁹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 26.

²⁰ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 31.

²¹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 25, 26.

you've had a good, nice last spree. End it all. Pretend you're going back and just kill yourself somewhere convenient on the way.' Again obsessed by this somehow inevitable solution. Again things looked black and depressing."²² Closer to his suicide, on "*Saturday, 27th April 1968*," he writes: "On the way there and back I toyed seriously with suicide – to accumulate enough sleeping pills, pack my stuff, take the car from where I had dumped it...park in some lay-in [sic], swallow the stuff, put the radio on, and sleep it off – literally – my life."²³ However, his hunger for love and life stop him from taking the step to do so, "I realise that my thoughts of suicide cannot stem from my despair, but on the contrary, from my hopes. It is my love of life which tempts me towards suicide, and not my despairing situation."²⁴ His desire to live and find the love he longs for, his desire for life to have meaning through writing again, become entangled in the act of writing the diary.

Ghali's pattern of writing could be summed up in motifs: falling in love, being repulsed by the subject of his affection/desire, not being able to write, rereading the diary, getting drunk, feeling depressed, being broke, all which can be described as being a constant state of unsettlement. Lejeune writes that "[t]he diary's thematic obsessions are reinforced by the regularity of its forms. By definition, writing a diary is free, totally free. But in fact, each diarist quickly settles into a small number of forms of language that become "molds" for all of his entries, and never deviates from them."²⁵ Ghali's obsessions culminate in a specific lexicon describing his feelings, "miserable", "disgust", "loneliness", "lovesick", all which emphasize his diary as a diary of and against depression. Since "[e]motion can be said to be *created in*, rather than shaped by, speech in the sense that it is postulated as an entity in language where its meaning to social actors is also elaborated,"²⁶ then perhaps the way Ghali writes about his bad feelings can be read within the meanings they carry for him.

The diary's repetitive nature expose the levels of feeling bad and how essentially, the diary's language emanates depression. Disregarding the fact that readers know how the diary will end before they start reading it, this is a closer look at how Ghali describes his depression. On "*Saturday, 5th September 1965*," Ghali writes:

Falling...falling...falling. Perhaps I have been unable to touch my Diary lately, except in short fits because at times I am repulsive to myself, I find myself repulsive and

²² Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 40, 41.

²³ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2017), 186.

²⁴ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2017), 186.

²⁵ Lejeune, *On Diary*, 180.

²⁶ Abu-Lughod and Lutz, *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, 12.

don't want to touch me, or to interest myself in me. It is horrible to dislike your own self and there must be a certain vestige of genuine madness in all this (we have, alas, used the word 'mad' again). I have started drinking and taking tablets recklessly again, and am anticipating a period of terrible *cafard* once again, *cafard* and despair and loneliness and hopelessness...and moaning. But no moaning, we have promised (is the use of 'we' a 'Freudian' slip?). I look terribly old and haggard again and this always depresses me too.²⁷

Ghali describes his depression in action by repeating the word "falling" using a verb to describe his depression. The verb he writes is very specific and comes with an array of possible sensations: loss of control, fear, inevitability to say the least. The depression where he falls is the point where he comes face to face with these bad feelings which are reflected unto the self. He finds himself repulsive, engaging in a complex emotional response. At the moment of depression, with the use of words associated with it, "*cafard* and despair and loneliness and hopelessness," he experiences another feeling "repulsion". This feeling of finding himself repulsive, of being repulsed at oneself, shows how the feelings Ghali experiences and expresses are all turned inwards, at the self. At the end of a very drunken entry written on *Friday, 9th July 1965*, Ghali writes, "I am sad again, and terribly lonely [sic] – the eternal theme of this Diary. Searching for love – and now, nearly resigned never to find it."²⁸ The drinking cannot be separated from the act of writing the diary as he writes when he is drunk at times and at others records how much drinking he has done. For readers, the alliteration in drinking, diary and depression connotes a certain musicality that becomes the thumping sound of Ghali's diary rhythms.

In the moment of suicide, this final act of reconciling with the mess he felt his life was, Ghali Lejeune leaves the diary as a legacy rather than destroy it. Lejeune poetically writes, "[t]he diary of the end is a struggle against the end—until the end absorbs the diary along with the rest, we might say. But that's not quite right: death can prevent me from continuing my diary, but it can't undo the diary."²⁹ Ghali's final entry is written while drunk: "I am, of course, drunk. But then sober it would have been very very very difficult (– I acknowledge the drunken writing myself)."³⁰ The end of Ghali's diary absorbs the whole text in the way that his suicide swallows the diary whole by the suicide being the end of the story and mostly the most prominent part of it. He ends the diary with an intention as he had begun it with one: "I'm

²⁷ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 155, 156.

²⁸ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 143.

²⁹ Lejeune, *On Diary*, 198.

³⁰ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2017), 211.

going to kill myself tonight.”³¹ The form of the diary is exposed in having a purposeful audience in the last entry, Athill, allowing for a witness not only to his suicide but to his feelings in their rawness. As he endured his depression and the shameful feelings he expressed in his diary while writing it, the fact that someone other than him has read them works as an assurance that there is a witness – other than the diary – of his life. The written feelings in his last entry falls very far from his usual lexicon of depression. Life and death are wrapped up in the moment of suicide: “And the most dramatic moment of my life –the only authentic one is a terrible let down.”³² The diary remains despite of choosing death and perhaps is the only object that would perhaps atone for his life and suicide as a let down. Rather than write his death with bad feelings, Ghali’s drunken note is one of release and relief: “It is a pleasure. I am doing this not in a sad, unhappy way; But on the contrary, happily and even (a state of being and word I have always loved SERENELY) ...serenely.”³³ Perhaps the verbal culmination of his bad feelings is taken over at the end of the diary when he writes ‘serenely’ in capital letters. The state of serenity almost swallows the depression out as he has “already swallowed [his] own death.”³⁴ But then Ghali’s diaries are not the suicide note, and as the diary ends, “SERENELY” vomits out the taxonomy of bad feelings out directing us back to where it all started.

“Going Home”?

Ghali writes on “1st June 1964/In half an hour I’ll be going home. My heart is terribly heavy and I am miserable. I know for sure I am ill – mentally ill; but to realise that and be so alone is terrible and my self-pity is also pitiable. I wish I were in London, with Reg Kimber and Guy and Bob Hugell.”³⁵ During the time he lives in Germany and writes his diary from Rhedyt, he expresses a contempt for Rheydt and Germans and his life there. About Germany, he writes: “There’s nothing called civil courage or clear thinking anywhere here.”³⁶ On Tuesday, 16th July 1965, he tells Brigitta, one of his love subjects, his opinion of living in Germany: “Told her living in Germany was like in a cowshed – with cows,”³⁷ and on Tuesday, 20th July 1965 he writes, “The more I stay in this country, the

³¹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 211.

³² Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 212.

³³ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 212.

³⁴ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 212.

³⁵ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 226.

³⁶ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 76.

³⁷ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 144.

more I want to vomit on the population in general."³⁸ At times in the diary, Ghali connects feeling bad, his *cafard*, to his location, namely Rheydt:

"But what shall I do with myself? Go on and on living amidst people I despise more and more – every day? I shall go mad. This is no laughing matter anymore, it might have terrible consequences on my character. As it is, my outbursts of temper are increasing all the time. To close myself, as I have most of these last weeks, in my room, lonely and listless, will really drive me mad."³⁹

This contrasts greatly with the state of madness he was in when he starts to keep the diary in order to overcome; in the first entry, no mention is made as how 'where' is contributing to this madness. His writing about Rheydt is a series of metaphors and affects all conjoined in repulsion which he feels is well deserved.

Bargaining on London to be home, Ghali resides in Athill's house for the remainder of his life: a city where he feels at home. He also puts up hopes and dreams on feelings when he imagines he will find love in London: "As for love, I will not find it here in Germany. I have waited enough, I shall find it, probably, if ever, back in England, in London, in the town I belong to..."⁴⁰ When he finally goes to London, he writes: "*London, Tuesday, 13th April 1965/* London...London...LONDON. My town, my city, the only place on earth to which I belong, my spiritual abode, my love, the great love of my love. No sooner have I been here, than I have started to worry about leaving it..."⁴¹ What is significant in the beginning of this diary entry is that two things happen at once. The first is a written expression of happiness, and a different association to the feeling of 'love'; London is his love, and it is not associated with sickness or being unrequited. However, the physical presence in London prompts worry thus connecting London to an emotional place, a larger fear of not attaining this love. When Ghali returns to London later to remain there, he writes of life there as "[a] social avalanche. What a contrast to that dull and boring life in Rheydt,"⁴² comparing life and affects; how he feels in London is in direct contrast to how he feels in Rheydt.

In connecting affect to the struggle to 'find home' in a state of exile, Sara Ahmed writes that "home becomes the impossibility and necessity of the subject's future (one never gets there, but is always getting there), rather than the past which binds the self to a given place."⁴³ Ghali writes about homes and cities which he occupied in his past in his diary entries showing

³⁸ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 146.

³⁹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 147.

⁴⁰ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 123.

⁴¹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 113.

⁴² Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 17.

⁴³ Sara Ahmed, "Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999): 331, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303>.

a geographical dislocation and affective connection to these different homes through memories. How does Ghali's *cafard* relate to location, then? The supposition of home in London is defied by the blatancy of his depression taking over his feelings. Feeling bad surpasses location which Ghali attributes to his depression and can be found for us to trace in the repetitiveness of the diary which ultimately reflects the recurrence of these feelings. While in London for a visit, he writes: "*Monday, 1st August 1966*/Again another two weeks without writing this Diary or anything else. The dreadful return to Germany is starting to loom in the near horizon, slowly I realise I have to start thinking of returning and to realise that I am returning because I haven't done anything constructive about trying to stay here."⁴⁴ A feeling of worry and concern destroy the possibility of staying in London, his city, his home. Also, he reveals how this feeling of worry is connected to a return to where he does not feel home and in some way, this is his doing. So, "[i]f the problem of depression is linked to displacement and dispossession," writes Cvetkovich, "then it is tempting, of course, to suggest that "cure" or "healing" or "recovery" comes from finding or returning home."⁴⁵ London becomes the possible home, the place where he will not feel bad and where all his potential can be realized. His state of exile in this sense is not an impossibility of staying in London but connected to the deeper state of depression which can be connected back to exile: a loop of returning and moving with no possibility of home. A loop where 'return' does not ensure erasure of depression.

Ghali's bad feelings cannot be regarded as related to Rheydt but rather to a general state of being in exile. Exile not only meaning inability to return to where he originally is, but to have no anchor. Ghali's exile is layered and the parts in the diary when he writes about his childhood reveal that being 'home' or feeling 'at home' is not merely the ability to physically return and live in a specific geographic location or one city. While in London he writes, "*1st February 1967*/Well, here I am. I mean where I have been most of my life – since the age of fourteen. Homeless, penniless, of no 'fixed address' –. No self pity, but ironic. Not sad, but pathetic and sordid."⁴⁶ His exile reveals itself as being a constant state of being, an emotional and affective space which he carries with him everywhere he goes. Where does such a subject go home to, then? Ahmed writes that "[t]he question of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being at home is here a matter of how one feels or how one might fail to feel."⁴⁷ While Ghali does

⁴⁴ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2017), 32, 33.

⁴⁵ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 152.

⁴⁶ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2017), 61.

⁴⁷ Ahmed, "Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement," 341.

not refer to a certain place which he could call 'home', even if he writes about how he is in a good place because he has a job and a car and can afford a flat in Rheydt, he reminisces about the home he once had and can no longer return to. In several entries, Ghali writes about Alexandria, going back in memory to a familiar and loved place:

Alexandria, my Alexandria, with rocks in Stanley Bay I know so well, every little on...the exact distance between the rocks and how to dive exactly in between. The shallowness of the water...how to dive exactly and just at the sand not more than a millimetre from your breast...When my 'love chords' have been slightly touched, as they have, slightly (I insist) my feelings, as in anyone else's, I suppose, become tender to my nostalgia – I even want to see my mother again.⁴⁸

He does not express a desire to return or the impossibility of return yet engages in writing of affective states that reveal the extent of his longing and belonging. Memory offers a trajectory of return that is laden with "tender" feelings. The affective description of Stanley Bay, the rocks, the seabed, the tactile imagery of Alexandria's seascape, are brought into memory through love. His feelings allow his readers to trace the connection between the present, physically and affectively, to the past unwritten in the diary. The search for love – in a form that is not associated with feeling bad – becomes an aspiration. Ghali seeks love as an affective objective symbolizing home.

Material Feelings

Love does not materialize for Ghali the way he imagines it would in London, at least not the kind of feeling that would weigh out other bad feelings. London does not provide the home he hopes it would but in some rather twisted way, it becomes his resting place, a city he is associated with through his writing. Exile is a state of physical dislocation or a feeling of not being home that feeds on a feeling of anti-home: insecurity. To wrap up these thoughts on Ghali's feelings as recorded in his diary, which are just the tip of the ice-berg, I want to take a final look at a feeling which he writes and which is an underlying sensation of depression in/of exile. While still in London, Ghali writes on "*Thursday, 15th December 1966*/I am still here in London, hanging by a thread and not enjoying very much because of the sense of insecurity...I might have to leave at any moment."⁴⁹ His feeling of insecurity amounts, of course, to material issues: not having a job, being unable to secure one, having to live in Athill's home for years and not being able to write

⁴⁸ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguhi Ghali* (2016), 129.

⁴⁹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguhi Ghali* (2017), 58.

anything – but the diary! The entries where Ghali speaks of financial insecurity reveal the materiality of depression and how the depressed subject is trapped in a loop where the material controls and directs the affective. Ghali's worry about money exists even beneath feeling good: "Thursday, 23rd February 1967/I am happy, content, although terribly worried about money and debts in Germany."⁵⁰ Rheydt therefore becomes a location Ghali does not want to return to not only for reasons he has stated in his diaries but also because of a material situation which he wishes to avoid.

Cvetkovich suggests that "[d]epression can be seen as a category that manages and medicalizes the effects associated with keeping up with corporate culture and the market economy, or with being completely neglected by it."⁵¹ Ghali's inability to write makes him incapable of "keeping up" with a cultural milieu and a social position as well as an envisionment of the 'self' as a writer. It is not a set of feelings or a state that he can discuss anywhere but in his diary: the private space that can hold all that is bad, ugly, unattractive, and devastating in Ghali's reality. His material worries and his failure to produce writing that can defer this material angst are like two of several colors that make up a Rubik's cube puzzle. They intersect and exist against and with one another throughout the diaries and only settle into order with the final entry. After writing to Athill that he is leaving his diary to her and suggesting that they could be edited into a work of literature, Ghali immediately lists his debts.⁵² The debts can be paid back on condition that the diaries can be turned into a capital-generating object. It is a possibility laden with failure: failure to write and failure to make material profit otherwise. It is also a final desperate attempt at being a writer.

But to go back to the beginning of the diary, rather than the end of it because this is where readers commence on this journey into Ghali's dailiness. In the first diary notebook he writes: "*Saturday afternoon, 13th June 1964/* I suppose when I kill myself, it will not only be through loneliness and love, but also through money."⁵³ The stark contrast between feelings like "loneliness" and "love" echoing exile and the materiality of "money" as reasons to commit suicide cannot be ignored. They leave a trace of how feelings can be materialized and how money can magnify certain emotions to become realities of life and death. The entry in the published diaries ends with "money. [...]"⁵⁴ indicating an editorial cut. The entry ending at this specific point is

⁵⁰ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 68, 69.

⁵¹ Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*, 12.

⁵² Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2017), 211.

⁵³ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 33.

⁵⁴ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali* (2016), 33.

powerful, definitive and leaves the entry at a moment that allows for suspense – a rare affect in reading a diary to which you know the ending. The ellipsis, however, also create a sensation of suspension in reading if they are taken for what they are: an editorial cut. As a curious reader turned academic, I follow these traces, these signs of editorial cuts. The manuscript at this point does not only suffice in relieving the curiosity about what is left out of the published diary but offers a visual stimulant of what writing these words looked like. What Hawas leaves out as an editor is a repetition of drinking and writing about it. Ghali continues, "Anyway," deflecting a feeling of mundaneness and repeated action but also repeated feeling. He drinks and so feels better. While these editorial cuts are not the empty spaces in the diary as lacework, they are also gaps which are full of repetition: depression, drinking, self-loathing. The gaps in the diary, which we can never know but only come to 'feel' by way of touching moments in the diary's language of depression, can be visualized in the physical gaps between the words on the page in Ghali's handwriting:

~~most remarkable thing~~ ...
 suppose when I kill myself, it will not only be through
 loneliness and love, but also through money. Anyway.
 ate at Koushops, then slept till four. Terrible hangover.
 — I am now drinking again. and of course feeling much
 better. at 9 p.m. I have to pick up Gilla and go
 to Rolf's for a quiet evening.

Scan from Ghali's manuscript diary⁵⁵

Ghali's handwriting speaks of the physicality of his depression through the sprawling and erratic movement of the letters. Entries, such as this one, expose the effect of the alcohol on his handwriting and the effect of that on his mental state. He writes the diary to put off depression; he drinks to pause the *cafard* of depressive moods; he writes about his depression and drinking. Reading the diary in his handwriting allows for a whole new process of reading and understanding and feeling the way he writes about his depression in such an intimate setting.

⁵⁵ "Suppose when I kill myself, it will not be only through loneliness and love, but also through money. Anyway. Ate at [unclear] then slept till four. Terrible hangover. - I am now drinking again and of course feeling much better. At 9 pm I have to pick up Gilla and go to Rolf's for a quiet evening." Screenshot from a PDF of one of Ghali's diary notebooks: *Ghali Diary Notebook 1*, 23 (from the PDF, <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/33320>).

Conclusion: Feeling Bad

The published diary is a material object that readers hold, and the manuscript offers a material sensation that is caught in the virtual as they rest in PDFs online in Ghali's archive. Yet the handwriting – the wispieness of his handwriting – can create an affective composition of the feeling bad, drinking, then feeling better. In the virtuality of the archive, in the scanned papers of his handwriting, are traces of what his words meant and felt to him which automatically resonates back to us. Oscillating between edited and published diary and manuscript diary is almost like swinging between Ghali's good days and his bad ones. The acts of re-reading the diary – whether by readers or by Ghali himself – carry a certain echo of the act of editing it. He writes that "Re-reading this Diary makes a pathetic impression"⁵⁶; the impression he imagines his diary will leave is not only the impression felt by him in the act of re-reading but continues in the many possibilities of what he believed could be done with the diary. This is echoed most elaborately in his final entry which is his suicide note addressed to Athill: "I am leaving you my Diary, luv – well edited, it would be a good piece of literature,"⁵⁷ hoping that she would edit and publish something out of them. The possibility of the diaries becoming a circulated text perhaps magnifies the ugliness of his feelings, and the very dark pouring of the self in the entries of the diary. Suicide, then, becomes inevitable. The end of the diary stipulates its beginning in another life, another form, another realm, where readers are exposed to Ghali's mental world.

To examine Ghali's final entry/suicide note by considering the idea that "[t]he tragic conflict between the acceptance of life implied by writing and the refusal of life signified by suicide can be read in the different forms that diary endings take,"⁵⁸ can perhaps allow us to wonder what kind of editing did Ghali have in mind when he left his diaries to Athill? Does this editing include a passing over and wiping out of the words which he uses to write out his feelings? The complexity of Ghali's chosen lexicon to describe his bad feelings deviates from the more used adjectives mentioned above. For instance, he writes on "*Monday, 4th January 1965/Very very sad today and also very tired. In fact, absolute misery although am fighting against it,*"⁵⁹ adding sadness to the adjectives. The physical synonymity between the state of being in love and of illness and sadness is very relevant. Love is associated with

⁵⁶ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 57.

⁵⁷ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2017), 211.

⁵⁸ Lejeune, *On Diary*, 198.

⁵⁹ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguïh Ghali* (2016), 89.

these negative feelings, rather than being a feeling of pleasure and happiness, it becomes a feeling of despair and torment: "12th January, 1965/Yesterday, Monday, woke up feeling a lot better, lovesickness only comes in short spasms now. It is more a penetrating spasm of loneliness than love in fact."⁶⁰ If the feeling bad adjectives are edited out, his numerous affairs, present and past, would remain as guised metaphors of depression.

As way of concluding this initial probing into Ghali's array of feelings in language, after having touched upon his handwriting and how it plays a role in how his feelings are read, I want to return to the diary as a form. Within the repetitive nature of the diary resides possibilities for freshness. This can be seen by tracing how Ghali describes his depression in every entry; taking a moment to re-read – as he does – and mellow on his taxonomy of bad feelings that are repeated but always with a newness of sensation described in words. Repeated feelings occur not only in the writing of the diary but in the multiple acts of re-reading and reading it whether by Ghali or the different readers. So does their materiality. In the process of Ghali's diaries becoming a public narrative of life writing, his feelings materialize by becoming a book, a published commodity, and also materialize in the reading process itself. These feelings are also repeated when readers consciously and unconsciously identify with them. To divulge into this embodied reading of Ghali's diary, I want to offer this thought for final contemplation:

For those who are fortunate enough to imagine that their careers and other life projects can be meaningfully shaped by their own desires, depression in the form of thwarted ambition can be the frequent fallout of the dreams that are bred by capitalist culture—the pressure to be a successful professional, to have a meaningful job, to juggle the conflicting demands of work and leisure, or to have a "personal life" in the form of a sense of self that lies outside the circuits of capital.⁶¹

While Cvetkovich's quote and her work on depression as a public feeling is grounded in a world quite different than the one where Ghali lived, her description is perhaps one that both seems to describe Ghali's struggle and also the personal struggle that many readers have: "depression in the form of thwarted ambition."⁶² In reading Ghali's diaries, perhaps we get caught into a revealing practice of diary-keeping that mirrors unmet dreams of writing, finding love, or finally going home. Perhaps not. In all cases, to indulge in his daily feelings is to get caught in a spiderweb: a web of the writer's feelings published in a book, scattered across locations that hang in his memory and physicality as he writes the diaries and which also hang in our memoirs as we read them.

⁶⁰ Ghali, *The Diaries of Waguhi Ghali* (2016), 91.

⁶¹ Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*, 17, 18.

⁶² Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*, 17.

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„Going Easily Under”: Pamiętniki depresji Waguih Ghaliego

Abstrakt: Dzienniki egipskiego anglojęzycznego pisarza Waguiha Ghaliego (1927–1969), najbardziej znanego z powieści *Beer in the Snooker Club* (London: Serpent’s Tale, 1987), po raz pierwszy ukazały się w internetowym archiwum jego niepublikowanych prac i zostały zredagowane w dwóch tomach pod tytułem *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali: An Egyptian Writer in the Swinging Sixties* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016, 2017). W maju 1964 roku Ghali zaczął prowadzić swój dziennik, próbując poradzić sobie z depresją, która zakończyła się jego ostatnim wpisem w formie listu samobójczego. Wpisy Ghaliego ujawniają jego walkę z napadami depresji i niezdolnością do pisania literatury, dokumentując jego ostatnie lata wygnania w Niemczech, a następnie w Londynie. We wpisach dziennika można odczytać różne emocje i uczucia: smutek, wstręt, złość, samotność i zawód miłosny. Artykuł ten bada afektywne przejawy uczuć Ghaliego w strukturze gatunkowej dziennika w świetle lektur Sianne Ngaia i Ann Cvetkovich oraz pracy nad dziennikami Philippe’a Lejeune’a. Co więcej, celem artykułu jest odczytanie emocji zapisanych we wpisach Ghaliego, aby dowieść, że nie jest to tylko dziennik depresji, ale także dziennik wygnania. Artykuł łączy wygnanie jako stan

bycia z depresją Ghaliego, badając związek między prowadzeniem pamiętnika a wyrażaniem takich uczuć w tekście, próbując zrozumieć, w jaki sposób depresja i stany emocjonalne, które z niej wynikają, są kulminacyjnym produktem ubocznym jego długotrwałego wygnania.

Słowa kluczowe: pamiętniki, pisanie autobiograficzne, Waguih Ghali, depresja, wygnanie, Egipt.

„Going Easily Under.“ Waguih Ghalis Tagebücher der Depression

Abstract: Die Tagebücher des ägyptischen englischsprachigen Schriftstellers Waguih Ghali (192? – 1969), bekannt für den Roman *Beer in the Snooker Club* (London: Serpent's Tale, 1987), erschienen zum ersten Mal im Internet-Archiv seiner unveröffentlichten Werke in zwei Bänden: *The Diaries of Waguih Ghali: An Egyptian Writer in the Swinging Sixties* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016, 2017). Im Mai 1964 begann Ghali sein Tagebuch zu führen, indem er gegen seine Depression schrieb, die mit seinem Freitod endete, was der letzte Eintrag bezeugt. Ghalis Tagebucheinträge bringen seinen Kampf gegen die Depressionsschübe und gegen das Unvermögen Literatur zu schaffen zum Vorschein und dokumentieren gleichzeitig seine letzten Exiljahre in Deutschland und dann in England (London). In den Texten lassen sich verschiedene Emotionen und Gefühle nachweisen: Trauer, Abscheu, Ärger, Ekel, Einsamkeit und Liebeskummer. Der Aufsatz untersucht die affektiven Manifestationen der Gefühle Ghalis bezogen auf die Gattungsstruktur des Tagebuchs unter Einbeziehung der Lektüre von Sianne Ngai und Ann Cvetkovich und der Arbeiten von Philippe Lejeune. Ziel des Aufsatzes ist darüber hinaus das Aufzeigen der Emotionen in Ghalis Eintragungen, um zu beweisen, dass es sich nicht nur um ein Tagebuch der Depression, sondern auch um ein Tagebuch des Exils handelt. Der Aufsatz verbindet Ghalis Exilerfahrung mit seiner Depression, indem die Beziehung zwischen dem Tagebuchschreiben und Ausdrücken von Gefühlen im Text nachgewiesen wird. Die Verfasserin belegt, dass die Depression und die von ihr verursachten emotionalen Zustände eine wesentliche Nebenwirkung seines langjährigen Exils waren.

Schlüsselwörter: Tagebücher, autobiografisches Schreiben, Waguih Ghali, Depression, Exil, Ägypten.