

**Generic Exile and Liminal Being in
Waguih Ghali's Published Writings**

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Despite having authored only one work of fiction, Waguih Ghali (192?-1969), an Anglophone Egyptian writer who died in the late sixties, has had a growing fanbase as a novelist, specifically in the past decade. Ghali is now being read again through the publication of his diaries which have been edited in two volumes and published in 2016 and 2017.¹ Ghali's diaries, some of his letters, and a very rough draft of the beginnings of a second work of fiction are rare findings of "self-referential writing" (Smith and Watson 2019, 1)² left by an author who wrote a book hailed as "one of the best novels written about Egypt".³ Although the original manuscript of Ghali's diaries have been available online as part of the Cornell University archive since 2013,⁴ it is not an easy task to delve into pages and pages of his handwriting which makes the publication of the edited diaries a literary treat for his fans. These manuscripts reveal how the last four years of Waguih Ghali's life were spent in exile between West Germany and London, echoing a physical movement between different geographical spaces, as well as a sense of not belonging to a certain place.

Ghali's novel, *Beer in the Snooker Club*, (first published in 1964 by Andre Deutsch), humorously reveals a very raw depiction of his protagonist's existential crisis: Ram is caught between two cultures as he narrates a story that moves between Cairo and London; he is stuck in the class he is born in, yet does not fit in. Physical and emotional displacement could be easily traced – specifically the latter – in the life of Ram who feels that he does not belong somewhere or the other. The concept of borders controls the movement of his characters and their ability to obtain visas to travel to England through the scenes where Ram and Font desperately go to the Home Office time after time. To travel

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to London is the dream which they cannot wait to fulfill. Similarly, in the first notebook of his diary, Ghali excitedly writes that he is finally going to London. Four years later in London, a very desperate Ghali left six notebooks in total of his diaries, to Diana Athill, writer, and editor, who had edited his novel for its publication with Andre Deutsch, after committing suicide in her apartment. Ghali writes to Athill in his final diary entry, which is his suicide note, that "well edited, [the diary] would be a good piece of literature," (2017, 2: 211).

The premise of this paper is how Ghali's diary-keeping was connected to his need for writing fiction and how exile, as a state of existence, delineates the borders between the two literary genres he writes in: fiction and diary. Moving forward from examining physical borders which restrict movement in Ghali's novel and in his diaries, the paper will examine the lines governing diary as a sub-genre of life writing. Rather than just examine his novel generically as an autobiographical novel, this paper will read the novel as a pretext to the diaries. By using theories on diary as a genre of life writing, I will read the diaries to examine how the generic markers of such a genre reflect the state of physical and emotional exile Ghali expressed both in his fiction and his diaries. It is important to note at this point that the paper is concerned with the edited and published diaries and not the manuscript online. The reason for this is to limit the focus of this paper to works that have been published under specific generic labels to readers. Therefore, the texts that are read are Ghali's novel, *Beer in the Snooker Club*, and the volumes of his diaries edited by May Hawwas. To examine the fluidity of genres in the process of reading life writing, in opposition to the rigidity in which published narratives are presented to readers in print, the first section will present a theoretical overview of the differences between genres.

Diaries: Exiles of a Genre

Within the broad spectrum of life writing, autobiographical fiction and diaries are very far apart in terms of structure and intention as well as the generic labels which they are stamped with and presented to readers. Autobiographical fiction deviates from autobiography in that the autobiographical pact is not fulfilled since the narrator, the author and the protagonist do not share the same identity (Lejeune 1982, 193). In the introduction to *The Treacherous Imagination*, Robert McGill defines autobiographical fiction as "narrative prose labeled as fiction but identified as drawing significantly on its author's life," (2013, 2) and comments on the effect and role of paratexts (2013, 7) in the process of reading fiction as autobiographical. McGill adds that "it seems appropriate to think of autobiographical fiction, like fiction in general, not as a formal quality but as a

hermeneutic orientation toward a text. In other words, “autobiographical fiction” is a lens through which one reads,” (8). Autobiographical fiction is hardly a genre stamped on a published book which allows for it to become what McGill calls “a hermeneutic orientation toward a text” (8); it becomes an endeavor by the readers to trace the autobiographical in the fictional. *Beer in the Snooker Club* is narrated in the first-person by Ram, whose real name we never get to know. The geographical and temporal circumstances in which Ram lives and the details of his family, class and education are very similar to the details known about Ghali's life and background.

Even though diary as a genre does not leave room for the reader to search for fiction in the real, it is governed by hazy generic borders and definitions despite being very different in form and purpose. Smith and Watson define the diary as “[a] form of periodic life writing, the diary records dailiness in accounts and observations of emotional responses... The immediacy of the genre derives from the diarist’s lack of foreknowledge about outcomes of the plot of his life,” (2010, 193). The question as to whether diarists write essentially for an audience and for what purpose they keep the diary itself marks diary writing as much more different from other more intention-based genres of life narratives such as autobiography and memoir.⁵ Diaries have a specificity which cannot be controlled within the generic markings of other life narratives which is the immediacy of the act of writing: the move between the immediate present in the act of writing – without editing or intention of editing – and everything between a faint memory and the near past. The reason why writers keep diaries, to whom they address them, and whether they are published or not, and when, all differ from one diarist to another adding yet other impossible specifications to this genre. Nonetheless, the later work by Philippe Lejeune on diaries has produced theorizations about the act of keeping, publishing and reading diaries that allows for broader speculations and readings of such intimate narratives.

The first generic specificity according to Lejeune is that “[t]his is a type of writing for which none of the ordinary working procedures is allowed: the diarist can neither *compose* nor *correct*. He must say the right thing on the first try,” (2009, 182). Then what happens when a diary is edited? The question here of course would include publishing circumstances and whether the editor is the diarist or a different person. All such details manage to control a genre that refuses to be controlled within specific generic markers except for the fact that by writing a diary you cannot be expected to be writing fiction. “Diary writing is a sport,” explains Lejeune, “it is not first and foremost an art that is developed to give meaning or pleasure to others. Instead, it is a performance. Something

like skiing or sailing: for your own purposes, you use the energy from a natural force that carries you along" (182). This definition of course, marks the difference between fiction being written for the pleasure of others, while diaries are a personal 'performance' or an extended treatise of the self in daily segments. It is worth noting that Lejeune compares diary writing to a 'performance', which would automatically entail an audience: for whom is the diary written; for whom do I record my life? The lines defining and separating Ghali's published work are at once constricted and fluid because of how *Beer in the Snooker Club* is read as autobiographical fiction; Ram travels to London when he is around the same age that Ghali left Cairo to study medicine in Paris. Unlike Ram though, Ghali does not go to fight the British in Suez in 1956. His subject matter seems to be his own life whether in fiction or in the published diaries.

One other question which still speaks to how diaries are constructed, published and received (in relation to fiction) is whether they are read on their own or as merely paratexts to another primary text. How can a diary, such as Ghali's, function as a paratext when it is published as a separate narrative, when it could also be regarded as a literary sequel? Gerard Genette defines the paratext as "a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d'être*" (2001, 9). If we think of an author's diary as a paratext, we would question how it is dedicated to the existence of another essential text, because according to Genette, "the paratextual element is always subordinate to 'its' text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence" (9). How then do published diaries as a genre, by authors who are already known for works of fiction, function within these defining lines of text and paratext especially that Ghali's diary is written after his novel.

Genette gives a primal and general definition of the paratext where "[i]ts most private part consists of messages the author addresses to himself, in his diary or elsewhere: this is the intimate paratext, so designated by the mere fact of its being addressed to oneself, regardless of its content" (2001, 9). He comes to later define a diary in detail as an "epitext" which "is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space," (2001, 344) making the epitext more loosely attached to a text it could be read against. It is then, the connection between genres and authorship that could link Ghali's novel and his diaries: he is the author of both texts and his life appears to be the subject matter of both diaries and novel as autobiographical. However, if read as a sequel, the diaries would appear to be following into the footsteps of how the novel itself is read: as fiction that can tell us about the life of its author. Diary is

essentially not that. Yet, *Beer in the Snooker Club* is read as a guide to the life Ghali led before leaving Egypt in 1958. This brings us to the problematic of function, intention and specifically addressee in relation to diary and autobiographical fiction. The reader(s) is a complicated entity which can determine the fluidity of a generic marker in the process of reading itself. They "come to their readings of an autobiographical text ... from different experiential histories and geopolitical spaces. There is, then, no way to predict what kind of "reading" they will take away from, or give to, an autobiographical act" (Smith and Watson 2010, 78). This complexity instigates the question of which narratives are telling of the lives of their authors and how does genre control each narrative until the moment it is read either alone or paratextually.

For the case at hand, Ghali indicates in his final diary entry that if edited the diaries could become "a good piece of literature" (2017, 2: 211). What, then, are the generic 'markings' that govern the medium in which a narrative is written and what it is edited into? I use the word markings specifically to highlight those words, indicators or nuances that control and mediate how a text is read, similar to those markings of a musical score denoting tempo or rhythm in performance. If, as Genette claims, an "epitext is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space" (2001, 344), then how do we determine, in the case of the diaries, which Ghali writes after the publication of his novel, the relationship between them as paratextual to begin with? Reading the diaries as paratext by no means indicates that they cannot function as texts. Diary as a genre is not determined by the question of publication because as an act, it surpasses such a purpose: a diary is written first and foremost because its writer commits to such an act. This commitment is at once a generic determinant but also a liberating one because whatever happens to a diary, however it comes to be read by others, it does not change its generic function both when it is written and when it is published as a diary: a diary is a diary, no matter who it is addressed to.

When a diary is written, it happens to remain outside of the lines of a peritext in its totality because it is an independent text. Genette differentiates between a 'peritext' which is controlled and contained within the text and an 'epitext' that is not controlled within the confines of the text (2001, 344). Yet, I wish to argue, that once published, in whole and in their own generic marker as 'diaries', a diary can take on a new function of becoming text rather than paratext. The diary, as private authorial epitext, exists in a loose generic mold:

our study of the epitext confronts us with its lack of external limits: the epitext, a fringe of the fringe, gradually disappears into, among other things, the totality of the authorial discourse ... we would do well to bear in mind this potential for indefinite diffusion. (Genette 346)

This marginal yet limitless position allows for both generic rigidity but also malleability that allows a diary to be a diary and to also have a generic function in relation to autobiographical fiction. The question remains, however, when looking at Ghali's diaries, as to how a published diary can "disappear" as Genette says, "in the totality of the authorial discourse" (2001, 346), especially that the two volumes of Ghali's diaries are read at once separately and in junction with anything else he wrote.

Ghali's diary is, in essence, a fluid text; it wavers in generic existence. This fluidity of the diary is generically important because it highlights its function as an epitext in its relation to Ghali's novel: "[t]he location of the epitext is therefore anywhere outside the book - but of course nothing precludes its later admission to the peritext" (2001, 344). The diary acts in the same fluidity when it comes to function as a peritext in different publications. Its function as a paratext changes when it moves from a free floating epitext to a constrained peritext when Athill includes part of Ghali's diaries in her memoir about him, *After a Funeral* (1986). It is important here to note that Athill exercises a specific authorial and editorial power over the diaries and what she includes from them as segments of Ghali's diaries move out of context and are reused paratextually. What remains of a diary, then, when it can be used so fragmentally and yet read as a whole? Can the same be done to Ghali's novel?

Keeping a diary is a precarious and intimate act, very much unlike the act of writing a fictional narrative. Lejeune differentiates between the two acts of writing as he highlights how "[t]he diary is a sort of "installation" that plays on fragmentation and the tangential in an aesthetics of repetition and vertigo that is very different from traditional narrative aesthetics" (2009, 203). This fragmentation and tangentiality give the diaries a looser form of existence so that they can move from epitext, to paratext, to being read as a text that stands alone. As Ghali was writing the drafts of his unpublished novel, 'Ashl', while keeping a diary, the generic difference between the flow of the diary up until the 'end' contrasts greatly with the unfinished manuscript Ghali was trying to write. It also contrasts greatly with the selective nature of the finished novel where we know of Ram's life not in an ordered daily narrative such as the diary and hence, call it autobiographical fiction. The question here, though, is whether a diary by an author can ever be read alone, when the whole diary itself is structured and is

initiated so that fiction can be written. However, the fiction that is written is not published, and in the world where readers act as audiences for published texts, the fiction he writes before keeping the diary is read in conjunction with it because whenever Ghali mentions *Beer in the Snooker Club* in the diaries a connection is struck that entails a reading of both together in some way.

Liminal Bodies, Liminal Worlds

How a text is narrated is part of what governs the way it is read, sometimes moving away from the designated generic label. According to Genette, what distinguishes a diary, as a private authorial epitext, is the presence of a possible addressee who receives the addressed text before it is published to the reading public (2010, 371). The addressee could be the physical diary itself, but it could also be according to Genette, simply "a first addressee interposed between the author and the possible public, an addressee (a correspondent, a confidant, the author himself) who is perceived not as just an intermediary or functionally transparent relay, a media "nonperson," but indeed as a fullfledged addressee" (371) who is not related to whether the text is intended to be made public or not. This single addressee is quite different from the concept of readership which writing and publishing a work of fiction entails.

One subtle way in which his diary resists fine generic definitions is that Ghali does not address the diary as an addressee in the traditional manner of 'Dear Diary.'⁶ He, rather, writes to himself: to a 'self' that understands and comprehends the need to keep the diary and one that knows his history all too well. I call this the liminal⁷ addressee, because it is neither Ghali himself nor is it addressed to someone specific. This liminal addressee echoes Ghali's position in exile:

the attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since...these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention. (Turner 2004, 79)

To this liminal addressee, Ghali writes about his life and about the madness he hopes to avoid by engaging in an act of writing. The 'self' he addresses, this liminal addressee, is an all-knowing omniscient receiver rather than a narrator: the liminal addressee stands between him and whoever will read the diary later

(whether it is us or Athill, for instance). The liminal addressee knows what we as readers cannot and they share with Ghali moments of reminiscence such as that in the very long entry on 3 November 1967: "Do you remember the first time I met Lilian?" (2017, 2: 147). Almost a week later, at the end of the entry dated the 9th of November, Ghali writes, "My tenderness is beginning to turn into passion— and we know ourselves, mate" (2017, 2: 151), turning the liminal addressee into an accomplice. The liminal addressee shares a knowledge of Ghali's memory but only functions by existing in the present moment as we see from the pronoun 'I' and later 'we'. But by that stage of reading the diary, the reader has also become an accomplice and can know 'them' (Ghali, his diary, and his addressee) all too well. The repetitive nature of writing entries and the nature of writing an unsculpted narrative make the diary what it is: very different from a novel and the conventions in which a novel is written.

To move beyond the generic label of 'novel' in which *Beer in the Snooker Club* has been published, to examine the question of narration in the first-person, we will find the same mesh of feelings, events, physical relocation, belonging, and the inescapable inquisition into the self that one can find in a life narrative. However, the narrator of the novel, this first-person narrator, does not address a liminal addressee, but rather a reader who becomes implicit in the narrative at hand. In other words, the reader implicates her/himself in the act of writing the novel. In the act of keeping a diary, the reader's immersion in it is not an implication but rather a mediation; it is a transient sliding across the world of someone's mind. The implication takes place in diary-writing when the writer has already committed to keeping the diary and not in the reader's implication of reading it. The reader does not matter here, as it does for the novel.

It is worth noting here that Lejeune makes another generic distinction between diaries and fiction in his argument about diary as 'antifiction'. He states that "[t]he absence of control that characterizes real diaries contrasts with the imaginary control of the novelist" (2009, 208). This control exists in the manifestation of what we see as traces of Ghali's life in his novel, which make readers consider it 'autobiographical.' As a writer of fiction, he can control what details to include from his life in the fictional narrative and in what way they are presented. Yet, this notion of control is manifested in the diaries as well, thus further problematizing the clear distinctions between diary and fiction. Ghali at one instance keeps himself from writing, in case Athill reads his diary again and comes to read and know the intimate details of his thoughts and emotions and therefore see him in a different light. Similar to the process of writing fiction, Ghali practices control – an abstinence of a sort – of what and when he writes in his diary.

When Ghali finally passed away in January 1969 in London, after swallowing twenty-six sleeping pills at the end of December, Athill wrote an obituary in *The Times* describing Ghali as “an exile from Egypt” (1969, 10). Similar to the life of its author, *Beer in the Snooker Club* moves between two temporal and geographical dimensions: London and Cairo in 1956 and onwards. The diaries, however, start in Rheydt, Germany, and then travel to London, as Ghali moves into Athill's apartment sometime in 1965 and end with this suicide note in 1968. On the other hand, Egypt does not appear at any point in Ghali's personal writings as a place where he lives or an identity to which he belongs. Egypt only belongs to the fictitious Ram, and to a world that Ghali no longer occupies.

Edward Said's "Reflections on Exile" offers insights to the discussion of geographical borders in Ghali's writings (though Ghali's visit to Israel definitely separates him from Said politically). However, Said's essay is about a state of being and not a person, and the existence in exile that we can see beyond literature, perhaps in intimate writing as he says that "to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself" (Said 1984, n. pag.). If we decide to map, as Said says, those territories of experience beyond generic differences, what do we find in diaries kept in a state of exile of a sort? Relating this to Ghali, we know from his diaries that he resides in London because there is nowhere else he would prefer to be. In the first volume of his diaries, Ghali writes about the excitement of being in London and the anxiety he anticipates because of having to leave the only place he can call home in a month's time:

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 ... (2016, 1: 113)

Being in London, however, does not help him write no more than it keeps him from his addictions. London, his "spiritual abode" (2016, 1: 113) cannot keep him from falling in and out of his depressive episodes. Throughout this period, he keeps the diary. Alongside his regular sexual adventures, alcohol consumption and gambling, keeping the diary becomes a constant. While Ghali moves freely, geographically, in the diaries, he is stuck when it comes to writing fiction; he is also unable to deal with his depressions.

The transience of the temporal and geographical limitations in diary-keeping are important generic specificities of the genre. Lejeune argues that "[o]ne of the paradoxes of the diary is that having a date on it immunizes it against aging ... The journal is on a different playing field. It is in a daunting face-off with time. What it is betting on, if there is any bet, is escaping death by building up traces and hoping to be reread" (2009, 210). The dates of Ghali's diaries keep them set within the confines of a world which we can imagine; so does the historical framework of his novel. However, the diaries do not lend a critique of a society nor do they offer something beyond the protagonist's gimmicks; they just reveal what a diary reveals: a writer sitting down to write about mostly painful matters. The dates matter and they don't in the published diaries. They initiate us into the defeat of Egypt in the Egyptian-Israeli War of 1967, for example, only so Ghali can talk about what has happened with Athill the day before:

Tuesday 6th June 1967

Tragedies— catastrophes. Native, international and personal. There has been war between the Arabs and Israel for forty-eight hours...

Since one person is not a collective, all these horrifying happenings haven't diminished my own disasters -- I've left Diana again and am again hopelessly bewildered, lost, insecure, etc. (2017, 2: 103)

Ghali's entries on the defeat of 1967 do not function as political commentary nor as a historical record; the diary is rather a personal document where his feelings come through. In exile, his relationship to what happens in Egypt is based on geographical distance and reveals anger and not nostalgia or homesickness for instance. The scope of the catastrophe is not only being away from Egypt while it loses the war, but also that he can no longer live with Athill.

The war of 1967 is one temporal marker in the second volume of the *Diaries* that locates them within a political and historical context. *Beer in the Snooker Club* is set within the temporal framework of post-1952 Egypt: it is struck from the first scene in the novel of Ram's landowning aunt signing papers to minimize her financial losses. The Suez War in 1956 is a solid temporal marker in the plot of the novel. Ram and Font participate in the resistance against the British in 1956; they are politically aware of the implications of the war when they are finally allowed to travel to London. Exile, in the lives of the characters, does not have the same bleak outlook it has for Ghali in 1967: no prospect of being in a good place to write his second book. Ghali writes in his *Diaries* that "[t]here is something nauseating about someone living here, far away from it all, and permitting himself to judge" (2017, 2: 105), exiling himself even further by not

allowing himself to make judgements in his own diary. Perhaps to assume that generic markers control how Ghali – some eight years apart – is affected by exile is not fully presumptuous. His political stance against Nasser and the 1952 regime – which forces him to leave Egypt in the first place – does not change.

Generically, diaries by authors of fiction can hardly be separated from the works of fiction, as the process of reading them becomes intricately bound with the fiction produced by the same writer. Genette believes that a reader who searches for details in journals kept by writers on their fictional work "is likely to be disappointed...[because] many a writer looks on his journal rather as a complement to – indeed, as relief from – the work, and uses it preferably to keep track of events ("intimate" or not) external to his work" (2001, 390). The edited and published volumes of Ghali's diaries come to function differently because they are written after *Beer in the Snooker Club* is published. To make a slight generic turn between diary and autobiographical fiction, what changes, then, when readers try to find details of the author's life in their fiction? This reading essentially implicates the readers into a fragmented narrative of the author's life that is scattered across genres. The reader's imagination becomes a contribution to the fragmentation of generic borders between diary and fiction. Everything we read about Ghali's life in the diaries, seems to push us back to his novel as autobiographical fiction to try to understand where this exile started and how it came to be the way it is described in the diary entries. Closer towards the ends of the entries, we see how Ghali's exile has taken new dimensions for him. He writes in the entry on 26 May 1968 about the lecture he was to give on "Israel and Palestine at the LSE" and which left him "shattered as a consequence" (2017, 2: 191) when a representative of the Egyptian government declares to the audience that Ghali is "not Egyptian. He has defected to Israel," (2017, 2: 191). Amidst a terrible depression, this public declaration manages to magnify all that exile has left him with:

I wiped the floor with the chap ... But afterwards ... It suddenly, after all those years, dawned upon me that not only had I had no 'home' since the ages of ten or so, but that I now also had no country. Why it was only now that it struck me – and why it should affect me so much, I cannot say. But it did, very much... Driving back in the car ... I felt a new kind of loneliness. (2017, 2: 191)

Having no record of what his life was like, no life narrative of his exile since this early age, readers are left with an autobiographical novel to create a narrative.

Between autobiographical fiction and diary, a narrative of exile is created where – ironically – neither time nor geography matter.

Writing Towards an End

The generic differences between diaries and writing fiction exist within the constraints of writing within a framework, whether it is loose or heavily structured. Ghali's published texts were all written in exile, under restrictions of physical mobility to and from certain places. We see from the diary entries how Ghali goes about writing fiction the same way he keeps a diary, with no plan or structure: "Most writers, I presume, have a 'plan' about a novel, an idea at least. But not I. I start a sentence or a phrase and try to carry or rather to stretch this to a novel never knowing what will come next," (2016, 1: 90, 91). The difference, though, in practice, is the act of remembering to write what you already know has happened, rather than writing to write things in the way you want them to be read. The diary is not a record but rather a flow of emotions; a retrograde written record of a life from a larger lens to focus down to the personal, the very core of the self that is writing and that is being written. The novel moves from the self to a swelling and contained world – it is contained in narrative function by genre – that makes us able to read *Beer in the Snooker Club* as a historical record, geographically and temporally, with Ram's character as a guiding medium at where exactly we are looking. Think of it as a photo album; the novel is a chosen selection of photographs, laid out together in an organized order and a previously decided logic. Time is not important since time can be turned around. The diary is not that; it is rather a personal daily scrapbook where movement is forward. Time is not allowed to exist in the act of scrapbooking because the only order is to move from page to page and not to create a meticulous narrative. Keeping a diary is the opposite of that. It is the mess that it is: "[a] diary is turned towards the future, so if something is missing, it is not the beginning, but the end that changes in the course of writing it" (Lejeune 2009, 191). But does the end of the diary really change in the course of keeping it?

Ghali states the intention behind keeping the diary in the very first diary entry: "Rheydt, Germany, Sunday, 24th May 1964/Going mad, as I seem to be going, perhaps it'd be better to keep my Diary [...] if only for a streak of sanity" (2016, 1: 23). Ghali's diaries are a text that is read with the knowledge of the ending. Since, as Lejeune writes, "[a] real diary is always written without the knowledge of where it will end ... No one knows where he is heading, except towards death" (2009, 207) we can look at Ghali's diaries as a writing practice to withhold the state of madness which brings about a desire for death. He begins the diary to postpone death and ends it with death. It is his psychological state of mind that

brings the diaries to the end that they have postponed. They exist by putting off the one act that they lead to. Perhaps Ghali's suicide severs the connection between reading his novel as a testament of a past life, and rather proposes a reading of the novel as the life he did not live. The diary is the novel he does not write. Lejeune writes that “[o]ther connections certainly exist between the diary and creative writing, which make the ‘end’ of the diary a minor problem, or the variant of a larger question—the end of writing” (2009, 196) which for Ghali meant the end of life. The final entry and the act of writing are tied together in an equation where one cannot but undo the other. *Beer in the Snooker Club* ends with an act which we as readers know all too well as it is one of Ram's social habits. He goes to Groppi to drink whisky which he cannot pay for and looks for a gambling game. Although it does not go back to the actual beginning of the novel, or the opening scene, it takes us back to a recurrent daily practice; very similar to keeping a diary.

It is significant, in trying to look at generic boundaries between his diary and his fiction, to examine how Ghali's relationship with the diary changed for the sake of looking at the larger question of writing as an exercise for staying sane and hence, alive. While in Rheydt he writes on "Monday, 18th October 1965/I am beginning to hate this Diary somehow– it has become a 'person', who goes on and on putting with my complaints and groans...and whenever I look at it, see it, it is only a reminder of the utter misery that I am" (2016, 1: 193). The evening of the same day, he writes: "I think I shall not write this Diary for some time. It depresses me to look at it" (2016, 1: 193). He cannot stand what the diary has become when it becomes exactly that which he initiated it to be and changes the genre of writing to maintain some sanity:

Friday, 22nd October 1965

As I said, the Diary does depress me. Have worked well the last three days on the novel. It is my salvation. I am slowly entering my cocoon, and when I am in it, I am alright. I've discovered an isolated pub, which is becoming my local. One or two beers now and then, all alone, dreading any of my acquaintances finding the pub ... But the novel is my salvation. (2016, 1: 194)

By the time he has resided in London, the diary takes on a different function; it becomes the record of the life he imagined would finally make him able to write his second work of fiction. Instead, he starts new notebooks of his diary leading up to what Lejeune calls "rituals of closure" (189), of both life and diary.

It is when Ghali seems most at home at London, that the mania of his life as he knows it unravels and writing the diary is again the only thing he continues to do. The significance of Ghali's suicide note being the final diary entry is not only a paradox of insisting to write which manifests a desire to live and choosing to die. The final diary entry, the final act of writing, is a performance of existence despite death that shows how "[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," (Lejeune 2009, 198). The paradox of life in postponement of death and of diary that could be well edited into fiction all seem to culminate in a moment that seems to be delayed in time and not in space. Borders do not matter at this moment. Ghali eventually dies in the only place he feels he can exist and function. It is the passage of time that controls the suicide. The diary is a temporal movement towards suicide.

If we think of Ghali's final diary entry, we are brought back to what we already know. We know before reading that Ghali commits suicide in 1968 and we know from the entries that he constantly has suicidal thoughts. However, the way in which the final entry crosses generic borders between diary entry and suicide note ends generic liminality. The suicide ends Ghali's liminal state. The liminal addressee is no longer there; there are multiple addressees. The purpose of the entry is to announce the end of his life and the end of the diary:

And the most dramatic moment of my life – the only authentic one, is a terrible let down. – I have already swallowed my death...I could vomit it out if I wanted to. Honestly and sincerely, I really don't want to. 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, SERENLY) ... serenely. (2017, 2: 212)

The first and final entries of course tie the whole performance of keeping the diary together creating a circular plot. Physical borders form a map of locations where Ghali lived and wrote; but from Rhydett which he hated, to London which he could call home, the madness he writes to put off is a constant. If we think of how Lejeune believes that "[r]eviewing all the functions of a diary demagnifies the problem of its ending," (2009, 196) in relation to Ghali's diary, the end is presupposed at the beginning; the function of the diary is to postpone its end. I would argue that in Ghali's case, the editing and the publication of the diaries in their totality do not demagnify the problem of its ending, since it presupposes it at the beginning. The way the diary comes to function as Ghali writes it generically and how it is read in accordance with his published fiction, magnify

the end – the suicide – as a starting point from where we know about Ghali's life. We come to know about his life through his suicide first.

Ghali's final entry proposes an impossibility of an end despite his decision to kill himself. The end of a diary does not presume an end of a life. The end of a life presumes the end of writing in the diary; it does not however mean that the diary ends. The diary moves beyond death to become what it can become generically: text, epitext, peritext, etc. It goes through a metamorphic process of being whatever it is, of being read by whoever will read it. This initiation from being written to the liminal reader to being read by hundreds or thousands of readers makes the end quite impossible. It is an inevitable beginning. What is significant about the endings, in Ghali's published diaries and *Beer in the Snooker Club*, is that both narratives create an extended reading process about Ghali's life and who he was. You finish the novel to pick up the diaries, to finish the diaries and then perhaps read the novel again, or perhaps go online for more. Curiosity is insatiable.

The narrative movement in both the diaries and the novel echo a geographical movement which reveals a life between borders, a life of exile: physical, emotional and even generic. Ghali is not preoccupied in the diary entries with the passage of time but with the repetitiveness of it that comes through the recurrence of his bouts of depression, and of course, his bouts of love. He writes at the beginning of the third notebook in the entry dated 15 October 1965: "Later": "Come my 'part 3' – the humor is in my heart, but again the 'want' to put it down on paper. This 'theory' of love of mine ... is not proofed," (2016, 1: 193). Ghali's diary at notebook three records the passage of time where the dates are merely markers of the same rehearsed performance. Time is not a denoting marker in the diary of exile, especially emotional exile; time does not alter the nature of such borders which Ghali lives through; time does not change the struggle to find love, the struggle to fight off depression, the struggle to write. Lejeune describes the relationship between journaling and time in a beautiful image where

[k]eeping a diary is surfing on time. Time is not an objective, continuous thing that the diarist tries to portray from the outside using tiny discontinuous brushstrokes, as a novelist would. He is himself caught up by the movement he is sculpting, moving along with it, emphasizing certain lines and directions, transforming this inescapable drift into a dance. (2009, 182)

Ghali moves along the geographical mappings laid down by the many layers of his exile, in a "dance" to postpone what he feels is inevitable.

Last Words

Months before his suicide, Ghali's depression had reached a plateau; the entries seem to lose the momentum to push forward and yet he keeps writing. It is at that time that he is writing the 'Ashl' manuscript: "I am now trying very hard to finish that novel about Ashl – simply to show something for all [Diana] has done for me. I know it would please her, and the idea that I am doing it for her and not for me urges me on," (2016, 2: 184). At this stage of the temporal and geographical plateau in the diaries, Ghali seems to be writing slowly towards his death. The failure of writing fiction comes hand in hand with the ability to maintain the practice of keeping the diary. He writes a few days later:

Saturday, 27th April 1968

I try very hard not to think of anything at all. I work on the novel, then get stuck and work on a short story, get stuck and come to the Diary ... I feel such despair that I tell myself: 'Alright, your life is ended – this is nothing in it for you.' And then I tell myself 'Alright, you've lost everything and everything is hopeless. Why don't you simply start again? Since your life is ended, why don't you coop yourself up somewhere, work in the docks of Hamburg, and write. Edit your Diary. Write whatever fantasies you want –. Since your life is ended, be absolutely occluded from life.' (2016, 2: 186)

This idea of writing fiction from the diary is a generic fantasy, one that underlines the fluidity of writing a life, be it in diary or fiction. Ghali yearns for a different time and a different geography, where he could write; where he could imagine a different life than the one he has faced in his own diary. At the end, the diary becomes both an ally and a constant reminder of failing to write the genre he wanted to write. His life is ended, and yet he still writes. Lejeune says that we "can regard the diary as a force of opposition and renewal that ... taps into a new type of relationship between author and reader, with a more active role for the reader," (2009, 209), necessarily because of the diary's fragmented nature. The diaries never really end because the reader is involved in a matrix of decoding and determining what happens. Can the readers then make up a new narrative that lies between what we imagine from his novel and what we know of memory in the diary? Is it a generic impossibility to look at the diary as fiction?

Lejeune argues that diary is exactly not that: diary is 'antifiction'. Ghali does not leave London to go work in the docks in Hamburg; he does not edit the diary, but rather leaves it with a hope that it could become fiction based on his life. While Ghali ends the diary with a final entry denoting a fatal finality, he manages to revoke the diary generically in the wish that it is edited into something else. He writes moving to the end of the performance of keeping a diary only to pose the possibility of diary becoming fiction. The fantasy of fiction allows him a space beyond himself where he can exist outside the trappings of geographical and temporal limits, beyond the limits of the self.

Endnotes

¹ Ghali's diaries have been edited into two volumes by May Hawas and published by the American University in Cairo Press. His novel has been recently translated into Arabic by Reem Saleh and Iman Mersal and published by Dar Al-Shorouk in 2013.

² Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson use the term "self-referential writing" to mean all writing that 'refers' back to the self. The overarching genre is, however, life writing. The genres examined in this paper, autobiographical fiction and diary, are subgenres of life writing. Ghali's personal papers are self-referential: about his life.

³ Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif described *Beer in the Snooker Club* as "one of the best novels about Egypt ever written" in the blurb of Serpent's Tail's reissue of the novel in 1987, more than twenty years after Ghali's death.

⁴ In January 2013, the online archive of Ghali's papers on the Cornell University website went public; the archive is based on copies made by Debora Starr, Associate Professor at Cornell University, in 1999, and was made available with the help of a Digital Collections Grant.

⁵ Philippe Lejeune's concept of the autobiographical pact, in "The Autobiographical Contract", is very important in the understanding of autobiography as a genre. He later writes, comparing it to diary, that "[a]utobiography, a public act, has a solid history based on events and the crossing of thresholds, guided by precedents and made visible by the reception of published texts. Not so the personal journal, which was developed blindly by individuals who, unbeknownst to one another, decided to keep private or secret writings, most of which have been lost. But these decisions to write were underpinned by a collective logic and contain patterns that we must discern from the few traces that remain" (2009, 93).

⁶ In "O My Paper!", Lejeune investigates the history of the tradition of "address[ing] personal writings to the physical medium on which they are written," asking, "[w]hen did 'Dear Diary' begin to be used as the heading for a journal entry?" (2009, 93).

⁷ By liminal, I refer to Victor Turner's definition of liminality in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (1991).

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