



# Amal Farah

**Hans Christian Andersen Award Candidate 2018**

**Country: Egypt**

**Category: Author**

Prepared by EBBY, The Egyptian Chapter of IBBY



Illustrations in dossier courtesy of illustrators Walid Taher and Mohamed Taha.

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# 1. Bookbird Summary

Born in 1968 into an artistic family of modest means, Amal Farah cites her mother's epic storytelling and her brother's paintings and their family library, as key influences on her growing up.

*"I come from Aswan, where where the temple of Abu Simbel stands beneath the burning sun, the open sky, the widest Nile, and the date palms. I come from a land of beauty and art, where our women use colored strings to design caps for children and the men string verse like tumbling water in contests that confer reputation and confirm togetherness.*

*I was one of those whose fathers uprooted to Cairo, search for a better life. Life would return in the summers when I was back in the village, around the campfire with cousins and aunts, sipping tea and telling stories of boats, adventures, and the jinn we believed could reach out with bony arms across the Nile banks to turn us into rabbits and goblins at will."*

In 1990, armed with a BA in Arabic literature from Cairo University, she started her career in journalism, determined to write vehement prose on the issues that would stay with her for her entire life: social justice, culture as an essential right for all, and political participation.

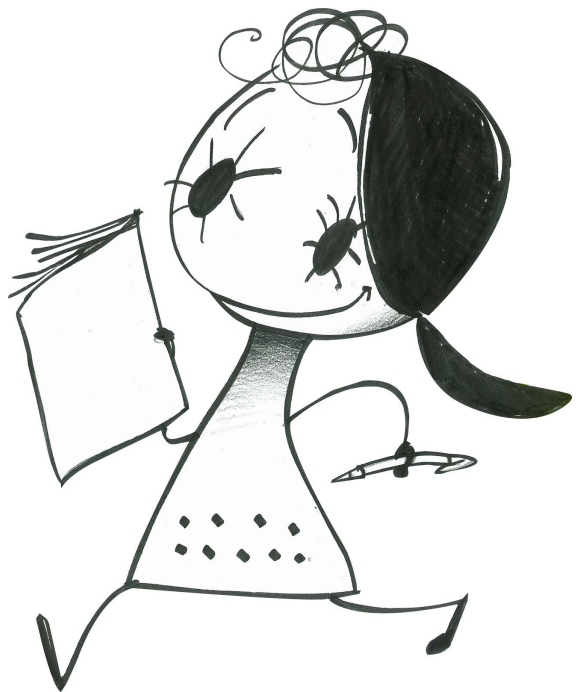
Having gone from being a reporter to a journalist to a syndicated columnist in seven years, she began turning towards the poetry she grew up with and the nagging suspicion that the issues she fought might be better served by giving children a rich childhood, full of words, thoughts, play, imagination, and dreams. Farah began songwriting and founded a children's supplement for a major newspaper, and moved fully into children's journalism. A year later, the great Egyptian artist Helmi ElTouni liked two of her short stories so much, that he introduce her to Dar El-Shorouk publishing house that published her first three stories to great critical and popular acclaim.

Today, forty children's books later, Farah's work is considered by many to have created a critical juncture in contemporary Egyptian children's literature. Her phrasing has the preciseness of an archer, while her imagination runs beastly wild, producing books that carry deep philosophical insights, and invite revisiting at various ages. Her infectious love affair with the Arabic language is played out with artful

reticence, in elegant playful prose with great verbal economy. Her writing is both narrative and non-narrative and often defies genre itself. She also resists age brackets for children’s books insisting, “I don’t write for children, I write for childhood, a refuge for a lifetime.”

Farah’s work has received both national and international recognition, and her civic engagement and professional generosity towards other writers endears her to those working in culture, and her opinions on books are sought as a respected juror on many Arab literature award committees. Since 2015, Farah has set up her own publishing house for children’s books, ‘Shagara Publishing,’ and has won the 2016 Best Children's Book of the Year from the Etisalat Award for Children’s Literature.

499 words



## 2. Biographical information

### Formative Years

Amal Farah was born in 1968 in picturesque Aswan, between Luxor-where a third of the world's ancient monuments are- and Nubia-the land of gold, song, and storytelling.

Her father was a humble clerk at the Ministry of Education, and a great lover of the arts who held strong leftist views. Her mother was a storyteller who raised Amal and her brother, the painter Naguib Farah, alone when their father died when Amal was five years old. Her artistic brother, sixteen years her senior, and his personal library of socialist literature and Russian novels she considers one of the foundational influences on both her writing and her worldview.



Farah graduated with a BA in Arabic from Cairo University and wears many hats in the Egyptian cultural scene, that of author, poet, literary consultant, journalist, editor, and most recently, publisher. The one she wears the most effortlessly and recognizably is unquestionably that of children's author.



"Nile river near Assuan (Aswan) - southern Egypt." by Immanuel Giel. Photographed in 1990. licensed under Creative Commons. 12 Apr 2005.

*"I come from Aswan, where the temple of Abu Simbel stands beneath the burning sun, the open sky, the widest Nile, and the date palms. I come from a land of beauty and art, where our women use colored strings to design caps for children and the men string verse like tumbling water in contests that confer reputation and confirm togetherness.*

*I was one of those whose fathers uprooted to Cairo, search for a better life. Life would return in the summers when I was back in the village, around the campfire with cousins and aunts, sipping tea and telling stories of boats, adventures, and the jinn we believed could reach out with bony arms across the Nile banks to turn us into rabbits and goblins at will."*

## Journalism and civic engagement

Amal Farah started her journalistic career in 1990 as a reporter for the Arab Struggle Newspaper (جريدة الكفاح العربي) a socialist Pan-Arab political weekly. It was here that she naturally fell into writing vehement prose about the three issues that would stay with her for her entire life: social justice, culture as an essential right for all, and political participation.

Five years of working in the trenches of had softened her views and she turned her attentions to more practical contributions to her causes, engaging with various NGOs to work on projects and awareness campaigns on political participation, sexual education, civic engagement, reproductive health, the promotion of syndicates for female agriculturalists, empowering women to fight street harassment, and inclusion for those with disabilities. In the meantime she has also segued into more literary publications, having worked her way up from a field reporter to a journalist covering cultural affairs for the Arab world.

## Children's Journalism

Never forgetting two touchstones in her brother's library, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and the work of the Czech children's illustrator Jiri Trnka, recipient of the 1968 Hans Christian Andersen Medal, Farah began to see that children were key to the change she wanted to see in the world.

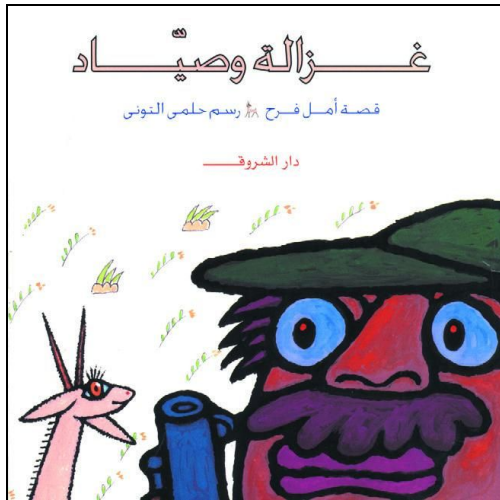


Kyrios San. "Sen noci svatojanske A midsummer night's dream Jiri Trnka, 1959 VHS Rip, spa subs HC." *YouTube*. 30 Apr 2015. Web.

Drawing on her rich musical heritage, she turned the poetry she had written since childhood into children's songs. Working extensively to produce songs for children's television series produced both by national television and independent outfits such as the Arabic "Sesame Street," she has notably written the songs to the highest rated Egyptian children's cartoon "Bakkar" that ran from 1999-2005 starring a Nubian boy detective, his pet goat, and circle of friends.

In 2000 she worked to establish *Girls and Boys* the popular children's supplement to *Akhbar Al-Yom* newspaper, remaining on the editorial board for two issues before she spent a year writing her own syndicated column in the children's magazine *Aladdin*.

### Helmi ElTouni and Writing for Children



In 1999 Farah had written two short stories for children in the prominent Kuwaiti cultural magazine *Al-Arabi*, "The Talkative Giraffe" and "The Story of a Girl Named Mila," that had caught the attention of eminent artist Helmi ElTouni who approached her to ask if she had written any longer stories. She timidly shared the three stories she had written with the formidable and generous man who promptly illustrated them and secured her a contract with the most important children's publisher in Egypt, Dar Al-Shorouk. *A Gazelle and*

*a Hunter, A Triangle and a Circle, and Abracadabra* were published in three consecutive years and Amal Farah was officially a children's author.

### Simultaneous Hats

In addition to writing, Farah is still engaged in work with civil society and regularly supports other children's writers through workshops in the villages of Egypt as well as Rome, Tunisia, Beirut, and Kuwait. She has served on two important Arab Children's Books judging committees, the "Arab Festival for Children's Theatre" Awards, Kuwait, 2016 and "Made in UAE", Sharjah, 2013.

Farah has written scripts for two popular children's radio series "prophetic stories" (2003) and "Bling Bling" (2002), the children's television series "The Five Adventurers" (2003), "Uncle Yassin" (2002), as well as the Egyptian "Sesame Street" (2001). Her foray into silver screen scriptwriting was as a writer for the animated film "Donzo's Adventures" (2003).

She has worked as a literary consultant to the two largest children's books publisher and is currently editing manager at Nahdet Misr, managing eight children's magazines: *Mickey, Super-Mickey, Mickey-Pocket Edition, Princesses, Winnie the Pooh, National Geographic Kids, Mickey Comics, Tinker Bell, and X-Mickey*.





Farah with husband, partner, and longtime artistic collaborator, artist Magdy El Kafrawy.



Farah portrait by, artist Magdy El Kafrawy.

In September of 2015, After a writing hiatus of six years during which she had two small sons to follow her then teenaged daughter, Farah made a surprisingly risky move. Along with her husband, painter Magdy ElKafrawy, she eschewed the comforts of being an author in demand to set up her own publishing house and for the first time, shoulder managerial and commercial responsibilities. In a personal interview she explains that the move allowed her more artistic freedom to publish books that publishers were still uncomfortable with.

She recounts the difficulty of finding a publisher for her picturebook on sexual education, until the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services adopted it. She also remembers the resistance she met when she abandoned happy endings in her picturebooks, *“The Day the Ringgggg Disappeared”* ends with a boy, upset by the sound of a ringing alarm, banishing it only to realize its importance and ask the clock to bring it back. The books ends with the clock telling the boy that alas, it could not be brought back, because no-one knew where it lived.” The idea of irrevocable loss was one she insisted on introducing then, and may have even sowed the seeds for operational independence.

Shagara (“tree”) Publishing was imagined to be a place of rootedness with branches that reached to the skies. The partners intended the house to be an incubator of works that promoted artistic and linguistic appreciation, the values of tolerance and coexistence, and the preservation of what makes us different and complementary to the rest of humanity.

Shagara was a runaway success; in the first year of operation, their young adult novel *The Ink Vampires* by



Ibrahim Farghally was longlisted for the Sheikh Zayed Book Award. In 2016, Amal Farah's own picturebook *I Want to be a Turtle* won Best Children's Book of the Year from the Etisalat Award for Children's Literature. To date this fledgling publishing house has published 39 books and expects to begin publishing translations in 2017.

## **References**

Farah, Amal. Interview by Nagah Amer. *Faiz Online Magazine*. 21 Mar. 2016.

### 3. Portrait photograph



## 4. A statement on author's contribution to literature for young people

The beginning of the revival of Egyptian children's book publishing through the 2006 National Book Project supported by USAID, was a moment where all Egyptian book publishers worked together to support the craft of writing and illustrating for children. The mandate was to select books to publish to fill the country's public school libraries. That was the year that Amal Farah made her shift from a talented poet who had written a small number of original children's books to a creative force to be reckoned with in the field. Ten of her newest titles were selected for the project and her impact both as a community writer and an inspiring author have made themselves felt (Ashour).

### **Respecting children**

With few exceptions, the modern period of Egyptian children's literature until the 2006 revival was largely populated with works of folklore, religious stories, and Arabized fairytales. Original writing was by and large extremely directly didactic, and assumed a very simple-minded child that could be hoodwinked with poorly constructed naive tales of Struwwelpeter-like punishments that rain on imperfect children, turning away generations of Egyptian children from voluntary reading.

Amal Farah's playful texts were both beautifully produced and respected the child reader. It was as though an enthusiastic reader with an impish smile sat on a park bench and began to animatedly read as young children began to gather one by one to hear the rhythmic witty story. Farah set a new standard for respecting the intelligence of small children and offering them only the finest language and ideas. Her picturebooks are palimpsests that promote reading by remaining enjoyable to the adult reader on a philosophical level, and inviting revisiting again and again as touchstone texts. At her publishing house Shagara, she refuses to succumb to marketing demands and attach age brackets to books, finding the only writing worth taking up children's time is that which is timeless.

### **Supporting the craft**

On any given day, Farah can be found giving creativity workshops in sunny Zamalek gardens where she emphasizes the importance of philosophy, aesthetics, and working with children on sustainability. On other days she is working with children in storytelling circles (Sayed). Her workshops are well received, and she has been generously supporting writers for years, one of the scripting teams she supported, wrote the important children's series "The Adventures of Zizo" that was produced the Egyptian Radio and TV Union (2010).



Workshop for children in Valle Giulia, hosted by Egyptian Academy in Rome, January 2015.

A tireless champion of others the growing field, Farah lectures on the craft of writing for children to aspiring writers, often citing five essential elements writing for children: Infusing the ordinary with the extraordinary, having something real to say that a child might like to hear, inviting reflections on our worldviews by exploring others, then the importance of balance "the accuracy of a chemist, the aesthetics of a goldsmith, and a marketer's persistence," and finally the important of the drafting process (Saleh).

## Words

A strong believer in what she calls "real education," Farah's books are a testament to her belief in the importance of looking inwards when promoting taste for Arabic books in children who are increasingly exposed to literature and culture in English and French; citing the promotion of the aesthetics of the Arabic language and non-instrumental education as key. Farah is also an outspoken advocate for public and school libraries (Mansour). Farah pays a great deal of attention to language and semantics, sometimes playfully showing her readers that no two synonyms can ever truly signify the exact same thing. Her love for the Arabic language is infectious in spite of her light handed approach that uses rhyme and rhythm to increase her reader's semantic and phonetic sensitivity to words.

## Humanity

She exemplifies the sense of wonder she would like children to preserve, Serious journalists find themselves commenting on her childlike excitement and infectious positive attitude in interviews (Alzaraa). Her faith in humanity that is reflected in her sunny person does not come from a belief that humans are naturally built for tolerance, rather the opposite, that they choose it in spite of everything that drives them to build walls. Her books *I am Human*, *Strange Inscriptions*, *A Triangle and A Circle* all embrace the uniqueness each brings to the rich fabric that is art, society, and the world. Her book *Sarah the Peperomia*, offers a new perspective on special needs in a climate where special needs are met with great struggle if at all (see section 12).

### **Family**

Eschewing the hackneyed without abandoning the traditional altogether, Farah's books *Stories from Daraw* and *A Girl's Diary* are both a revival of the extended rather than the nuclear family as a wellspring for stories and inspiration for inner growth. Her own writings are as rooted as her mother's sense of belonging to her land, and as winged as her brother's abstract paintings. Farah hopes to encourage children to maintain their individualism without feeling the need to irrevocably uproot themselves.

### **Breaking forms**

Farah writes to childhood rather than to children, and pushes the boundaries of genre to insist on the possibility of offering children journalistic books that will pave the way for more non-narrative reading, as well as mixing the scientific with the philosophical. In *Big Bells*, *Small Bells*, for example, the material, history and sociological significance of bells is explored along with the ringing bells of our conscience.

EBBY wholeheartedly supports Amal Farah's nomination as she exemplifies the values of the Hans Christian Andersen Award and has contributed significantly to Egyptian children's literature.

## References

Ashour, Radwa, et al. *Arab women writers : a critical reference guide, 1873-1999*. translated by Mandy McClure, American University in Cairo Press, 2008.

Alzaraa, Abdo. "Amal Farah... and the Etisalat Award." *Rose Alyoussef*, 8 Nov. 2016.

Mansour, Ahmed. "Amal Farah after winning "Sharjah's Etisalat": My Book Carries the Message of Belonging to a Homeland." *Al-Youm Al-Sabea*, 2 Nov. 2016.

Saleh, Sherif. "Amal Farah Reveals Five Secrets about Writing for Children" *Annahar*, 2 Dec. 2015.

Sayed, Nesmahar. "Once Upon a Time in Zamalek" *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 Jan. 2016. Web.

# 5. List of awards and other distinctions



## Awards for children's books

2016, *I Want to be a Turtle* Best Children's Book of the Year from the Etisalat Award for Children's Literature.

2012, *I am Human* is Egypt's selection for IBBY Honor List of Outstanding Books.

2011. Anna Lindh Foundation selected Farah's books among those that represent the best of Arabic literature in the *101*

*Books Exhibition* in Alexandria, Egypt.

2008, *What Happened to the Last of the Dinosaurs?* is Egypt's selection for IBBY Honor List of Outstanding Books.

2007, *The Box* is Egypt's selection for IBBY Honor List of Outstanding Books in for Young People with Disabilities.

2006, *What Happened to the Last of the Dinosaurs?* wins Excellence Prize from the Suzanne Mubarak Award for Children's Literature.

2006, Amal Farah's works is given a special section in the Gothenburg museum of children's books.

2004, *The Box* wins Excellence Prize from the Suzanne Mubarak Award for Children's Literature.

2004, *The Box* is Egypt's selection for IBBY Honor List of Outstanding Books.

2003, *Huff Bluff* receives Honorable Mention by the UNESCO prize for Children and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance.

## Awards for children's media

2001, Second Prize for Children's Songs, for the song titled: "Thumbnails", awarded at the Radio & TV Festival, Egypt.

1999, First Prize for Children's Songs, for the song titled: "The most beautiful thing in



creation", awarded at the Radio & TV Festival, Egypt.

1998, Second Prize for Children's Songs, for the song titled: "A library and a book", awarded at the Radio & TV Festival, Egypt.

#### [Awards for other cultural work](#)

2016, Certificate from Volkshochschulen German Adult Education Centres Cooperation to develop community and education, Germany.

2000, Best TV Program Prize, for the program titled: "Footsteps melody", awarded at the Radio & TV Festival, Egypt.

1997, Second Prize for Poetry, awarded by the Cultural Development Fund, Egypt.

1987, Second Prize for Theatrical Songs, awarded by General Institute for Cultural Centers, Egypt.

#### [Awards for commercial work](#)

2003, Gold Medal for Radio Commercials, for "Signal toothpaste" commercial, awarded by the American University in Cairo.

2002, Gold Medal for Radio Commercials, for "Chipsawy Crisps" commercial, awarded by Al-Rameh, Egypt.

2001, Silver Medal for Radio Commercials, for "Kouky Chicken" commercial, awarded by the American University in Cairo.

1999, Silver Medal for Radio Commercials, for "Clorox" commercial, awarded by the American University in Cairo.

## 6. Complete Bibliography

- Big Bells, Small Bells.* Cairo: Shagara, 2016.
- The Kangaroo.* Cairo: Shagara, 2016.
- I Want to Cry.* Cairo: Shagara, 2016.
- A Different Relationship.* Cairo: Shagara, 2016.
- Fear.* Cairo: Shagara, 2016.
- Stories.. Or?.* Cairo: Shagara, 2016.
- Happy Endings,* 2016, Cairo: Shagara, 2016
- A Dot.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- This is What Happened.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- The Journey between Night and Day.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- I Want to be a Turtle.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- Mr. Night and the Sun.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- A Dot, a Semi-Circle, and a Line.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- Aptchew.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- Let's Draw a Horizontal Line.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- Aaah Beck Beck Teck Teck.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- The Sun.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- The Tree.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015
- A Girl's Diary.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- Sarah the Peperomia.* Cairo: Shagara, 2015.
- The Butterfly Girl.* Cairo: Samer, 2012.
- Meow Meow, It's Ahmed.* Cairo: Samer, 2012.
- Very Very... Definitely Definitely... Never Ever.* Cairo: the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services, 2010.
- I Am a Human.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2009.
- The Kind Giant.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*The Boy and the Basket.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*Water and the Wise.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*The Train that Doesn't Go 'toot'.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*Mountains.. Rocks.. Camels.. Birds.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*It's Terrifying.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*Stories from Daraw.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*What Happened to the Last of the Dinosaurs?.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*The Day the Ringgggg Disappeared.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*Grandpa, the riddles, and I.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

*A Cat that goes Bekhaw.* Cairo, Nahdet Misr, 2005.

*Strange Inscriptions.* Paris: Division of Arts and Cultural Enterprise, UNESCO, 2005.

*Colors.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2005.

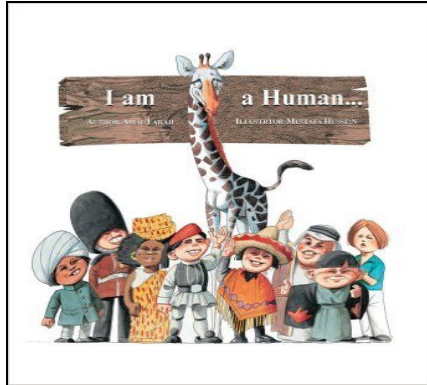
*The Box.* Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2005.

*Abracadabra.* Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 2001.

*A Triangle and a Circle.* Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 2000.

*A Gazelle and a Hunter.* Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 1999.

## 7. List of translated editions



Amal Farah. "Il cavallo che non nitriva più." Translated by Maria Albano, *Cavallo che non nitriva più e altri racconti egiziani*. Rome: Edito da Città Aperta Edizioni dell'Oasi Editrice, 2009. **Italian translation.**

*I am a Human*. Illustrated by Mustafa Hussein, translated by Yasmine Motawy. Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2008. **English translation.**

*Water & the Wise*. translated by Yasmine Motawy. Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006. **English translation.**

*What Happened to the Last of the Dinosaurs?*, translated by Sara M. Enany. Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006. **English translation.**



## 8. Five of the most important titles

### 1. أريد أن أكون سلحفاة

*I Want to be a Turtle.* Illustrated by Osama Abu Al Ola, Cairo: Shagara Publishing, 2015.

### 2. السيد ليل والشمس

*Mr. Night and the Sun.* Illustrated by Salah Elmurr Cairo: Shagara Publishing, 2015.



### 3. سارة البييروميا

*Sarah the Peperomia.* Illustrated by Sally Samir. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.

### 4. نقوش غريبة

*Strange Inscriptions.* Various illustrators, Paris: UNESCO Division of Arts and Cultural Enterprise, 2005.

### 5. مثلث ودائرة

*A Triangle and a Circle.* Illustrated by Helmy ElTouni. Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 2000.

## 9. List of the books sent to the jurors

### 1. الوحش

*The Monster.* illustrated by Walid Taher. Cairo: Shagara Publishing, 2016.



### 2. أريد أن أكون سلحفاة

*I Want to be a Turtle.* Illustrated by Osama Abu Al Ola, Cairo: Shagara Publishing, 2015.

### 3. جداً جداً.. طبعاً طبعاً.. أبداً أبداً

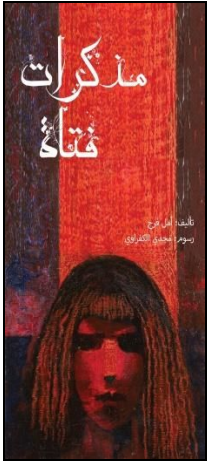
*Very Very... Definitely Definitely... Never Ever.* illustrated by Mohamed Taha, Cairo: the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services, 2010.

### 4. مذكرات فتاة

*A Girl's Diary.* Illustrated by Magdy El Kafrawy. Cairo: Shagara Publishing, 2015.

### 5. أين اختفى آخر الديناصورات؟

*What Happened to the Last of the Dinosaurs?* Illustrated by Ehab Schaker, Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.



## 12. Reproduction of book covers and presentation of selected titles

*A Triangle and a Circle.* illustrated by Helmy ElTouni. Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 2000.

*“The second line asked: Why don’t we all huddle together and think this through?”*

Three lines trying to make sense of themselves by working together to make shapes. Along the way, synchronicity, confusion, clarity, and harmony take shape as well.

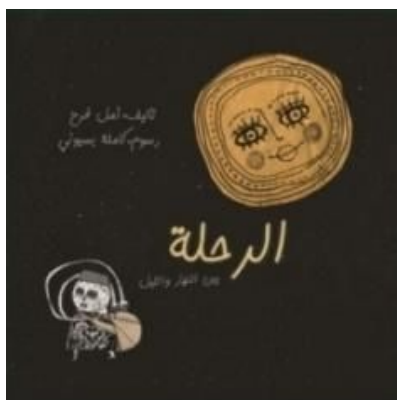
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*The Journey between Night and Day.* illustrated by Kamla Bassiouney. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.

*“The stories of our dreams are sometimes made up of details made up by the night, grabbing them from bits of the day, rearranging them in an unfamiliar world.”*

A book on the psychology of dreams, on the night, daydreams, the unconscious and the sun’s journey around the earth that makes so much possible.



*Aptchew.* illustrated by Hisham Rahma. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.

An everyday journey of sounds and the cacophony that exists all the time waiting for attentive ears to discover it.

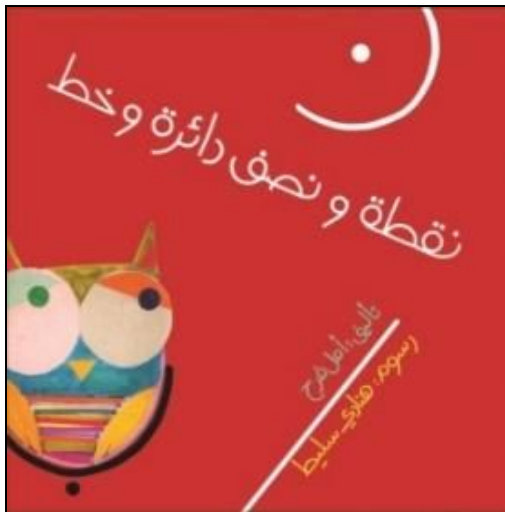
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*A Dot, a Semi-Circle, and a Line.* illustrated by Hanady Sleit. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.

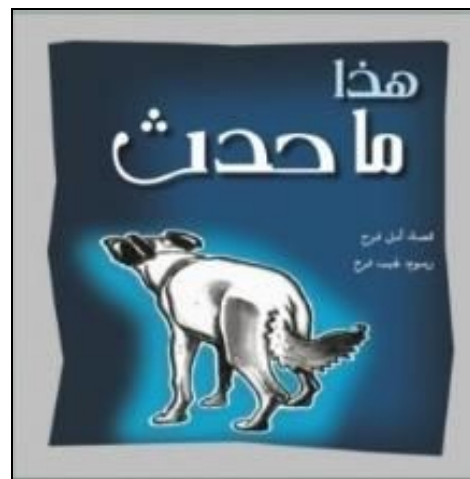
Amal Farah authors an orthographical system for writing Arabic letters and numbers, condensing them into nine shapes that together make up a line drawing of a flower.

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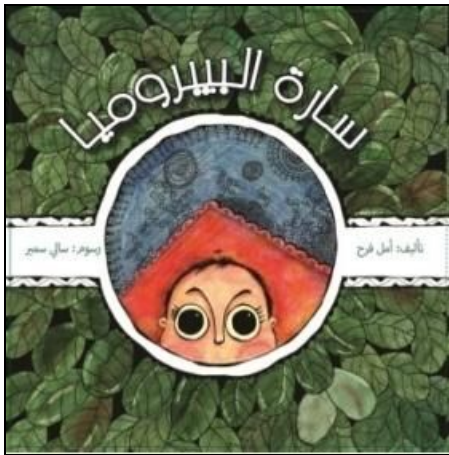
*This is What Happened.* illustrated by Naguib Farah. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.

Narrated by Mahrous the mongrel and the family he lives with and then loses.





*Sarah the Peperomia.* illustrated by Sally Samir. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.



*Before the birth of her baby sister, Sarah's aunt bought her a special fish that could not live with other fish in the fishbowl. Then her uncle bought her a Peperomia plant that could not be left outdoors. Everything around her seemed to have special needs.*

A day in the life of a family expecting the birth of their special needs baby. Sarah, the older sister narrates the events leading up to the birth.

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*Stories Or?* illustrated by Salah Elmurr. Cairo: Shagara, 2016.

A playful book that breaks the fourth wall to engage readers in a word-image game that slowly unfolds to show the meaning of the artistic arrangement of paintings in an accessible yet deeply philosophical game of exquisite corpse.

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*Happy Endings.* illustrated by Salah Elmurr. Cairo: Shagara, 2016.

Fantastical tales for middle readers without beginning or end. These encourage the reader to take the imaginary road less travelled and



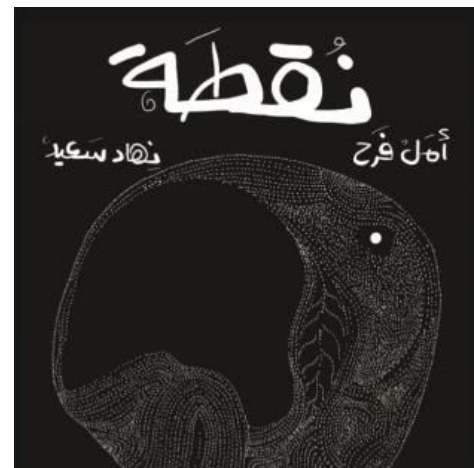
*A Dot.* illustrated by Nihad Saeed. Cairo: Shagara, 2015.

*“With a dot of light, darkness begins to dissolve.”*

Beautiful things come in small packages. This book is about the value of the tiny. In this case, the dot, the building block of the world.

write happy endings for each short story, no matter how unlikely.

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*Big Bells, Small Bells.* illustrated by Osama Abu Al Ola. Cairo: Shagara, 2016.

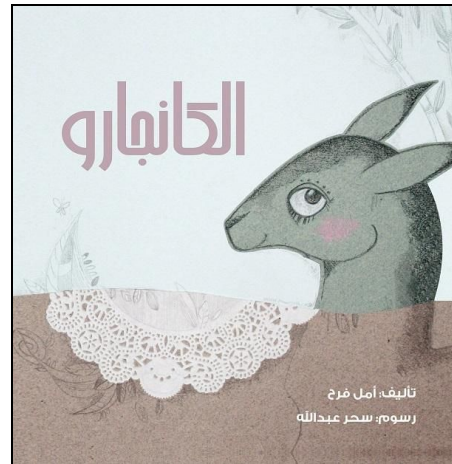
*“And in the far regions of Tibet, the sounds of bells are used to heal the soul ”*

A book of bells; their socio-economic history, bells from around the world and even the ringing bells of our conscience trying to tell us something.



*The Kangaroo.* illustrated by Sahar Abdulla. Cairo: Shagara, 2016.

What starts as a funny story about a kangaroo not quite ready to leave his mother's pouch, becomes an exploration of the concepts of independence and self-reliance.



*A Different Relationship.* illustrated by Aya Abdelrehim. Cairo: Shagara, 2016.

*“What about loneliness? It is a fear that grips the heart from too little togetherness.”*

A book that uses sparse elegant language that work synergistically with equally bare images to attempt to ‘name’ the nature of the relationships we are involved in.

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*I Want to Cry.* illustrated by Walid Taher. Cairo: Shagara, 2016.

*“It is Sunday: My brothers and sisters, my neighbors and I, are twittering birds that play and fly. I press the doorbell, I feel dark and blue. I feel that I just want to cry.”*

An endearing book on the naturalness and limits of sadness that draws on the psychological robustness of children to show a way out of it.

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*Stories from Daraw.* Illustrated by Ihab Schaker. Cairo: Nahdet Misr, 2006.

Five stories from Daraw, the author's Southern Aswan village, each with a different narrator. Stories on the ability to imagine: a forlorn monkey that is overcome by nostalgia and goes about smelling the leaves of the village trees, a dove that flings open the imaginative gates before an author with writer's block and goat whose intelligence is hidden behind a veil of simplicity.

