

**Cultural and Stylistic Challenges in
the Translation of Naguib Mahfouz into English
The Examples of *Ziqaq el-Madaq*, *Palace Walk* and *The
Harafish***

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Abstract

The writer of this paper (also a translator) is interested in the translation of Naguib Mahfouz into English. This paper is an attempt to show some of the shortcomings in the translation of some of Mahfouz's novels into English. The paper takes the AUC translation of three Mahfouzian novels: *Ziqaq el-Maddaq (Midaq Alley)*, *Palace Walk*, and *El-Harafish*, as samples of the study. There are examples of failures in the translations of the three novels. The stylistic and cultural defects in the translation of these three novels have been referred to by such prominent critics as Edward Said and Rashid el-Enani. The paper tries to put our hands on these shortcomings related to style and culture. The paper comes up with the following conclusions:

1- Most of the mistranslations are cultural, due to the inability of the translators to understand Arabic culture on one hand, and the Egyptian culture on the other.

2- That most of the stylistic mistakes in translation are metaphorical, due also to the inability of the translator to understand the rhetorical nature of Arabic.

3- That the inability to understand Arabic culture entails a similar inability to understand the metaphor. This means that language and culture go together.

Key words:

Naguib Mahfouz, el-Harafish, Palace Walk, Midaq Alley, mistranslations, metaphor, style, culture, AUC, trilogy.

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Translating literary works is always a challenge; if prose can be translated with a considerable degree of intelligibility, some critics think that poetry is sometimes near-impossible to translate. Also, Arabic in particular poses a special difficulty for translators, J. D. Latham writes: To Ibn Faris, Arabic was the best and richest of all languages, which could not be translated into any other language, nor could non-Arabs compete with Arabs in the use of metaphor. *I'rab* (grammatical inflexion) enabled Arabic to articulate its utterances with the utmost clarity, and its richness of synonyms the language was without equal: "In Persian the lion must rest content with but one name, but we give it a hundred and fifty."¹

This does not mean that translators should give up; it means that there are difficulties that can be brought about because human communication must continue. Many literary translations have got more universal fame than the original. Man's insistence on communication cannot be debarred in spite of difficulties and challenges. The central challenge which faces the translator is the different culture of the source text, and the impossibility to impose his own as Susan Bassnett argues: To attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground, and the translator should not be tempted by the school that pretends to determine the original *intentions* of an author on the basis of a self-contained text. The translator cannot *be* the author of the SL text, but as the author of the TL text has a clear moral responsibility to the TL readers.²

This clear moral responsibility which the translator carries out is to communicate the source language and culture to the target reader in his language, and not to impose his own culture on the translation. Languages, being human phenomena, have the ability

to communicate with the same degree of rhetoric and culture-specific vocabulary. Susan Bassnett also writes: Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.³

A translator, according to Bassnett, is one who understands two cultures of two languages, and knows the words which communicate culture in both languages. It is not an easy task; it needs the translator to be highly knowledgeable in both languages, in their canonical literatures, in their dialects and accents, their colloquial and classical histories, their etymologies and lexical variations, and in their habits and conventions.

In short, this paper investigates some of the cultural and stylistic challenges in the translation of three works by Naguib Mahfouz into English: *Ziqaq el-Madaq*, *Palace Walk*, and *The Harafish*. It is argued that Mahfouz's literature is loaded with cultural dimensions, and that the translation of these cultural dimensions is difficult, if not, sometimes, impossible, it is argued also that Mahfouz's prose is characterized by a high degree of metaphoricity, which, sometimes, stands as a barrier between the translator and his aim of communication. In the three examples studied, translators sometimes ignore the cultural dimensions, mistranslate, or explain them. Translators also find difficulty in translating the Mahfouzian metaphors, either they mistranslate, paraphrase, or change them into the literal.

The three Mahfouzian works are the American University in Cairo translations, *Ziqaq el-Madaq* (Midaq Alley) appeared in Arabic in (1947) was first translated by Trevor Le Gassick, and published in (1966) by the American university in Cairo Press, *Cairo Trilogy* (2002), is translated by William Maynard Hutchins, Olive E. Kenny, Lorne M. Kenny and Angele Botros Sama'an (Hutchins hardly recognizes the efforts of the other three translators) with an introduction by Sabry Hafez, and *The Harafish*

translated by Catherine Cobham, and published by the same printing house in (1994).

It is important to notice the difference between a translator who fails to convey the culture of the source text, and that one who behaves according to a theoretical point of departure, or a point of view on translation, like Perrot d'Ablancourt who writes: I do not always stick to the author's words, nor even to his thoughts. I keep the effect he wanted to produce in mind, and then I arrange the material after the fashion of our time. Different times do not just require different words, but also different thought, and ambassadors usually dress in the fashion of the country they are sent to, for fear of appearing ridiculous in the eyes of the people they try to please".⁴

According to Perrot d'Ablancourt, the translator should be dedicated to convey the beauty of the source language, and "renders its images", that is what is meant by fidelity and faithfulness of translation: When I speak of a prose translation I don't mean a servile translation. What I mean is a generous translation, a noble translation that clings closely to the ideas of its original, tries to match the beauty of its language, and renders its images without undue austerity of expression. The first type of translation, the servile one, becomes very unfaithful because it tries to be scrupulously faithful. It ruins the spirit by trying to save the letter. It is the work of a cold and sterile talent. The second type of translation, on the other hand, which tries above all save the spirit, does not fail to keep the letter, even where it takes the greatest liberties. With its daring features, which remain true always, it becomes not just the faithful copy of its origins, but a second original in its own right. It can only be the work of a writer of genius: solid, noble, and productive.⁵

Actually, this quotation refers to a gap between theory and practice, a theorist in the field of translation is safe from the pains of the translation experience itself. Ideal translation never exists unless through some sort of authoring. In spite of the fact that there is difficulty in apprehending other people's cultures and ways of imagination neatly, "this does not mean that we can ... never

genuinely apprehend it at all. ... We can apprehend it well enough, at least as well as we apprehend anything else not properly ours, but we do so not by looking *behind* the interfering glosses that connect us to it but *through* them. We cannot simply get rid of the interfering glosses of our culture, which operate in and through our signifying systems, including, particularly, language".⁶

Midaq Alley

Midaq Alley (1947) is work number ten by Naguib Mahfouz, or the third novel after a translation (*Old Egypt*, 1932), a short story collection (*Whisper of Madness* 1938), three historical novels (*Mockery of Fates* 1939, *Rhadopis of Nubia* 1943, *The Struggle of Typa*, 1944), and two novels (*Modern Cairo*, 1945, *Khan al-Khalili* 1946). It is also the first real proof of his literary genius as a novelist. After its appearance in the late forties it received a considerable amount of admiration, and approval by literary critics like Taha Hussein, Sayyed Qutb (then a renowned literary critic), and others. It noticeably shows Mahfouz's unwavering interest in the alleys of Cairo; it has also inaugurated the setting of most of his novels and short stories. At that time Mahfouz was still under the spell of the realist European novel of the nineteenth century, and under the influence of the desire to establish the art of the novel in the Arabic literary soil. Mahfouz had to be Dickens as well as Kafka, Thackeray as well as Hardy, Lawrence as well as Flaubert, Woolf as well as Joyce. The path was wonderfully paved to him to fulfill his project; his achievement is well systematized and arranged all the way from *Old Egypt* (1932) to *The Seventh Heaven* (2005).

That is, *Midaq Alley* was the first novel to touch directly and vehemently with the Egyptian culture; the culture of the ordinary people in the streets of Cairo and its quarters. The novel, therefore, is loaded with figures of speech, colloquial behavior and popular characters. The translator finds great difficulty in communicating these idiosyncratic touches limited only to a culture of great depth in history. There are many examples in which the translator proves competent to convey the author's intentions together with the beauties of the source language. However, there are many

examples in which the translator shows his helplessness towards these cultural and stylistic challenges. *Midaq Alley* is written - fundamentally - to reflect the cultural gatherings of the Cairene life, which stands as the underneath layer of human life at large. The locality of Mahfouz's literature is the main element of his universally acclaimed fame. The opening paragraph of the book shows a great deal of the cultural and stylistic intentions of the author which the translator finds himself shut in:

مضت حياة النهار، وسرى دبيب حياة المساء، همسة هنا وهممة هناك.
يا رب يا معين. يا رزاق يا كريم. حسن الختام يا رب. كل شيء بأمره. مساء
الخير يا جماعة، تفضلوا جاء وقت السمر، اصح يا عم كامل واغلق الدكان.
غير يا سنقر ماء الجوز، اطفئ الفرن يا جعدة. الفص كبس على قلبي.... (6).

The noises of daytime life had quieted now and those of the evening began to be heard, a whisper here and a whisper there: "Good evening, everyone." "Come on in; it's time for the evening get-together." "Wake up, Uncle Kamil, and close your shop!" "Change the water in the hookah, Sanker!" "Put out the oven, Jaada!" "This hashish hurts my chest (1)."

The translator's inability to understand the aesthetic secret of Arabic is evident from the outset of the novel; the opening scene starts with a considerable amount of mistranslations. In page (6) "همسة هنا وهممة هناك" is translated "a whisper here and a whisper there", the translator does not want to take the pains of differentiating between "همسة" and "هممة", the first is "whisper" the second is "muttering" or "humming". More important, the fact that the translator felt an inability to translate a whole sentence, decides to ignore it totally; the sentence is a cultural challenge, and it needs some effort to make it out and render it in an equivalent English sentence: "يا رب يا معين. يا رزاق يا كريم. حسن الختام" (6) These phrases are invocations to God, or prayers to God to help, provide, and grant one's life with the best way of end (death), and that everything goes with His ordinance". Ignoring these phrases empties the text of its spiritual and cultural character. This failure continues in a series of starking examples. The following example is one of them:

... وبفضل هذه الثقة يسرحني في تجارته الواسعة من تبغ
وسجاير، وشوك وسكاكين، وملاءات أسرة، وجوارب وأحذية! ..
دنيا!
فتمتم عباس الحلو متفكرًا: دنيا! (38).

He trusts me so much that he has let me in on his big trade in tobacco, cigarettes, chocolate, knives, bedcovers, socks, and shoes! Nice, isn't it?"

"Yes, very," Abbas muttered in reply (19).

The translation of this part goes well until the reader reaches the word "دنيا!", uttered first by Hussain Kirsha to refer to the abundance in his work in the English camps. However, the same exclamatory word is repeated thrice by Abbas el-Hilu in his answer to Hussain bearing a different meaning in each time; the translator renders the word in all cases as: "Nice, isn't it?" and Abbas's answer is "Yes, very," after a while Abbas repeated the translation of the same expression: as "very good". Hussain's translation may be fitting, but the translator is unable to comprehend, and communicate, the cultural overtones of the word "دنيا!", it bears two meanings in these two different situations. The Arabic word is loaded with cultural meanings which are blendings of curiosity, wonder, and sorrowfulness for one's downhearted state compared to others'. In the third pronouncement of the same word, Abbas means that sometimes fate gives without limits, in other times takes without limits.

Chapter 6 opens with this sentence: "وكان المعلم كرشة قد شغل" (50) بأمر هام (24). Here, the translator, being aware of the insufficiency of the word "Mr." for "المعلم", he adds the definitive phrase "the café owner" which does not exist in the source. Nevertheless, the cultural tone of the Arabic word is lost in the translation. The word "معلم" usually means teacher, but here it does not mean "teacher" though suggests a teacher's job. The "معلم" here is a master of his work which cannot be based on any pedagogic certificates. It is a word that almost goes to coffee owners, restaurant owners, or shopkeepers, and in this respect it is

different from the word "أوسطى Osta", which almost goes to masters of handiwork like plumbers, mechanics, carpenters, etc.

In the outset of chapter X Abbas sings the love deep down with his heart, in a well known folkloric song, the song's words in the source text ascertain that a lover must meet his beloved one day, "هلبت يا قلبي على طول الزمن ترتاح / وتتول وصال اللي تهوى، وفيه ترتاح" (86), which the translator turns them into a question in the target language: "Will you, my heart, after your long wait delight? / Will you soon win your love and in her delight!" One conjectures that the translator confuses between the word "هلبت" which means "it is a must" and the word "هل" which is a question word. In the beginning of chapter xii, the reader faces the terrible encounter between Mr. Kirsha's boy, and Mr. Kirsha's wife, defending her injured dignity, she tries to drive the gay boy out of the café, the translator of this short exchange skips some important cultural significances:

- من أنت يا ستي، وماذا فعلت حتى ...
- ما أنا؟ ألم تعرفني؟! .. أنا ضررتك .. (106).

The translator skips the phrases which he does not understand culturally, like "يا ستي" and mistranslates the phrase "أنا ضررتك" by "I am your fellow wife ..." a phrase that does not communicate the cultural meaning of its source text; it leaves the target reader to ask about the meaning of "fellow wife", who is usually one's second wife. The target does not refer to the connotations of the phrase which points to the homosexual character of *Mr. Kirsha* (Moa'lim Kirsha).

In chapter xiv the sentence "جننت يا بن القديمة!" (121) is also mistranslated as: "Have you gone out of your mind, you son of an *old hag*?" The word "old hag" has different connotations in English from the word "القديمة" in the source text; in English, it means "a wizened old woman, or a kind of fairy or goddess having the appearance of such a woman, often found in folklore and children's tales such as Hansel and Gretel. Hags are often seen as malevolent, but may also be one of the chosen forms of shape shifting deities, such as the Morrígan or Badb, who are seen as neither wholly beneficent nor malevolent".⁷ In Arabic the word "القديمة" has

cultural folkloric connotations; it means "old worn-out pair of shoes." Again the translator substituted an English cultural word for what seems a far-fetched image only the Egyptian reader understands. The following sentence also poses a challenge; two Egyptian terms to the colloquial: "Osta, and Effendi", which the translator proved unable to render in understandable English, translating the first term into "middle-class" is a fiasco, it reads:

وقالت لنفسها: إن أية واحدة منهن لتعد نفسها سعيدة إذا خطبها صبي

قهوة أو صبي حداد. وهذا صاحب دكان: أوسطى، وأفندي أيضاً! (111).

She asked herself which one of them would not consider herself lucky to become engaged to a cafe waiter or blacksmith's apprentice. Indeed, he was the owner of a shop, definitely *middle-class*. Moreover, *he wore a suit* (55).

The problem lies in the two terms of address in this sentence; "أوسطى", and "أفندي" which the translator vaguely rendered them "*middle class*" and "*he wore a suit*" respectively. The target reader will not comprehend what is meant by the two terms in their new language. It refers to the translator's extreme ignorance of the cultural dimensions of colloquial Arabic; Arabic of the coffee shops, streets and workshops. The translator might have understood that coffee shop owners are a middle class people, which is also an inaccurate understanding; they are highly qualified people in their works, who started as simple apprentices until they become "masters" of their trades.⁸ The word "master" is the best rendition, and it may be emphasized by a transliteration of the source word "*Osta*." In the following excerpt the cultural dilemma escalates:

فضحكت حميدة ساخرة وقالت:

- إن الفتاة حرة حتى يُعقد عليها، وليس بيننا وبينه إلا كلام

وصينية بسبوسة .. !

- والفاتحة؟

- المسامح كريم ..

- الفاتحة ذنبها كبير.

فصاحت باستهانة:

- بليها واشربي ماءها! (155).

- A girl is free until the marriage agreement is signed. Nothing has passed between us but words and a dish of sweets!" answered Hamida, laughing sarcastically.
- And the recitation of the Qur'an?"
- Forgiveness is honorable . . ."
- Punishment for violating the Qur'an is harsh, you know."
- I don't give a damn!" snarled the girl (75).

The translator is unable to communicate the ritual practiced by the Egyptians when they start their expected agreements with recitations of the opening of the Holy Qur'an (*al-Fatiha*), as a way of ensuring an upcoming agreement especially marriage agreements. It is the translator's predicament with the cultural usage of the verses of the Qur'an as Rasheed el-Enani writes: Another major problem which faced the translators, and defeated them entirely is that of the high religious content of everyday spoken Arabic—something without parallel in modern secularized English. Generations of Western translators of Arabic texts have failed to deal satisfactorily with this obstacle, the present ones being no exception. Their failure stems from their inability to realize that God's apparent omnipresence in the Arabic tongue is of a purely linguistic (and therefore idiomatic) nature. They tend to regard it as an expression of a universal and deep-rooted sense of religiosity and as such a part of the cultural flavor of the text translated that ought to be preserved, partly because of their exaggerated sense of the 'otherness' of the Arab culture and partly because of the inadequate command which most Western Arabists have of colloquial Arabic. For the hapless reader the text becomes at best cumbersome and at worst totally incomprehensible.⁹

The translator of the novel is defeated by "the high religious content of everyday spoken Arabic. This untranslatability coerces him towards attempting explication instead of translation. The translator's predicament is not, here, with Arabic *per se*, it is with Egyptian Arabic in particular, with the colloquial Arabic as spoken by the Egyptians, and with their particularities of religious practice. The following excerpt flows in the same stream:

يا ست الستات .. يا قاضية الحاجات .. الرحمة .. الرحمة يا
آل البيت، والله لأصبرن ما حييت، أليس لكل شيء نهاية؟ (312)

"O Lady of Ladies, O fulfiller of all needs . . . mercy . . .
 . mercy, O People of the House! I will be patient so long as
 I live, for do not all things have their end?"(125).

These phrases and sentences are clear in the source text, native readers understand what is meant by "lady of the ladies"; they know that the writer means "Lady Zynab" one of the wives of the prophet Mohammad, or one of the members of the family of the house of the prophet, whose blessings are believed to be of great benefit in solving a Moslem's problems, especially the *Shiites*. One can safely suggest that the difficulty which the translator faces in communicating the meaning is that he did not understand the source text. The same can easily be applied to the following sentence:

وهنا خرج الشيخ درويش عن صمته فجأة، وأنشد يقول:
 حننت إلى ريا ونفسك باعدت مزارك من ريا وشعبا كما معا
 فما حسن أن تأت الأمر طائعا وتجزع إن داعى الصباية أسمعا
 أه يا ست. الحب يساوي الملايين .. أنفقت في حبك يا ست مائة ألف
 جنيه، وإنه لقدر زهيد (59).¹⁰

Now Sheikh Darwish emerged from his silence and recited two lines of ancient love poetry, muttering, "Oh, madam, love is worth millions. I have spent, madam, for love of you, a hundred thousand pounds, but this is just a paltry sum!" (29).

In this above passage the translator writes that Sheik Darwish recited two lines of ancient love poetry which the translator left them un-translated, leaving the reader confounded and perplexed. Even when he translates Darwish's incantations, he could not help the target reader to understand what is meant by this *Madam* whom the speaker dedicates this great amount of love. Perhaps the following sentence causes more confusion for this target reader who may think that "*the mother of weak ones*" is different from "*Lady of the ladies*" in the previous passage or "*Madam of Madams*" in the next. Also he takes "روحي" which means "spiritual" for "my spirit" which is far from correct.

الحب الحقيقي لآل البيت، تعالي يا حبيبتي .. تعالي يا ست .. أنا
 عاجز يا أم العواجز ..(110).

True love is only for the descendants of Muhammad. Come, my lady Zainab, grand-daughter of the Prophet. . . come, madam . . . I am weak, O mother of weak ones" 54.

Sheikh Darwish now emerged from his usual silent fold and spoke in a far-off voice: كالصداق له مقدم ومؤخر. إلا أنت يا ست "Just like a dowry; الستات فلا صداق لك، لأن حبك روعي من السماء (162) he will give both before and after; so it is with all of them, except you, O Madam of Madams. You bring no dowry, for my spirit drew you down from the heavens themselves" (79).

At this point *Mrs. Kirsha* broke her silence and wailed, "He keeps humiliating me! O God, by the murderous wrongs done to Hassan and Hussain . . ." (61).

وهنا خرجت المرأة عن صمتها مولولة:

- مظلومة والله يا ربي ظلم الحسن والحسين (123).

Not all target readers know what happened to *Hassan and Hussain*; who wronged them? And who had done them injustice? These early Islamic historical events are - apparently - in need of footnoting from the part of the translator, something which did not happen, and left the reader with a vague area of Islamic history. The rendition of "Midaq Alley" into English, needs, as most American University in Cairo translations of Naguib Mahfouz, to be reviewed and fulfilled in new editions free of mistranslations, some of them rise to scandals as in the following examples from *El-Harfish, and Palace Walk*.

Palace Walk

THE translation of Naguib Mahfouz into English has been the subject of much controversy, attack, and modest admiration. It is truly a challenging work in both length and language. Mahfouz's literary diction is characteristic of him; his mingling of the colloquial with the *Fushah* (Literary Arabic) is naturalized in a way that the reader hardly senses it. Also, language and culture in his works in general, and in the Trilogy in particular, go together in a way that makes the task of the translator critical. Edward Said attacked the American University in Cairo translations as being "largely commercial",

he writes in *Al-Ahram Weekly*: A few years later I had an amiable and, from my point of view, encouraging correspondence about him with Jacqueline Onassis, who was trying to decide whether to take him on; she then became one of the people responsible for bringing Mahfouz to Doubleday, which is where he now resides, albeit still in rather spotty versions that dribble out without much fanfare or notice. Rights to his English translations are held by the American University in Cairo Press, so poor Mahfouz, who seems to have sold them off without expecting that he would someday be a world-famous author, has no say in what has obviously been an unliterary, largely commercial enterprise without much artistic or linguistic coherence.¹¹

Edward Said may be overplaying his accusation of the AUC translations for the sake of Doubleday; the idea of the translations being "largely unliterary" is exaggerated. Here, one sees that there are many cultural and stylistic challenges that compromise the AUC translation efforts, but sales prove that they achieved large popularity for Mahfouz and Egyptian literature. In an interview with *William Maynard Hutchins* the translator of *Cairo Trilogy*, he admits that the translation of *Cairo Trilogy* was a challenge. He answers: I was asked to do whatever it took to produce a publishable translation of the *Trilogy* BEFORE the Nobel Prize. For years a complete translation had been sitting in a closet at the AUC Press, but someone there finally decided that it was not publishable, for whatever reason. At the time I did not realize quite how difficult *Bayn al-Qasrayn* is to translate but did know how important it is. So I agreed to help, rather naively, I admit. After only a few lines of trying to edit the extant translation, I decided that I would need to create a fresh translation.

Once the Nobel event happened, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis became involved and bought rights to the *Trilogy* for Doubleday. I assumed I would be fired but I wasn't. I was given one year for each of the volumes but was still, as always, teaching. In a *Wisdom of Solomon* move the AUC Press put the names of the translators of the unpublished translation on the title page with mine, although their only input was my access to their extant but unpublished translation.¹²

Hutchins' translation, though, has been attached by a renowned critic, Rasheed El-Enany, a professor of Arabic Literature in the University of Exeter, UK, as being a failure. He writes: It is a great novel by any criterion. Not so unfortunately the present translation fails to capture the spirit of the Arabic text and does little justice to Mahfouz's style. "What constitutes modern and spirited prose in Arabic has been rendered in a largely dated and stilted English register particularly so in the dialogue.¹³

El-Enany actually gives stark examples of the inability to "do justice to Mahfouz's style", most of them religious and cultural specific. In his introduction to the AUC's translation of *The Cairo Trilogy* (2001), Sabry Hafez draws the attention to the book's importance as a cultural document of Cairo's life in particular, and Egyptian life in general, he writes: The Trilogy is also one of those rare works which provides its reader with a deep insight into the culture which produced it. Reading this monumental yet highly enjoyable book enriches one more than any number of textbooks about Egypt's modern history, society and culture. It inscribes the physical appearance, atmosphere and the vibrant rhythms of Cairo's life into the very texture of its narrative (vii).¹⁴

This means that the ability of the novel to document Egypt's history as it happened in downtown Cairo, is actually based on the writer's ability to grab hold of its culture. The writer proved efficient to touch on the various aspects, and social dimensions of Egypt. The novel is loaded with politics, social merits and demerits, love stories, loyalties and disloyalties, cultural shocks and cultural stratifications. All these aspects pose a serious challenge for the translator who finds himself obligated to understand a whole system of culture not his own. This paper shows various examples of these cultural and rhetorical challenges, aiming at proving the fact that the *Cairo Trilogy* is, first and foremost, a cultural document more than anything else, and that its translation needs to be revised by those who know the Egyptian language and culture, as well as its history. The following examples will stand as proofs of this:

وجاءت الأم حاملة صينية الطعام الكبيرة، ووضعها فوق السماط
وتقهقرت إلى جدار الحجرة على كئيب من خوان وضعت عليه "قفة"، ووقفت متأهبة
لتلبية أية إشارة 22

The mother carried in the large tray food and placed it on the cloth. She withdrew with the side of the room near a table on which stood a water jug, she waited there ready to obey any command (24).

This text is portraying a cultural aspect in Cairo of the early twentieth century, in which the good woman, Amina, is a subservient acquiescing creature. The writer actually exceeds reality to exaggeration in portraying the character of *Amina* as a mother of five. This loving, kindhearted, slave-like woman transcends usual norms and understanding. The translator could communicate the meaning successfully, but when he reaches to the word "قلة" he found himself in front of a cultural problem, which he translated as "jug" which means "إبريق", and which hardly communicate the meaning of the Egyptian "قلة". It is difficult to translate this word into English, its shape and deep rooted image in the Egyptian mind is hard to transfer. It is not a "jug", it is different in shape and usage. Furthermore, it is a water container that is characteristic of the farmers and lower middle class people in Egypt, deep rooted in their life, associated with their culture. However, the challenge is not only cultural, it is also metaphorical; the following sentence is a proof of the challenging metaphor which the translator finds himself in the trap of communication. The following example is instructive:

وأما أخواه فكانا يبدها أن المعركة حقاً بعد جلاء السيد عن السفارة (23).

His two brothers only began the battle in earnest only once their father left the table (25).

The metaphor in this sentence is translated literally, or rather explained "once their father left the table" instead of "their father declines from the battlefield". The comparison between the table and the battlefield is not satisfactorily demonstrated in the target text. The absence of the metaphor changed the sentence from literariness to literalness, and devastated the writer's efforts. The translator's attempts to explain rather than translate are numerous. In one of the curious exchanges between El-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad and Shaykh Metwalli Abd al-Samad, Shaykh Metwalli says:

"ما أبرعكم يا بني آدم في تحسين الشر، والله يا بن عبد الجواد لولا حبي لك ما باليت أن تحدثني وأنت قاعد على فاجرة" (41).

"How adept you are, you sons of Adam, in embellishing evil, by God, you son of Abd al-Jawad, were it not for my love of you, I would not suffer you to speak to me, you fornicator" (46).

The encounter between the two men is a piece of religious cultural transaction in which the language used is near impossible to translate; it perplexed the translator who is proud to have taken on the task alone. In short dialogue the translator does not translate; he explains instead. This explanation has deprived the source text of most of its beauties. The translator destroyed the beauty of the image in which the main character is portrayed in a way better than the translator explains. The translator's inability to render the source is unjustifiable; the sentence is not difficult to translate with its accompanying beauties. Translation as equivalence is impossible here, except the word "قاعد" which forms a cultural untranslatability case in the text. The way the word "قاعد" pronounced by *Shaykh Metwalli Abd al-Samad* is impossible to communicate. The equivalent rendition may go as: "Were it not for my love of you, you would not care to speak to me while you are sitting on a whore." The theory that meaning is a property of language is obvious in the following example:

- يا ست منيرة يا مهدية، تفضلي، أعدت لك خادمك
السفرة. (26 - 27)

Khadija shouted sarcastically:

- Diva Munira al-Mahdia, you renowned prima donna, please do us the favour of eating. Your servant has set the table for you (29).

The translator is obligated to add some paraphrase for this sentence, to show that *Munira al-Mahdia* is "a renowned prima donna" which the target reader does not know. Also, the following sentence poses another cultural challenge in the word "عالمة" which the translator renders it "professional", but professional in what? Of course, she is a sort of all-inclusive professional artist (dancing, singing, playing music, etc.) However, the target reader cannot understand these dimensions which the translator missed. The "عالمة *Almeh*" in Arabic means more a mere singer, it means the

woman who sings, plays music, dance, and runs a place where female dancers entertain customers with their singing and coquettish behavior. In Arabic the word means the one who is possesses an all-inclusive knowledge of her/his craft, as in this exchange:

فنظرت خديجة إلى أمها وقالت متهكمة وهي تعني الأخرى:
- يمكن ناوية تكوني عالمة! (27).

Khadija looked at her mother and said mockingly of her sister:

- Perhaps she intends to become a professional (30).

Another cultural problem the translator faces in the following sentence: "ابداً بالصلاة على سيد الخلق الحبيب (39)" which the translator renders as follows: "I commence with a prayer in honor of Muhammad, the beloved master of creation" (44). The phrase "master of creation" is a mistranslation of phrase "سيد الخلق الحبيب" which does not mean the master of creation, it means the master of all people in the past and present and in the future. The following passage poses another cultural challenge in the world of "*al-Mahmal*" which is a cultural tradition, and needs the translator to footnote it instead of explaining its nature in the body of the target text. And in the world of "عالمة" and the plural is "عوالم" which has been mentioned above being translated as "performer", which refers to the translators' confusion about the word.

وقطع عليه أفكاره وقوف حانطور أمام مدخل الدكان فمد بصره
مستلظعاً فرأى العربة وهي تميل ناحية الدكان تحت ضغط امرأة هائلة مضت
تغادرها في ببطء شديد على قدر ما تسمح طيات لحمها وشحمها وقد سبقتها
إلى الأرض جارية سوداء فمدت لها يدها لتعتمد عليها في أثناء نزولها.
وكالمحمل وقفت ملياً وهي تنتهد كأنها تستجم من عناء النزول، وكالمحمل
راحت تتمايل وتخطر إلى ناحية الدكان بينما علا صوت الجارية في لهجة
شبه خطابية لتعلن عن مولاتها:

- وسع يا جدع انت وهو للست زبيدة ملكة العوالم ... 80

A carriage stopped at the entrance to the store then and interrupted his thoughts. He looked out to see what was happening. He saw the vehicle tip toward the store under the weight of a prodigious woman who began to alight from it very slowly, hampered by her folds of flesh and fat. A black maid had gotten down first and held a hand out for her to lean on

while she descended. The woman paused for a moment, sighing as though seeking some relief from the arduous descent. Then like the ceremonial camel litter that each year was a traditional highlight of the procession of pilgrims setting off for Mecca, she made her way into the store, swaying and trembling. Meanwhile, the maid's voice rang out almost oratorically to announce her mistress:

"Make way, fellows, you and the other one for Madam Zubayda, queen of the singers.

The problematic word in this text is the word "*Al-Mahmal*"; it is well explained to us in an essay by Prof. Yunan Labib Rizk in *Al-Ahram Weekly*: The *mahmal* is a set of richly decorated curtains carried by a camel procession and intended to drape the *Kaaba*. It was sent by Islamic rulers to Mecca at the time of the hajj. ... Work on the *kiswa*, which was heavily brocaded in gold and silver and adorned with precious jewels, began six months before the pilgrimage season and was periodically inspected by the Ottoman governor of Egypt. Upon completion, it would generally contain 17 *qintars* (approximately 765 kilogrammes) of silk and three *qintars* (approximately 135 kilogrammes) of pure silver. Then there was the grain dole Egypt sent annually to feed the residents of Mecca and Medina. The grain was sent by sea from Suez to Jeddah, along with the cash gifts for the nobles of the holy places. The man in charge of protecting the pilgrimage caravan and the transportation of the *kiswa* was a senior military figure who was granted the title Amir Al-Hajj, one of the highest positions of the state. He was the central figure of the grand procession of the *mahmal* which was marked by massive popular celebrations. ... The procession took place in the middle of the Islamic month of *shawal*. "Crowds would throng to watch the richly adorned litter in which the precious *kiswa* would be borne and which was mounted upon a decorated camel as it passed through the streets amidst the ululations of women and the supplications of the populace. The caravan was led by two companies of Turkish cavalry, followed by musical bands. It would come to a halt at the Citadel, from which the pasha (the Ottoman governor of Egypt) descended in order to present the *kiswa* to the Amir Al-Hajj."¹⁵

From this explanation one feels that the translator fails to communicate the meaning of "*Al-Mahmal*" to the target reader; a cultural difficulty that should have been footnoted. The target reader misses the meaning and its overtones; by substituting for it a

long sentence: "like the ceremonial camel litter that each year was a traditional highlight of the procession of pilgrims setting off for Mecca" the reader loses his concentration, as well as his attention to the figurative connotations of Mahfouz's simile. The similarity between the woman and "*Al-Mahmal*" lies in their fatness, heaviness, especially the woman's swaying movement; which provokes some lustful feelings. The translator proved unable to communicate all these connotations.

Like the word "*Al-Mahmal*", the word "ولية" poses also a great challenge to the translator; translator renders it "woman" not "my lady" as in "Palace Walk".

فضرب كفًا على كف وصاح بها:
- مهلاً مهلاً .. هل حسبتني أشك في هذا يا ولية؟! لو شككت فيه ما أشبعني القتل!
إنما أتحدث عما يجري في عقول بعض الناس ممن لا يعرفونا، "إن عين رجل لم
تقع على إحدى ابنتي" .. ما شاء الله، وهل كنت تريدين أن تقع عين رجل عليهما؟! .. يا
لك من مجنونة مهذارة (151).

He struck his hands and shouted at her, "Not so fast ... Slow down. Do you think I have any doubts about this, *woman*? If I did, not even murder would satisfy me. I am just talking what will go through the minds of some people who didn't know us. 'No man has ever seen either of my daughters ... 'God's will be done. Would you have wanted a man to see them? What crazy prattle you are (167).

The passage is a real challenge as it is loaded with sarcasm, irony and satire of a husband of his wife. The target reader may find himself perplexed about its connotations, especially that the translator fails to communicate the meanings of "ولية" and what is meant by "ما شاء الله" which he translated into a "God's will be done" which is a neutral statement that does not communicate the cultural bearings of the source text. The sentence is loaded with cultural connotations of satire and exclamation. It is also loaded with references to the husband's dual personality which combines morals with dissoluteness.

The following text poses another cultural challenge that the translator failed to understand and communicate. When Khadija says that "لم أخطئ في البخاري" she means - simply - that she tells the truth. But the translator fails to communicate this simple fact.

Instead, he paraphrased it in a rather long un-successful sentence which does not communicate the meaning.

- لماذا تنظرين إليّ هكذا؟! .. لم أخطئ في البخاري، وليس ثمة جريمة والحمد لله، ما هو إلا مشوار قصير ترجعين منه وقد ألقيت نظرة على جزء صغير من الحي الذي عشت فيه أربعين عامًا دون أن ترى منه شيئاً..
فتنهدت المرأة متممة: سامحك الله .. 158

"Why are you looking at me like this? *I haven't contravened any of the directives of the prophet recorded in the revered collection of al-Bukhari*. Praise God, no crime has been committed. All it would amount to is a brief excursion to have a look at a little of the district you've lived in for forty years but never seen."

The woman sighed and murmured, "May God be merciful to you."
176

The target reader doesn't know what Khadija means by saying: "*I haven't contravened any of the directions of the prophet recorded in the revered collection of al-Bukhari*"; it is actually a reference to a religious practice in which Muslims swear on these collections to prove the authenticity of their sayings and deeds.

وتقدمت منها خديجة .. ووضعت يدها على منكبها ودفعتها برفق وهي تقول:
- الفاتحة أمانة .. 160

Khadija went up to her. Placing her hands on her shoulders, she gave her a gentle push, saying, "Reciting the opening prayer of the Qur'an will protect you"(177).

Again the translator did not understand what is meant by this phrase "الفاتحة أمانة", which he paraphrased, or mis-translated, while Khadija begs her mother to pray for her when she visits the shrine of *al-Hussein*, the translator thinks - incorrectly - that the mother should recite the opening of the Holy Qur'an so that she should be protected from evil. This religio-cultural belief is based on an old Egyptian habit of asking people who are going to visit shrines of well renowned saints like *al-Hussein* and or the *Lady of the Ladies* (Zynab, the wife of the prophet) or even *Abu el-Abass el-Morsi* in Alexandria, to recite the opening of the Holy Qur'an, it is like a prayer not for the sake of the visitor, but for the sake of the one who asked him to do so.

من أجل الورد يُسقى العليق 173

For the sake of the rose, the thorns get watered. 192.

- أخطأت يا سيد، وعندك العفو، وكانت نفسي تتوق إلى زيارة سيدنا الحسين، وحسبت زيارته المباركة تشفع لي في الخروج ولو مرة واحدة. .. 186

I have committed an error, sir. It is up to you to forgive me. My soul yearned to visit your master *al-Husayn*, I thought that for such a blessed pilgrimage it was possible for me to go out just once" (208).

Of course the source text does not say "your master al-Hussayn", it is "our master al-Husayn *سيدنا الحسين*", the translator, here, is compromising the fact that Amina can never say "your master al-Husayn", after this long time of succumbing to the hegemony of *al-Sayyed Ahmad Abdel Gawwad*. Moreover, the word "pilgrimage", though correct, is not fitting to translate "الزيارة" the blessed visit", we know that "pilgrimage" is reserved in the Islamic mind for the annual journey to Mecca. Moreover, Amina's character in this excerpt is portrayed as talking to God and not to a human being who is her husband.

"ألم يئن الأوان يا بنت المركوب؟ ذبت يا مسلمين، ذبت كالصابونة ولم يبق منها إلا رغوة، هي تعلم بهذا ولا تريد أن تفتح الباب، تدللي .. تدللي يا بنت المركوب، ألم نتفق على هذا الميعاد؟ ولكن لك حق .. فردة ثدي من صدرك تكفي لخراب مالطة .. وفردة تالية تطير مخ هندلبرج، عندك كنز، ربنا يلف بي، وربنا يلف بي وبكل مسكين مثلي يؤرقه الثدي الناهد والعجيزة المدملجة والعين المكحولة، العين المكحولة في الآخر، إرب ضريرة ربا الروانف كاعب الثديين خير ألف مرة من عجفاء مسحاء مكحولة العينين، يا بنت العالمة وجارة التربيعة .. تلك لقتناك أصول الدلال وهذه تمدك بأسرار الجمال، لهذا ينهد ثديك من كثرة من عبث بهما من العشاق، اتفقنا على الميعاد لست أحلم، افتحي النافذة، افتحي يا بنت المركوب، افتحي يا أجمل من اقشعرت لها سرتي، ومص الشفة ورضع الحلمة لأنتظرن حتى مطلع الفجر، ستجديني طوع بنانك ... " (231-232).

"ISN'T IT time yet, bitch? I've melted away, Muslims. I've dissolved like a bar of soap. Nothing's left but the suds. She knows this and doesn't care to open the window. Go ahead, play the coquette, you bitch. Didn't we agree on a date? But you're right to hold back ... one of your breasts could destroy Malta. The second would drive Hindelburg out of his mind. You've got a treasure. May our Lord be gracious to me? May our Lord be gracious to me and to every poor rogue like me who can't sleep for thinking about swelling breasts, plump buttocks, and eyes enhanced

by kohl. Eyes come last, because many a blind woman with a fleshy rump and full breasts is a thousand times better than a skinny, flat-chested woman with eyes decorated with kohl. You're the performer's daughters and the neighbor of *al-Tarbi'a Alley*. *The performer* has taught you to flirt, and the alley has supplied you with its secret beauty potions. If your breasts have grown full and round, it's because so many lovers have fondled them. We agreed on this date. I'm not dreaming. Open the window. Open up, bitch. Open up. You're the most beautiful creature ever to arouse my passion. Holding your lip between mine ... sucking on your nipple. ... *I'll wait until dawn*. You'll find me very docile (260).

The passage is loaded with cultural and untranslatable phrases and sentences, the translators did their best to measure up to the challenge. One can number these challenging phrases and words: "*bitch* ليا بنت المركوب", "*neighbor of al-Tarbi'a Alley* جارة التربيعة", "one of your breasts" "فردة ثدي". In addition to the fact that the writer imitated the style of the *Hadith* and the *Qur'an* twice in this paragraph: "رب ضريرة ريا الروادف كاعب الثديين خير ألف مرة من عجفاء" *رب ضريرة ريا الروادف كاعب الثديين خير ألف مرة من عجفاء* many a blind woman with a fleshy rump and full breasts is a thousand times better than a skinny, flat-chested woman with eyes decorated with *kohl*", "*I'll wait until dawn* لأنتظرن حتى مطلع الفجر", "*I'll wait until dawn*. What is lost in translation here is the Egyptian sense of humor which is an important part of Mahfouz's style especially in *The Cairo Trilogy*. This is evident in translating phrases like: "بنت المركوب" and "فردة ثدي". Also they mistranslate the phrase "جارة التربيعة"; the target reader does not understand what is meant by "*al-Tarbi'a*", it needs footnoting. All the translator could do is to come up with a literal translation of the words with their load of the humor hidden in Egyptian culture and vernacular language. *Al-Tarbi'a is an alley adjacent to al-Azhar Mosque, the word also refers to a kind of vernacular verse written in quatrains.*

The translation of the following song proves a failure:

يا عزيز عيني	بدي أروح بلدي
يا عزيز عيني	السلطة خدت ولدي (379).

I want to go home, Darling.

They've taken my boy, Darling (428).

"My Darling" is written by the nineteenth century poet Youssef el-Kadi about the British enforcement of the Egyptians to serve in the ranks of the British army occupying Egypt in the late nineteenth century to the early fifties of the twentieth century. The song embraces another cultural and historical challenge that the translator fails to communicate, a failure which is due to his misunderstanding of the historical nature of the British occupation of Egypt between (1882-1952), when in the early period of the occupation, the government of the occupation "السلطة" used to gather Egyptian young people against the will of their parents, to send them to *The Sudan* or any other part where there is military action to help establishing the British occupation in these places. The translation ignores translating the word "السلطة" authority of the occupation" to render the song in a neutral dispassionate translation that does not refer to the British occupation's vicious role in exploiting the colonized.

The following sentence poses a challenge of certain nature, although the translation is correct, the target reader cannot understand the connotations of reciting the *Throne Verse*; it is an invocation to God to save a person from a trouble. It is told that the prophet Muhammad said "Whoever recites Aayat ul-Kursi immediately after each prescribed Prayer, there will be nothing standing between him and his entering Paradise except death".⁽¹⁶⁾

وأصغى الشيخ وهو يتلو همسًا آية الكرسي (445).

As the Shaykh listened, he recited the Throne Verse about God under his breath (Qur'an, 2: 255).

The following sentence is another cultural challenge; it begins with a popular greeting a translator should work hard to communicate its meaning to his target reader who does not understand unless by footnoting. The translator fails, here, to communicate the cultural connotations, and renders it in a neutral disinterested sentence. "It is a damp morning", which does not carry the same implications of the source. Also, the rest of the sentence is loaded with satirical connotations limited to the source readers more than the target ones. The translator also mistranslates the word "صباحنا" to "morning" instead of "our morning," which

could be more representative of the humorous spirit of the Egyptians. Also the phrase "you lion" does not carry the cultural overtones of the source, the whole sentence is better read in the original than in a neutral translation which does not carry the stylistic seductiveness of the original.

صباحنا نادي، ماذا وراءك يا سبع؟ (311).

It's a damp morning. What do you know, you lion? (352).

The Harafish

The Harafish is the most metaphorical of Mahfouz's novels; it is - actually - based on a colossal symbolic system supported by a huge metaphorical complexity. The translator struggles with this idiosyncratic nature of *The Harafish* with his knowledge of the eastern near-gothic, and Egyptian culture, and with his close relationship with Arabic. The metaphor used in *The Harafish* in particular, is the most complicated and most out-of-reach tasks in the transaction of translation. Although the translator of *The Harafish* (Catherine Cobham) could assimilate the poetical language of the novel with a considerable degree of success, a great amount of the metaphorical dimensions escaped from her rendering struggle. This is due - in part - to the complexity and highly rhetorical style of the source text. Besides using a complex scheme of symbolism, Mahfouz exploits the utmost capabilities of Arabic, benefiting from the language of the Arab Sufis, and even the Persian ones. He intertwines poetry with prose with great dexterity and deftness. The language of *The Harafish* has some certain linguistic particularities which one can say that they are four:

1- The use of a literary diction different from the diction he used in most of his novels.

2- The style of *The Harafish* is distinguished with syntactic structure particular to it.

3- The poetic language which the writer uses poses a serious challenge for the translator who finds himself unable to find the equivalent of these poetic terms. The author establishes this poeticism in the opening passage which looks like a piece of prose

while it is actually a piece of free verse, it can be quoted in poetic shape:

في ظلمة الفجر العاشقة في الممر العابر بين الموت والحياة،
على مرأى من النجوم الساهرة،
على مسمع من الأناشيد البهيجة الغامضة،
طرحت مناجاة متجسدة للمعاناة والمسرات الموعودة لحارتنا.

In the passionate dark of dawn,
on the path between death and life,
within view of the watchful stars
and within earshot of the beautiful, obscure anthems,
a voice told of the trials and joys promised to our alley.

The translation of this passage is well rendered; being the opening passage of a translation of the most important idiosyncratic novel in Mahfouz's works. However, the translation struggles to match the original poetic language; it tries to echo the source's rhythmical flow; however it could not correspond with the rhyme; the target text is free of the rhyme of the original the alliterative effect in words like *dark*, *dawn* and *death* reflects but part of the highly poetic language of the source. The division of the passage into equal sentences also is attempted in the target text. This alliterative and structural rendering is half away from the structural and rhetorical rendition of the original. While the translator succeeds to divide the sentences into syntactic parallelisms, she fails to achieve the rhythmical units in the source text; hence the internal rhyme scheme in the source is lost in the target. While the source text counts (28) words, the target counts (39) words, this again proves the poetical nature of the source, and the prosaic nature of the target which leans towards paraphrasing.

The inability of the translator becomes clearer as she advances in the more momentous passages in the text; the following paragraph poses this challenge:

البوابة تناديه. تهمس في قلبه أن اطرق، استأذن، أدخل، فز بالنعيم
والهدوء والطرب، تحول إلى ثمرة توت، امتلئ بالرحيق العذب، انفت
الحرير، وسوف تقطفك أيد طاهرة في فرح وحبور.

The great door was calling him, whispering to him to
knock and enter. The joy and serenity of the place scared him.

He was in the garden, a fruit swollen with juices, leaves yielding silk. A pure hand will come to pluck you in ecstasy.

The number of words in the source text is (29) words, and the number of words in the target text is (45), this English outnumbering reflects a problem in understanding this highly metaphorical passage. This is easily evidenced in the translator's tilting towards literalism, and reducing the metaphoricity of the passage as possible as he can. However, the translator falls into stylistic shortcomings besides losing the cultural connotations of words like "elbawaba البوابة", 'eltarab الطرب', 'elazb العزب' while in their context in Arabic. The translator also changes the sentence structure of the source text instead of one sentence followed by seven imperatives and a final one in the future simple, he renders the paragraph in four closed sentences, cutting the rhetorical sequence of imperatives in the source text, and thus, losing most of its aesthetic essence. The second sentence in the target text is a mistranslation of: "The joy and serenity of the place scared him)", which renders a different meaning, the source text can be translated as follows: 'obtain joy, serenity and rapture', the verb 'فز', which is mistranslated as 'scared', is an imperative verb meaning 'obtain, or gain, or win', the mistranslation comes from the fact that the translator did not understand the difference between 'فُزْ', which is an imperative verb meaning 'gain or win', and 'فُزَّ', which means to be 'scared', in the source language. Also, the translator felt free to change the plural into singular without any rhetorical purposes, when he translates ' وسوف تقطفك أيد طاهرة في ' فرح وحبور into 'a pure hand will come to pluck you in ecstasy', instead of *pure hands*. This analysis of the translation needs an alternative: "The great gate is calling him, whispering to him: knock, take permission, get in, win paradise, joy and serenity, turn into a strawberry fruit, be filled with fresh juices, a leaf yielding silk, a pure hand will come to pluck you in ecstasy".

The following excerpt is loaded with translating failures:

هاجر عاشور في الفجر، تحركت به الكارو نحو القبو كما تفعل في مواسم
القرافة، تربعت فوق سطحها المترجرج فلة محتضنة شمس الدين، أمامها بقجة مكتظة،
وراءها أجولة من الفول السوداني وبلاليص من الليمون والزيتون المخلل، وزكائب من

العيش المقدد، ولما خلصت العربية إلى الساحة، استقبلتها تراتيل آخر الليل وهي تشدو (59).

Ashur fled at dawn. He drove out through the archway toward the cemetery as if it was a feast day. Behind him on the swaying cart sat Fulla with Shams al-Din in her arms, hemmed in the bundles and packages, bags of peanuts, jars of pickled lemons and olives, and sacks of crusty bread. As they drove out into the monastery square, they were greeted by the last strains of the night's chanting (38).

Although this passage is not highly metaphorical, it is loaded with cultural terminology, related to Egyptian life (cart, archway, cemetery, packages, bags, jars, sacks, crusty bread (الكارو، القبو، القرافة، بقجة، أجولة، بلاليص، زكائب، العيش المقدد). However, the translator almost ignores these cultural terms, and passes them over resorting to literalism and directness. The cultural tone and meaning are lost in the target text: instead of 'هاجر' he writes: 'fled', ignoring the religious overtones of the word, 'archway' instead of 'قبو', 'cemetery' for 'قرافة', 'bundle' for 'بقجة', 'jars' for 'بلاليص', 'crusty' for 'مقدد', all choices cannot reflect the cultural complexities hidden in the source text vocabulary. The first word for example "هاجر" is rendered "fled" which does not reflect the religious connotations of the original, connotations which dig deep in the Islamic Hijra, the Prophet's hijra from Mecca to Medina, the Muslims' hijra from the Arabia to Abyssinia. It is the journey of the renewal of life; it is not mere fleeing as the target text shows, it is a positive movement in place, where the immigrant travels to come back after achieving his aim of self-fulfillment.

وأسبل جفنيه الغليظتين متفكرًا، شعر بأن الخلاء يلتهم الأشياء، وأنه يود أن يتسلق شعاع الشمس، أو يذوب في قطرة الندى، أو يمتطي الريح المزمجرة في القبو، ولكن صوتًا صاعدًا من صميم قلبه قال له إنه عندما يحل الخلاء بالأرض فإنها تمتلئ بدفقات الرحمن ذي الجلال (12).

He closed his heavy eyelids, deep in thought, feeling that things were sliding into a gulf of emptiness, that he wanted to climb the sun's rays, melt away in a dewdrop, or ride the wind that rumbled the archway; but a voice in his heart told him that the emptiness would be filled with the power of God's spirit and the earth would live again (7).

The source text numbers (46) words, the target (66) words, this means that the translator takes refuge in explanation to make clear the metaphorical formulation of the source language. The highly rhetorical structure of the passage is hardly translated to the target reader. However, translator could communicate this rhetoric with a good degree of success, something which outmatches the translator (s) of Cairo Trilogy.

تكتنفه دوامة تكاد تقتلعه من جذوره دائماً دائماً تتقدمه زينب فتغلبه بنداء
غامض(22)

At the same time he was caught up in a vortex of feelings which threatened to uproot him: Zaynab was always ahead of him, triumphantly drawing him with her secret call (14).

This sentence is loaded with sexual innuendoes which the translation proved unable to dispatch. This vortex of feelings is nothing but the sexual feelings which Ashur felt in his depths, the fulfillment of these feelings lies within his responsibility; it is there in the "secret call" which is made paradoxical in the source text and clear in the target. The reader is uncertain whether the "secret call" is hers or his. In the source text the "secret call" is in both characters, both Zaynab and Ashur are acquiescing to their weakness, taking refuge in their factual strength which lies in their bodies. In this respect the two characters are similar, and ready, armed with this "secret call" to start a world. Both characters are versions of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve who were driven to each other with this "secret call" which they heard coming from nowhere. This is what is made clear in the next sentence: "واستسلم لأنامل الأحلام الناعمة حتى حرقته أشعة الشمس (23) Then he abandoned himself to the caresses of pleasant dreams until the sun's rays burned him" (15). The religious fact is that Ashur (Adam) and Zaynab (Eve) give up to pleasant dreams (the dreams of desire to know, to be immortal, to be sexually satisfied), to be flung into the reality of man's predestination to toil in this life.

These semantic dimensions could not be rendered in the target text; it seems that the translator's concern is to communicate the meaning of the source, facing cultural problems in understanding its depths rooted in religious heritage. Mahfouz's language is so

loaded with innuendoes and allusions to his own culture, a mingling of Christianity and Islam. If the sentence does not possess a direct comparison, a metaphor, it is loaded to allusions to the point of the beginning of humanity. The following sentence emphasizes the assumption that the sexual intercourse between Ashur (twenty years old) and Zaynab (twenty five years), is an inauguration of a human race in the place, the rest are just ear-witnesses. The translator picked the meaning not only in words, but also in the rhythmical flowing of sounds. وكان بعض أهل الفجور عقب انطلاقهم من الغرز في النصف الثاني من الليل يقرفصون في الظلام لصق شباك And some degenerate citizens, leaving the smoking dens well after midnight, would crouch in the darkness close to the basement window, listening and dreaming" (16).

لكي تحندم المعركة لا بد من بشرة صافية وعينين سوداوين مكحولتين وقسمات دقيقة مثل البراعم. لا بد من الرشاقة والسحر وعذوبة الصوت. وقبل ذلك لا بد من القوى الخفية المتدفقة المنسابة الغادرة المغتصبة بلا ضمير. والطعم الفواح تضعه الحياة في الفخ وتنتظر. وتودع ذلك كله خمسة عشر عامًا من عمر البشر (41).

To arouse such a conflict she must have had clear skin, dark eyes outlined with kohl, delicate features like flowers opening, a slender, magical body, and a gentle voice. And underlying all that there must have been this hidden, blind-rushing, treacherous, rapacious energy, without scruples, admirably suited to its purpose. An enticing bait lying in wait while fate looked on expectantly. Fifteen years of a man's life put paid to in an instant (26).

The translator is dedicated here to reproduce the rhythmical and metaphorical texture of the source, the rhythm in words like: "bait/wait/fate" are evidences of this attempt. The translational attempt is successful; it calls back the original's symmetrical structure. However, the reader of the target text may find vagueness in its sentences and phrases; because of the translator's attempt to reproduce the musical and melodious nature of the source, while the last sentence fails to communicate the actual meaning of the fifteen years girl (Fulla) whom the translator introduces as a "man" and not a woman. The following sentence

faces the same problem in translating "offspring" as "children": (42) "ومن يتزوج الحياة فليحتضن ذريتها المعطرة بالشبق" (27).

In the following sentence the translator is explaining instead of word for word translating; Ashur's "heritage" is explained as "all he had learned from Shiek Afra":

"رأى خيوط العنكبوت ولكنه لم يبال. طرب حتى ثمل. هرس تراثه تحت حوافر الحمار. سارت الكارو وظهره ينصهر بالسخونة" (45).

Ashour saw the web closing around him and he didn't care. He was so happy that he felt drunk. All he had learned from Sheik Afra was crushed under the donkey's hooves as he drove along his back molten in the heat (29). One cannot guess how the target reader would understand these highly metaphorical language unless by a guide. "The web closing around him" is the sexual desire which attracts him to Zynab el-Natouri, "all he had learned from Sheik Afra" is the religious heritage, that is "crushed under the donkey's hooves", which refer to the sweeping power of sexual desire that overrides all powers.

In the following sentence the translator faces a cultural problem in the phrase "أنا في عرض النبي". He did not understand what does it mean, and he explained it, while the phrase bears familiar allusions in the minds of the natural reader, especial the Egyptian. The untranslatability of the phrase drives the translator to explain it in simple English words "begging for mercy".

فوثب عاشرو نحوه وطوقه بذراعيه وشد حتى صاح متأوفاً:
- أنا في عرض النبي (47).

Ashur sprang toward him, locked him in his arms, and squeezed him until he begged for mercy (31).

Another cultural challenge lies in the word "ولية" which in Arabic means the one who directs the affairs of some people. The translator fails also to catch its Egyptian connotations, which bears - sometimes - critical, if not disparaging shadows. The translator's confusion is evident in his different translation of the same word as "my lady" (89). The difference is that the word in the source is disparaging, the second is related to gentlemanly speech.

- عم تسألين ولية؟ 109

- What are you talking about, woman? (76).

ويداعبها شمس الدين فيقول لها وهو يلحظ عجمية الحناء:
- ما جدوى الكذب يا ولية؟! 127

"What's the point of trying to hide it, my lady?" (89).

The translator's confusion with the word "ولية" which the translator renders it different ways, reflects his confusion with understanding the word and its cultural denotations. It is essentially a derogatory word the addresser uses to undervalue the partner of the exchange. The following sentence is mistranslated into English though understandable by the target reader:

وفي لحظات الرضى تهبط سحابة فيمتطيها ذو الحظ السعيد فترتفع به في جوف القبة. عند ذاك لا يبالي بالموجات المثبطة التي يتلقاها من المجهول (141).

In happy moments a cloud would descend and bear him up into the vault of heaven. Then he would take no notice of the waves of depression which tried to drag him toward the unknown (100).

In "*waves of depression which tried to drag him toward the unknown*" is a mistranslation; it should be: "*waves of depression which he receives from the unknown*." In the following sentence there is another example of mistranslation out of misunderstanding of the text. "*Few rose to their feet out of deference*" is a mistranslation of the phrase "من يجلس إذا سليمان وقف" which means that when Suleiman stands up nobody will sit out of deference".

تاه بعملاقة الفتوة على تواضع الكارو. وتساءل من يجلس إذا سليمان وقف. وعدا بوابة التكية فأى باب يُغلق في وجهه (145).

Suddenly his cart seemed poor and mean for a man in his position. Few rose to their feet out of deference. The monastery door was not the only one to shut in his face (103).

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