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The representation of homosexuality between text translation and movie adaptation in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building

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The Representation of Homosexuality between Text Translation and Movie Adaptation in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building

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Introduction

As postcolonial writers, both Naguib Mahfouz and Alaa Al-Aswany "are transposing a culture–to be understood as a language, a cognitive system, a literature (comprised of a system of texts, genres, tale types, and so on), a material culture, a social system and legal framework, a history, and so forth"; thus, within the frame of traditions, culture, and religion (Islam in this case), both authors attempt to reflect the conflicts and maladies within the political as well as the social systems in modern Egypt (Bassnett and Trivedi 20). Mahfouz and Al-Aswany are recognized as major figures not only in Egypt but also worldwide, making them and the sensitive nature of their work doubly fraught: they are not only in the world's literary spotlight, but under the watchful gaze of local observers. Midaq Alley (1947) and The Yacoubian Building (2005) reflect through many motifs, including homosexuality, the political as well as social repressions that inhibit the modern Egyptian society. These two novels underwent translation and adaptation because of not only Mahfouz's and Al-Aswany's skillful craft, but also the presentation of characters—that the readers or audience can identify with—living and experiencing the unspoken taboo of (homo)sexuality.

In her essay about Nawal El Saadawi, "Reading about Nawal El Saadawi in an International Frame," Amal Amireh addresses the way in which the authors who begin by writing for local audiences become caught up in complex webs when their work crosses national boundaries. Amireh questions "the difficult and often ambivalent role of third-world feminists and Arab dissident intellectuals in a transnational age," and certainly Mahfouz and Aswany can be considered a part of this latter group (216). Amireh highlights how the person of this author or intellectual is perceived as the cultural link between his own culture and the West, and Amireh

opens up two main issues that can be related to Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building: namely, "the relationship between text and context" related to the intellectual's not unfixed position between the First World and the Third World; and the tendency of the West to seek out texts that reaffirm their stereotypes concerning Third-World societies (Amireh 216-222).

Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building gained popularity on both the local and the international levels; the exploration of the dark realm of homosexuality in the Cairene society is one of the reasons of this popularity. Mahfouz was the first Egyptian as well as Arabophone author to tackle homosexuality in a novel; Al-Aswany writes explicitly about social and political injustice in Egypt, and he also foregrounds the issue of homosexuality in the Egypt of the 1990s. While these issues may be fraught in a local context, when they cross national borders, through processes of translation, they become explosive, and the author is often caught in the middle of debates over cultural authenticity and accused of "selling out" to the West, as Amireh observes that was the case with El Saadawi. In order to understand the stakes of the risks they took in their writings, Mahfouz and Al-Aswany started their literary careers in Egypt and were quickly recognized as major authors within the national context. Both novelists subsequently achieved international recognition, though in different ways: Mahfouz was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature—the highest international honor accorded to an author—while Al-Aswany was introduced to the European and American markets through his bestselling novel The Yacoubian Building—a work perceived more as a popular than a "literary" novel (Al-Aswany xxi). Thus, the two novels I address in this thesis must be read in the light of the context of the authors' position and the reader's response to them as both national and international figures.

Before discussing homosexuality in Mahfouz's and Al-Aswany's works in particular, demonstrating how the representation and the reception of homoerotic desire in Arabic literature have developed can offer a better analysis and insight. Hanadi Al-Samman explores and compares the representation, as well as the changes in the notion, of homoerotic desire in medieval and modern Arabic culture. According to Al-Samman, homoerotic desire in medieval Arabic societies existed and was mainly characterized by the following features. First, it was socially known and accepted that the well-cultured elite can have their own youth and slaves to satisfy the homoerotic desire—paired with their heterosexual desire—through the "*ghilman* system." Second, homosexual desire was mentioned in the medieval Arabic literature within the category of "*adab al-zurafa*" (entertainment literature), which means that it was taken outside the religious context or frame. Third, the homoerotic desire's manifestation ranged from platonic love to lustful desire—similar to the representation of heterosexual desire (Al- Samman 273-276).

Taking these three features into consideration, Al-Samman comes to the conclusion that the commonness of "homoerotic tendencies [in medieval Arabic societies], a highly sophisticated level of expressing intricate and various forms of same-sex desire, an awareness of the Qur'anic admonitions against them [led to] a need to contain these desires by restricting them to the *ghilman* male slave system" (276). Thus, homoerotic desire as well as practice has its roots in Arabic culture; however, it appeared to have restrictions and rules in order not to, completely, violate Islamic regulations. The *ghilman* (young male slaves) system was a socially legitimate venue for homoerotic desire since it is secondary to the institution of

marriage (or heterosexual desire in general) and does not affect the "masculine attributes" of the homosexuals (Al-Samman 276).

Although the kind of master-slave relationship between homosexuals still exists in modern Arabic literature, it developed and took other forms, which are reflected in modern Arabic works like Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building, for several reasons. First, due to Western cultural dominance, and colonization, the notion towards homosexuality lost some of its characteristics (e.g., *ghilman* system). As a consequence, the modern Arabic societies started to follow the Western perception of homosexuality because of the "inciting discourse on homosexual identities" (Massad 362-374). In Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World, Joseph Massad offers an evidence-based analysis about the Western misconception about homosexuality in modern Arabic societies driven by an "orienatlist impulse" that deals with homosexual individuals as mere objects of study not receiving subjects (362-367). According to Massad, many Western scholars and organizations, or even Arabs based in the United States, call for tolerance as well as acceptance of homosexual identity, not just homosexual behavior or practice, in the Arab world. These international organizations in their claimed attempt to liberate and defend homosexuals in the Arab world set their own, political, restrictions that are limited to either full acceptance or violent refusal (Massad 385). According to Massad, these restrictions or rules do not simply define the societal norms and rights for homosexuals, but impose the organizations' own policy without considering or properly investigating the kind of ancient heritage and modern culture that these individuals experience in their Arab world; thus, this "missionary achievement will be

the creation of not a *queer* planet but rather a *straight* one" following certain norms to fit in the international society (385).

Khaled Hadeed follows Fredric Lagrange in categorizing the representations of homosexuality in modern Arabic literature into three main types as follows. The first type treats male homoerotic desire as part of a forgotten ancient heritage that should be dismissed and replaced by a modern civilized heterosexual norm. The second type tackles male homosexual desire as a "pathological" malady that leads to the destruction of the homosexual character (e.g., suicide and death). The third type deals with these homosexual representations as a symbol of the "traumatic relation with the West"; in other words, it shows the weakness of the colonized resisting the Western colonizer (Hadeed 1). As Al-Samman puts it too, many of the modern Arabic texts "represent homosexuality as a byproduct of active/passive, master/slave power relations with local and colonial powers, or as the result of pervasive and exploitive societal practices or child abuse" (277).

Al-Samman's view combines the three categories that Hadeed described; thus, one homosexual representation, in texts like Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building, can hold the features of more than one category. In other words, Boss Kersha's and Abduh's homosexuality represent many societal maladies. In the light of this very brief background about homosexuality in Arabic societies, I will show how homosexuality is represented and translated in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building mainly to reflect complicated relationships between different social classes in one society (in a local atmosphere) and between the Arab world and the West (on an international level).

Homosexuality is one of the major motifs that brought attention to Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building. The Egyptian audience received the motif of homosexuality differently than non-Egyptian audiences. As Amireh points, any "reception study" that focuses on the different impacts of a literary work on different readers is not an easy task (219). In other words, some readers inevitably understand novels as a form of representation of the real. Ironically, this is true of both local and foreign readerships: for instance, Al-Aswany notes how one of his literary works was not allowed to be published by the General Egyptian Book Organization (GEBO) because a bureaucrat at that agency told Al-Aswany: "I can't possibly publish this book…..Because you insult Egypt"—simply because the novel's hero mocks the well-known and beloved Egyptian politician Mustafa Kamel (Preface x). This would seem to verify Iser's demonstration of the subjectivity-versus-objectivity dilemma in the perception of literature, wherein a "literary text contains intersubjectively verifiable instructions for meaning-production, but the meaning produced may then lead to a whole variety of different experiences and hence subjective judgments" (25). What Iser is trying to argue for is a text-context relationship in which the reader puts aside his/her expectations and historical prejudices to give way to the literary text to reach him/her—needless to say, the cases of the reception of both novels demonstrate that ideal readers are hard to find.

Homosexuality in modern Arabic literature is a theme that attracts the attention—as well as the curiosity—not only of an Arab but also a Western audience. However, Arab and Western audiences are interested in homosexuality theme in modern Islamicate societies for different reasons. For Arabophone audience,

homosexuality reflects concerns about how Islamic mores govern their lives as and how the depiction of "homosexual characters have been…draped in the judgmental cloak of puritanical Islamic ethics" (Al-Samman 278). This religious notion arises in the Arab readers and they tend to judge the homosexual person through Islamicate regulations. Moreover, other Egyptian notions to treat homosexuality as a kind of illness are there. Thus, the Egyptian and Arabic readers received homosexuality in their societies as either a vice—according to religion—or an illness that cannot be cured, but can be avoided.

In crossing the borders of their own country through translation, Mahfouz and Al-Aswany face a problem, which is that "translations from Arabic to English are not always reliable and can lack cultural nuances, contributing to a reader's confusion or dissatisfaction" (Allegreto-Diiulio 12-13). Problems of translating language and culture may make it difficult for foreign readers to appreciate the nuances of the original novel as "the impact of a translated work of literature depends not just on the image of it created by critics, but primarily on the image of it created by translators" (Lefevere 8). In other words, the translator becomes a kind of second author of the work. Furthermore, as Jonathan Culler puts it "to understand the language of a text is to recognize the world to which it refers" (158); while an Egyptian or perhaps even an Arabophone reader would recognize the Cairene world(s) which Mahfouz or Al Aswany refer to, a non-Egyptian reader may have greater difficulty and is more heavily dependent on the vision of the translator.

Thus, translation is not only a process of transferring meaning from one language to another, but also the process of recreating and conveying a context—with

all it social and cultural accretions—for consumption in an entirely different context that has its own social and as well as cultural accretions—some of which may conflict with those in the translated work. The translation process in itself is very complicated; the translator has to make the balance between creating a sincere translation that is faithful to the original text and making it coherent, not necessarily familiar, to foreigner readers. Thus, the translation of a text is a kind of re-creation of the original realm of the novel in which "the recontextualizing process involves the creation of another intratextual context and another network of intertextual and interdiscursive relations, established by and within the translation" (Venuti 162). Since Arabic and English languages have different lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic systems, translation from Arabic into English is thus a complicated process in which the translator should maintain "a lexical equivalence [and] a semantic correspondance" (Venuti 162).

Midaq Alley has been translated twice—once by Trevor Le Gassick and once by Humphrey Davies, who is also the translator of The Yacoubian Building, where, in both cases, Davies presents very useful glossaries to his translations at the end of both novels that can help the foreign reader become "naturalize[d]" with and feel familiar with the text (Culler 161). Through a comparison of Davies' translation of Midaq Alley to Le Gassick's translation of the same novel, the reader observes the difference in translational styles that is most clearly reflected in those parts of the novel which deal with sexuality or religion. The different synonyms the translators use reveal Le Gassick's conservativeness and Davies' dogged accuracy. In the case of Midaq Alley, Le Gassick supplements his translation with an introduction, offering biographical information about Naguib Mahfouz as well as details concerning the Cairene setting

of the alley; he also includes a note on his own translation at the beginning. In contrast, Davies offers only a very brief commentary—approximately one paragraph—about the setting of the alley, leaving his reader to imagine the cultural as well as historical background of this novel him/herself. Comparing the translators' approaches to present the same text reveals the crucial role of translation and how it can influence the reader's reception of the text.

Interestingly, Midaq Alley was translated not only into other languages, but also onto the big screen: the novel has not only been adapted as a major Egyptian film ("Midaq Alley", 1963), but also caught the attention of Mexican director Jorge Fons, who made the film "El Callejón de los Milagros" (1994) based on Mahfouz's novel. Fons adapts Mahfouz's Midaq Alley to an entirely different cultural milieu, but nonetheless manages to preserve much of what we might call the “spirit” of the original, and is attentive to the connection between homosexuality and religion, albeit in the context of New World Catholicism. As part of my examination of how translation transforms a text’s meaning and creates new audiences, I will be comparing these filmic adaptations of Midaq Alley with Davies’ and Le Gassick’s textual ones and show how homosexuality is adapted in cinema.

Looking through the lens of translation, this thesis attempts to measure how Egyptian modern fiction is received in a world context. By focusing on two specific works which are often compared to one another in terms of themes and focus, and which have achieved an unusual degree of international attention; and by narrowing my investigation to their engagements with homosexuality representations and translations, this thesis aims to answer how homosexuality is translated as a cultural

practice and metaphor. Inevitably a focus on character—specifically, the character of the homosexual attempting to reconcile his behaviors and preferences to the mores of the society in which he lives—is necessary. Therefore, the successive chapters look at Midaq Alley's Kersha and The Yacoubian Building's Abd Rabbu, respectively. I am interested both in how the author represents these characters' homosexuality and the way it is both translated and adapted as more than a motif in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building, and this must be understood within the broader context of the engagement of this motif or topos within the history of Arabic literature.

Chapter One: Homosexuality Translated in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building

> *"Readers are not entirely free to construct their own characters. Characters are created by the author, described by the narrator, and re-created by the translator" (Hayward 138)*

The representation of homosexuality is a taboo in modern Arabic societies and, consequently, literature. Naguib Mahfouz and Alaa Al-Aswany expose homoerotic desire in modern Egyptian as well as Arabic literature. Mahfouz is the first modern Egyptian writer who tackles homosexuality in Midaq Alley, while Al-Aswany is the first one to expose the detailed and intimate description of physical as well as emotional homoerotic practice in The Yacoubian Building. This chapter aims to analyze how both Mahfouz and Al-Aswany present homosexuality through the characters of Kersha and Abd Rabbuh, respectively, in the Islamicate society of Cairo for more than the past fifty years. Moreover, this chapter will discuss how homosexuality is translated as a cultural practice from Arabic into English through comparing linguistic as well as stylistic approaches of the translators—bearing in mind the different reception attitudes according to the reader's cultural orientation or background.

Before exploring the representation of homosexuality in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building, I will address some of the approaches and the difficulties, or the problems, that surface during the translation process, and how they impact the readers, in order to demonstrate how Davies and Le Gassick translate homosexuality in these works. Basically, the role of translation is to carry over one culture to another; it is a tool of discovery and exploration. Particularly, in reading a translated piece of literature, the reader explores a new place and new cultural and traditional aspects in

his/her own language, so coming to contact with new information like this may urge the reader to look for other information about this introduced culture or to verify the information he/she read about. Indeed, having a cultural background of the translated literary text will help the reader grasp the intertextual quality in a translated text; on the other hand, the lack of this knowledge will also open a wider scope of gaining knowledge that will consequently lead to intertextual knowledge. Thus, reading a translated text is akin to being a tourist in the allies of cultures and traditions.

The translator must possess a strong literary and cultural background of both the source and target languages for two main reasons. First, this knowledge will help the translator choose a strategy in translating, using a cultural equivalence or leaving it kind of obscure, charging the reader with the task of exploring the information him/herself—and this can help the reader to get different forms of interpretation. Second, this knowledge enables the translator to recreate the original text faithfully, not restrictively, making the text comprehensible to the target language readers.

In Approaches to Teaching the Works of Naguib Mahfouz, Wail Hassan and Susan Darraj present the different approaches in which Mahfouz's works can be taught and read by non-Arab readers through translation. On the whole, contemporary theories about translation are divided into "domestication" and "foreignization" (Hayward 159-60). Domestication simply means that the translator should "re-create the original [text] as if it were written in the language of translation" so that it is familiar and naturalized to the foreigner reader (Hayward 159). Foreignization is almost the opposite of domestication: it is making the reader aware of the foreignness,

and the cultural estrangement, of the translated text through rendering the linguistic and cultural differences as they are in the original text (Hayward 131).

The translator is free to choose either approach; however, I argue that foreignization is a better and a more challenging translation approach, in Mahfouz's case at least, for mainly two reasons. First, Mahfouz has a very unique style in which he integrates different levels—that vary between formal *fusha* and colloquial Egyptian vernacular *'amiyyah*—of the Arabic language without losing the reader's comprehension (Hayward 133). The *'amiyyah* is reflected in "proverbs, sayings, puns, wordplay, and curses" that affirm the Egyptian sense of Mahfouz's work; these phrases and expressions preserve their own essence if they are not domesticated or naturalized to English readers (Hayward 134). Second, translating these *amiyyah* phrases without changing their cultural connotation by substituting them with English equivalents helps the English reader to either relate it to his/her personal background about Egyptian society, if it exists, or encourages him/her to explore more about this society. In both cases, the reader is urged to move and maybe search beyond the text in order to identify with it as the "foreignized elements of the translation jar the reading process" (Hayward 134). In this case, the translator can add notes to explain the phrase or mention its English equivalent.

Lawrence Venuti has a different point of view as he argues that "the significance [of a text] depends not only on the denotative meanings of words and phrases, but on form, on resemblances among foreign linguistic features" (159). In other words, Venuti advocates linguistic resemblance in translation and compensating the cultural denotations using introductory essay, endnotes, or glossaries (159). In other words,

Venuti favors the translation that maintains the original text's words and structure and compensates any alienation that the reader may suffer from through adding the translator's own notes outside the translated text itself. Venuti also presents the relationship between intertextuality and interpretation and the crucial role of translation as the connecting bridge between the two as well as being a "unique case of intertextuality" (158). Intertextuality means reading a text and interpreting or understanding it through another text, which is usually a former one. Translation can be considered as a form of intertextuality because simply it takes one text from a linguistic and cultural system and injects it in another one; thus, if the translator creates an exact precise equivalent, same as Barnstone's restricted fidelity (that will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter), of the original text, he/she might lose the readers' comprehension or attempts of interpretation. Here Venuti takes this issue of discussion to the readers' reception. Venuti states that "the reader must possess not only the literary or cultural knowledge to recognize the presence of one text in another, but also critical competence to formulate the significance of the intertextual text" (157-8). I agree with Venuti that the normal reader—not a critic or an interpreter—needs to possess a critical, or at least a curious, mind that can analyse and discover the multilayers embedded in any text (whether translated or not); however, I argue with the idea that the reader must possess literary or cultural knowledge of the original text because this kind of ignorance functions as a stimulus to the reader to know more about this different realm.

On the other hand, in Poetics of Translation, Willis Barnstone argues that "translation is the activity of creating metaphor" (16). Barnstone uses a very simple kind of equation to demonstrate the relation between metaphor and translation. He

states that a metaphor is "A = B"; in other words, a metaphor is a word or a phrase that denotes or symbolizes something else: although A is not B, A symbolizes B and is equivalent to it; thus, B is translated into A. Each and every reader will realize his/her own metaphor in a text according to many factors (e.g., reader's cultural and literal background and text's orientation) and there "can never be identical responses" (Barnstone 17). Thus, if one text can have different interpretations, then the translation of the same text will also have different interpretations, and this translation has to communicate what is equivalent, and not necessarily identical, to the original text to its readers. According to Barnstone, the word-for-word identical translation, which is called "restricted fidelity," suits information transfer but most probably not literature, while "expressive fidelity," in which the translator is faithful to the original author's intentions not expressions, suits literature not information transfer (33). Therefore, expressive fidelity in literary translation is the process in which "the meaning is 'transported' from one word or one set of words to another nonidentical word or set of words" (Barnstone 16). Barnstone here means that the translated word, or set of words, does not have to be linguistically identical to the original one, but it has to be expressively equivalent to the original one. However, this categorization of restricted and expressive fidelities should not be taken for granted—as restricted fidelity can be an approach to reach the foregnized translation which aims to trigger the reader's curiosity.

As mentioned before, Mahfouz is the first modern Egyptian novelist who tackles homosexuality in Midaq Alley. Therefore, it is very interesting to closely observe the stylistic as well as the linguistic features that Mahfouz uses in order to sketch the modern homosexual character in Arabic literature. Names in Mahfouz's

novel do reflect their owners, and Kersha's name is no exception (Deeb 29). In colloquial Egyptian Arabic, Kersha means a filthy part of the animal's (usually a sheep) intestine—the colon. It is worth noting that neither Le Gassick nor Davies offers the meaning of Kersha's name. However, Le Gassick translates "المعلم كرشة" as "Mr. Kirsha" and Davies translates it as "Boss Kersha." Davies' translation is preferable because Kersha's English transcription is closer to the Arabic sound of the name and, more importantly, the word "boss" emphasizes Kersha's social standard more than "Mr." that Le Gassick uses: as "المعلم" means a master/craftsman. Kersha indeed is a man of authority in the household and in the alley. His wife fears and respects him, and being the owner of the alley's café, which is the meeting point for the alley residents, sets him again at a certain level of authority—which is reflected at the very beginning of the novel when he dismisses the storyteller and gets a new radio. Moreover, "Mr." indicates a certain image of an educated decent man or may be an "effendi" in Egypt's 1940s, while "boss" refers to a kind of (vulgar/illiterate) master.

Further, the physical description that Mahfouz presents about Kersha, while he is pursuing his homoerotic desire, is not a pleasant one indeed:" وانبعث من عينيه المنطفئتين نور خافت شرير، و راح يدنو منه بفيه الفاغر وشفته المتدلية،" (51) which is translated as "a faint glint of evil seemed to issue from his dim eyes…his mouth gaping and his lips drooping" (46) and "a dim, evil light shone in his dead eyes, with open mouth and slack lip" by Le Gassick and Davies, respectively (43). A close reading of these two translations suggests that Davies' translation is more accurate than Le Gassick's as the former mentions how the evil light "shone" not "seemed to issue" from Kersha's eyes; in other words, Davies' translation affirms the presence of evil while Le Gassick's

translation suggests only its presence. However, both translators stick to the word "evil" that asserts the author's notion about homosexuality: it is evil.

In the first chapter of Midaq Alley, Mahfouz describes a routine night in Kersha's café describing Kersha in Arabic as follows: " والمعلم كرشة يتابعه بعينين ثقيلتين وهو يستشعر في خمول ذوبان الفص في جوفه ويستنيم إلى سلطنة لذيذة" (15). Mahfouz here does not present the word drugs or any other synonym openly; he mentions a "lobe" that has a pleasant effect on Kersha. This description implicitly suggests drugs. However, both Le Gassick and Davies chose the words *"hashish"* and *"nugget of opium,"* respectively, to translate Mahfouz's "الفص" (11). Thus, Mahfouz presents an allusion to hashish or opium while Le Gassick and Davies use the direct word. Mahfouz's Arabic readers understand that this "الفص" denotes drugs because of the effect of it, that is, "*سلطنة لذيذة*". On the other hand, Le Gassick and Davies substituted the allusion of "*سلطنة لذيذة*" with "delicious power" and "a delicious sensation of well-being," respectively (11).

In Midaq Alley, chapter 6, Mahfouz talks about Kersha's homoerotic desire as "شهوته الأخرى" which means his other desire (craving) (Mahfouz 51). Le Gassick translates the phrase as "his other vice" while Davies translates it as "other appetite" (46 and 43, resp.). It is striking how Le Gassick uses the word "vice." He decided that Mahfouz's intention is that homosexuality is a vice, and this is true in a sense as previously mentioned; however, Mahfouz's narrator alludes to homosexuality as an evil but never expresses this explicitly. Davies follows Mahfouz's style; he sticks to the meaning offered on paper by Mahfouz not his intentions. In this case, critics and readers who advocate the foreignization strategy would prefer Davies' translation more than that of Le Gassick. Davies' translation offers, more or less, the effect that

Mahfouz intends on his reader: to suspect and question the other desire—homosexuality—and then to decide if it is a vice or not. On the other hand, Le Gassick deprives the reader from the whole mini-investigation process that Mahfouz offers. Thus, Davies' "restricted fidelity" to Mahfouz's original words presents a broader sense than Le Gassick's "expressive fidelity."

In the first paragraph of the same chapter of the novel, Mahfouz presents the first allusion to Kersha's homosexuality in chapter 6 describing it as "الداء الوبيل", again Mahfouz uses allusion not explicit statement of homosexuality (Mahfouz 50). It is interesting how both Le Gassick and Davies translate this phrase. Le Gassick translates this phrase as "unwholesome weakness," while Davies translates it as "noxious malady" (Mahfouz/Le Gassick 45 and Mahfouz/Davies 42, resp.). Mahfouz's very own words implicate his conservative approach when he is dealing with homosexuality as he introduces it as a pathological sickness. Davies' "noxious malady" is more accurate than Le Gassick's "unwholesome weakness"; there is indeed a difference in the meaning as well as the indication between the words "malady" and "weakness." Kersha is described to have many flaws, but never presented as weak; on the contrary, Kersha is physically a strong man (Mahfouz 93).

His homosexuality is, according to Kersha himself, not a kind of weakness at all, but, maybe, a vice just like hashish-smoking. Even his wife considered him "her lord and master, to whom she would forever maintain her exclusive claim and whom she would always seek to recover, no matter how often the hand of sin ought to snatch him away. In fact, she was proud of him" (Mahfouz/Davies 70). Thus, Umm Hussein—his wife—would not respect her husband if he was weak, but she would

stand by him if he suffers from a disease or a malady. Thus, from what has been described previously in this chapter about Kersha in Midaq Alley, the conclusion is that homosexuality is represented as an evil sickness that should be kept a secret.

It is interesting how Mahfouz never uses the Arabic word of homosexuality and uses only the English word: "Homosexuality هذا شر قديم، يسمونه في الإنجليزية" (110). It can be suggested that this kind of narration is used mainly because as a first mention in modern Egyptian literature, homosexuality is expressed in a timid, as well as euphemistic, manner by Mahfouz. Moreover, the choice of English as a language to explicitly articulate homosexuality may indicate "the encroachment of colonial concepts" (Massad 278); in other words, this concept of homosexuality is exported from British colonialism that Mahfouz uses to represent "the tension between [Egyptian] tradition and [Western] modernity" (Scott 30) in which "modern Egypt seems to stand paralysed without a future" (El-Enany 57).

Other examples that reflect the different approaches that Le Gassick and Davies use in translating homosexuality in Midaq Alley are found in chapter 9. Mahfouz repeats "الداء الوبيل" describing Kersha's homosexual tendencies again through Umm Hussein's thoughts (77). Both Le Gassick and Davies use different translations than the ones they used before in chapter 6. Le Gassick translates "الداء الوبيل" as "filthy disease," while Davies translates it as "unwholesome malady" (72 and 68, resp.). Le Gassick shifts from weakness to disease, while Davies sticks to the word "malady" only replacing the adjective by another synonym (i.e., noxious and unwholesome) as "وبيل" means harmful or bad.

Although it seems from the previous examples that Davies is more adhering to Mahfouz's original words than Le Gassick, chapter 9 offers different evidence. Mahfouz describes Umm Hussein's misfortune about Kersha's homosexuality as "فللمعلم نفسه مأساة قديمة جديدة لا يعرف لها إنتهاء" (78). Le Gassick translates this line as follows: "Kirsha himself had a problem, both old and new, and it seemed endless" (73). On the other hand, Davies twists the line as his translation is as follows: "Boss Kersha was himself a permanent and endless catastrophe" (68). There are more than one point to discus in this line and the two translated versions. First, the Arabic line does not mention Kersha's name; Mahfouz simply refers to him as "المعلم". It can be suggested that Le Gassick finds it irrelevant to use the word "Mr." before Kersha's name in the context of this line, and Davies uses the phrase he uses in most of the novel which is "Boss Kersha." The striking difference appears in the rendered meaning. According to Le Gassick, Kersha has a problem, while Davies mentions that Kersha himself is a catastrophe. An Arabophone reader will simply realize that Mahfouz's Arabic words mean Kersha has an old-new never-ending tragedy. The word "مأساة" means tragedy; however, both translators do not use the word. In this case, Le Gassick is more faithful to Mahfouz's words than Davies; however, both translators failed to render Mahfouz's stylistic uniqueness because the implication of the word tragedy is more intense than the word "problem" and reveals more sympathy towards Kersha than the word "catastrophe."

In a nutshell, Kersha represents the duality that the Egyptian society suffers from in an alley that "presents in a nutshell a disintegrating system within which age-old institutions are falling apart and human relationships are all distorted" (Takieddine-Amyuni 25). Midaq Alley's narrator is not as objective as he may seem; Takieddine-

Amyuni suggests that "Mahfouz hides behind a morally detached observer who registers cinematographically the daily activities of the Alley," while with a closer look at Kersha's character, and homosexuality in particular, the reader, of either the original Arabic or the translated English versions, can notice the degraded—almost hostile—description of Kersha while, at the same time, presenting him as a victim of the national as well as the international sphere who cannot reconcile his identity between old heritage and new foreign customs (25).

Almost fifty years after Midaq Alley, Al-Aswany's The Yacoubian Building brings not only a homosexual character, but also a homosexual relationship between the aristocratic journalist Hatim Rasheed and the poor ignorant soldier Abd Rabbuh/Abduh. Although, Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building are intertextual, the latter novel presents further dimensions and details of the world of homosexuality in the modern Cairene society. The Hatim-Abduh relationship shows "the decadence, degeneracy and misery to which Egyptian society succumbed as a result of the post-colonial state" (Mehrez 162). Al-Aswany presents a detailed description of the relationship between the two as well as each one's thoughts and conceptions about this relationship. Although Hatim Rasheed is a more prominent figure than Abduh in the novel, Abduh is the one who uncovers all kinds of exploitation that he and his fellows from the same social as well as economic standard suffer from.

The way Al-Aswany presents Abduh and Hatim in the novel is very interesting; both are recognized as corruptors by the society—because of their sexual relationship—while they are the very victims of social corruption as presented by the novel's omniscient narrator. Although the novel focuses more on Hatim's character,

this paper aims to shed more light on the character of Abduh. Al-Aswany, through his narration, presents Abduh as an extension of Hatim's childhood steward Idris; in other words, he narrates Idris's story through Hatim and then immediately Abduh appears (Al-Aswany 76). Idris and Abduh have many common features; both have dark skin, with the Upper Egyptian features of thick lips and broad nose, and both belong to a low, as well as marginalized, social class. Idris is the one who drove Hatim to homosexuality—unlike Abduh who was driven by Hatim to get involved into a homosexual relationship with him—but Idris and Abduh exploited Hatim in different ways. Idris exploited the lonely suffering child Hatim to satisfy his desire, Idris gave Hatim care and attention in exchange for sex, while Abduh used the socially well-accomplished Editor-in-Chief Hatim Rasheed to get a better life, or, more precisely, to get a life. Abduh is not a victim of Hatim Rasheed, but a victim of his social as well as economic difficulties.

In order to analyze Abduh's dilemma, his status quo should be investigated. Hatim and Abduh, according to Al-Samman, are "the representation of same-sex relationships in *The Yacoubian Building* [that] stems from the master/slave dichotomy into which the narrative locks itself" (285). The social hierarchy makes this relationship appear to be a master/slave relationship; the socially powerful Hatim Rasheed enslaves the poor marginalized Abduh, especially that Abduh more than once addresses Hatim as "Hatim Bey," and Hatim calls Abduh at the end of the novel "you'd strike your master, you dog of a servant?" (Al-Aswany 78, 133, and 235). However, a close examining of this relationship reveals further dimensions in the novel's "entwined stories, [as] no character is left entirely innocent" (Allan 3); Abduh as well as Hatim is a victim and victimizer at the same time. This relationship is very

ironic: Hatim who is the socially active, more prominent partner in this relationship is the sexually passive partner compared to the ignorant, poor, well-built *Sa'idi* (who belongs to Upper Egypt) Abd Rabbuh.

One may question who the master is and who the slave is in this relationship and the answer would be: none. It can be argued that although Hatim is the one who appears to be controlling this relationship, Abduh is the one who drives it as he is the one who ends it (by killing Hatim). Hatim seduces Abduh, shapes Abduh's life (offering him a job, money, and a place to live in with the latter's family), and, thus, makes Abduh not his slave but a slave to the life that Hatim offers as an opportunity for Abduh to rise above his miserable financial as well as social status. In other words, Abduh is the one who uses Hatim not the other way round; as if Hatim is the lamp's Jin who always says to Abduh "your wish is my command." Thus, it is more as if Abduh sells his body to Hatim, just as in prostitution, in order to be rescued from his poverty. Still there is a master and two slaves: Hatim and Abduh are slaves of distorted social conditions that were rooted in Egypt for more than 50 years. Hatim is the slave of his childhood abuse that happened to him because of two uncaring parents busy with their social status as well as satisfying their egos, while Abduh is a slave to social injustice that marginalized him and his fellows and a slave to his ignorance, poverty, and his insignificant place in the society. Thus, the master here is a vicious circle of oppression and exploitation, while Abduh and Hatim are slaves to this dominating system. The relationship between Abduh and Hatim is a kind of trading benefits; they needed each other, each one of them offers the other what he needs: Abduh offers Hatim sexual pleasure, while Hatim offers Abduh something that seems better than the latter's inhumane life.

Humphrey Davies' translation of The Yacoubian Building is preceded with a translator's note section and followed by a glossary and Qura'nic references—in addition to translating the preface. In the translator's note section, Davies mainly points out two things. First, he states that "it would be a mistake to assume that everything mentioned in *The Yacoubian Building* is an exact portrait of an identifiable existing original"; in other words, Davies tries to make the Anglophone readers apprehend the nature of the novel as being realistic not a reality (xxvi). Second, Davies mentions that "the book contains numerous references to people and events that are likely to be unfamiliar to the non-Egyptian reader," and that is why Davies offers a glossary at the end of the novel (xxvi). Thus, Davies tries to save the English version from what the Arabic version had suffered from, that is, the reception of the novel as a "true story." Al-Aswany presents a kind of disclaimer in the preface stating that he "used only the name of the real building in the novel. Everything else is pure imagination. The characters and events are all imaginary" (xvi). As if both Al-Aswany and Davies are trying to defend any pre-accusations that might entail the novel as either insulting Egypt or confirming an orientalist stereotyping.

Moreover, Davies' translation—and specifically the usage of words—preserves the Egyptian sense of the novel and, at the same time, offers a comprehensible text to the Anglophone reader and this is crystal clear in the parts about Hatim Rasheed and Abd Rabbuh and their sexual relationship. For example, when Al-Aswany presents Hatim's background, he relates Haitm's father, who is a "leading figure in the law in Egypt", to famous names in Egypt's judicial life like "Taha Hussein, Ali Badawi, [and] Zaki Naguib Mahmoud" (73). In the glossary, Davies offers a very brief account

about each one of these names stating that they are real characters. Although this mingling between fictional and real characters may confuse the readers about the nature of Al-Aswany's fictional character, it adds a realistic essence that helps the Egyptian reader to visualize the realm of the novel.

Another example is found in the conversation between Hatim and Abduh on Abduh's birthday. When Hatim offers Abduh a kiosk as a birthday gift, he first shows him the keys and the kiosk, Abduh states that he does not get it, and then Hatim replies "آه يا صعيدي....دماغك مقفولة؟!" (Al-Aswany 184). Davies translates Hatim's reply as follows: "You Sa'idis! You're thick as planks" (Al-Aswany/Davies 132). In this line, Davies combines domestication and foreignization—although the two approaches may seem contradictory. First, Davies keeps the word "صعيدي", which is not familiar to the Anglophone reader; he only transliterates it and presents it in the plural form with its meaning in the glossary at the end of the novel, that is, "Upper Egyptians" (251). The word Sa'idi has a notable existence in the Egyptian culture as well as language; thus, Davies' choice to preserve the word is very subtle. Second, the phrase "دماغك مقفولة" can be literarily translated as "you are block head" and indicates poor intelligence; however, Davies chooses an Anglo cultural equivalent that can be not only comprehended but also have the same lexical weight, that is, "thick as plank." This expression is derived from the idiom "thick as a short plank" that indicates stubbornness associated with the lack of wit.

It is worth noting that Davies keeps the words that assert Abd Rabbuh's Egyptian identity. For example, he transliterates Abd Rabbuh's nickname and explains that "Abduh is a short form of Abd Rabbuh" (Al-Aswany 247). Moreover, when

Abduh's wife calls her husband, she addresses him as "Abu Wael." Again, Davies transliterates this and explains in the glossary that it stands for "Father of Wael" and "it is polite to address a parent by his or her child's name, preceded by 'father of' or 'mother of'" (Al-Aswany/Davies 247). However, Davies does not mention that this prevails only among the low standard classes, as the middle and upper classes do not use this kind of addressing each other. The word "gallabiya" is repeated more than once in the novel and Davies explains it in the glossary as a "full-length gown closed in front, the traditional dress worn by many Egyptians" (Al-Aswany 248). Thus, words like gallabiya and Sa'idi reflect the local color of the novel's setting.

In other words, Davies is trying to reveal the authentic Egyptian voice, or as Ahdaf Soueif calls it Egyptian "*wigdan* [inner soul, passion, or sensibility]" expressed in English (Massad and Soueif 89). For example, towards the end of the novel, when Hatim succeeds in seducing Abduh for the last time, Al-Aswany presents the following dialogue:

"فأبعد عبده يده وقال بصوت مخمور: يا حاتم بك إحنا اتفقنا...الليلة أخر ما بيننا....من باكر كل واحد يروح لحاله...صح..؟! فابتسم حاتم و مر بأصبعه على شفتيه الغليظتين وقلد لكنته مداعبا: صح يا صعيدي" (331).

Davies translates the same lines as follows:

"Abduh removed his hand and said in a drunken voice, 'Hatim Bey, we made a deal. Tonight's our last night. Tomorrow morn, each goes his way, roight.' Hatim smiled and, passing his fingers over Abduh's thick lips, said, in playful imitation of his accent, 'Roight, you Sa'idi you'" (233)

Since Al-Aswany does not present vowelization, he uses the word "لكنته" which refers to the Sai'di accent that Abduh uses in order to make the reader visualize and hear Abduh. Davies subtly and lively translates this part not only by mentioning accent, but also by making this accent audible; that is, the word "roight" is assumed to be "right," Davies thus used the same vowel sound that is used in Arabic to change the sound of

the word. This kind of foreignization extends words and expressions and goes to a further level of foreignization related to the sound of the word.

Finally, the translational approach in which translation is considered as "a pane of glass…[that] should never call attention itself" should be revisited (qtd. in Zhang 84). In the light of the kinds of fidelity discussed in this chapter, one can argue that this statement underestimates the place of translation among other fields of study: translation has its own impact on the readers and it requires the same level of sensitivity and talent as writing/creating any literary text.

Chapter Two: Homosexuality from Text to Screen

Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building are transported not only to different languages, but also to a different medium, that is, from text to cinema screen. Indeed, there are differences between reading a text and watching a movie even if both tackle the same text. Consequently, there is a difference between text translation and movie adaptation. According to Mona Baker, adaptation can be considered as "a form of translation which is characteristic of particular genres, most notably drama" (6). On the other hand, Lawrence Venuti asserts that "translation and adaptation are carefully distinguished" (29). Thus, there is a debate over considering adaptation as a form of translation or a different field. Although translation and movie adaptation share similar features, there are still major differences between translation and adaptation. This chapter attempts to define movie adaptation, compare it with translation, and then demonstrate how homosexuality in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building is adapted into motion picture in Egypt and beyond the borders of Egypt—the later represented in the Mexican movie adaptation of Midaq Alley: "El Callejón de los Milagros."

In When Stories Travel: Cross-Cultural Encounters between Fiction and Film, Cristina Della Coletta explores how literary texts can be adapted into cinema films. Coletta starts the introductory chapter of her book by exposing the general attitude towards adaptation; that is, adaptation is a degraded second-hand creation that will never equate the original text's glory and excellence. Thus, adaptation is imprisoned between film and fiction and considered as a second-grade hybrid; that is, not purely cinema and not authentic as the literary text. Then, Coletta starts defending adaptation

which is always condemned by cinema creators or fiction critics. According to Coletta, adaptation is the "agoraic domian" that combines not only different voices but also different interpretations (2). Coletta subtly uses the adjective "agoraic" that is derived from "agora" which means the gathering place or assembly in the ancient Greek culture. Indeed, adaptation is the meeting point of different views—of the filmmakers as well as the original author—and interpretations. Thus, adaptation can offer a variety of different interpretations that a literary text may not offer.

Moreover, in defending adaptation, Coletta argues that "a literary work has no exclusive mode of existence and no unique and more or less extractable essence, which its ideal reader (the author's brotherly double) is eminently suited to understand" (5). Thus, adaptation can be considered an interpretation of the literary text: a kind of a recontextualizing and a decoding-recoding process of the original text in which the decoder is the filmmaker as well as the audience. Coletta supports her argument by stating the fact that literary texts are absurd and cannot be totally absorbed by one reader; in other words, the greatness of a literary text lies in the more interpretations and questions that it raises. Furthermore, Coletta defies the idea of the ideal reader as the normal reader has the right to make his/her own interpretations and assumptions. Therefore, adaptation is not a less artistic piece than the original text or a normal movie; it is simply an offered interpretation of the original text that opens up different interpretations.

The difference between adaptation and translation lies not only in the medium, but also in the level and kind of "fidelity." As discussed in the previous chapter, there are what can be called restricted fidelity and expressive fidelity as translation

approaches; while in adaptation, fidelity goes to a further level as "the film is not compared directly to the literary text, but rather a version of it mediated by an interpretation" (Venuti 26). Since cinema and books are different media with different criteria and audience/readers, then when a text is adapted into a cinema movie, the filmmakers are licensed to make—what they believe to be—the needed changes in order to make the text not only presentable but also attractive in this different mode and context. Moreover, the filmmakers may need to make these changes and "processes" such as "selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, popularization, reaccentuation, [and] transculturization" in order to convey the embedded message or the morale of the original text; this is almost different from the concept of a good translation that should be characterized by fidelity (either restricted or expressive) (Venuti 26-27).

In "Adaptation, Translation, Critique," Venuti argues not only that adaptation and translation are different, but also that film adaptation is better than translation for some reasons. Both translation and film adaptation "recontextualize" the original text in order to make it approachable; however, the techniques and modes of this recontextualization are different (Venuti 30). Venuti also categorizes translation and film adaptation as a "second-order creation" of a text; this second-order creation includes inevitable changes in the frame of resemblance (38). In other words, filmmakers may change the setting, language, and motifs of the original text, but all these changes within the original thematic umbrella of the original text. Moreover, the filmmakers can change the theme or the embedded message of the original text through shifting the focus on different characters or events.

Venuti suggests that the translated text should render the original text as it is with the least modifications that can make the text comprehensible by the readers, while film adaptation has the quality of criticism and interpretation, in other words, the translator has to be omniscient just as the original author; however, the filmmakers are free to impose their own interpretation of the original text. Since translation decontextualizes the original text, movie adaptation recontextualizes it. In other words, the translator has to follow the concept of "abusive fidelity" in which he/she should be faithful either to the texture of the language or to the signifiers and interpretants. In any of these two cases, the translator will lose something of the original text, while the filmmaker has the freedom to use the signifiers the way he/she wants. Venuti's argument here is profound because it focuses more on the process of translation or adaptation rather than categorizing the reader.

In other words, in Venuti's "Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation," he focused on describing the characteristics, the conditions, and the kind of knowledge that should be provided to the reader. Moreover, he presents very useful and interesting terms such as "abusive fidelity" and "second-order creation" that can help in founding concepts about translation and adaptation. However, Venuti neglected the challenging role of the translator. Moreover, he did not mention one privilege of translation over adaptation; that is, translation does not impose a certain interpretation on the text, it gives the reader total freedom to imagine and make his/her own second-order creation in interpreting the text while reading it.

Thus, the effect of the medium of reading differs from the medium of watching. In "El Callejón de los Milagros," the Egyptian "Midaq Alley," and "The Yacoubian

Building" movies, the directors, as well as script writers, kind of impose their own versions and views of interpreting the original texts, while reading translated versions of Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building, the reader has much more freedom than cinema audience in imagining as well as interpreting the text and visualising the characters. Although I disagree with preferring adaptation over translation or vice versa, because I believe that each field has its own techniques and magic, but taking the possibilities of different interpretations further, one movie adaptation can, indeed, offer several interpretations, but reading a text, even if it is a translated one, may offer a wider variety of interpretations because of the reader's imagination. Representing homosexuality on screen can be considered a complicated as well as a sensitive issue in an Islamicate society like Egypt; this can be discussed in the light of "Midaq Alley" and "The Yacoubian Building" movies. Moreover, the Mexican *adaptation "*El Callejón de los Milagros" of Midaq Alley represented the same social tension produced from the homosexual relationship between Rutilio (the Mexican Kersha) and his lover Jimy in a different culture and place.

The Egyptian movie "Midaq Alley" (1963), directed by Hassan El-Imam, has major differences from Mahfouz's original novel Midaq Alley; for example, the movie ends with Hamida's death not Abbas El-Helw's death. As Mahfouz was timid in representing homosexuality, El-Imam was even more timid than Mahfouz regarding Kersha's character and eliminated many details about Kersha's character and life. Kersha's homosexuality is referred to in only one scene in the movie, which can be suggested to be a representation of chapter 12 in the novel. The scene is in Kersha's café and Kersha is sitting next to and warmly—but not erotically—greeting a young man wearing a suit and a red tarboush, with a little kohl in his eyes, and chewing a

gum in a feminine manner. In chapter 12 in the novel, when Sheikh Darwish sees Kersha's lover, he says "it is an ancient evil, called in English homosexuality, spelled h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l-i-t-y" (Mahfouz 96). In the movie, Sheikh Darwish says that Boss Kersha is "ill, spelled i-l-l." Thus, the word homosexuality is replaced by the word ill. This reflects, first, the censored approach that the filmmakers follow in talking about homosexuality contrasts to other sexual topics like prostitution which are openly discussed and represented in the movie (and a character of one of Farag's prostitutes is added in the film to stress that). This also reflects how the filmmakers defined and translated homosexuality; in other words, homosexuality is considered a kind of sickness, maybe a "psychosexual illness" as Dr. Sabri Jirjis coined it in the 1930s (Jacob 178). It is worth noting that important scenes in the novel that tackle Kersha's homosexuality (e.g., Kersha's argument with his wife, Kersha seducing the young man, Kersha's talk with Master Radwan) are totally eliminated from the Egyptian movie.

Kersha in the Egyptian "Midaq Alley" movie clearly reflects the levels of fidelity that a movie adaptation can surpass because the movie can consist of "a simultaneous resemblance and difference [of the original text], mimetic but never an identity" (Venuti 27). This licence to eliminate and adapt is a double-edged weapon: it can open a wide variety of different interpretations and, at the same time, it can neglect important aspects and messages embedded in the original text's texture. For example, the filmmakers eliminated most of Kersha's role and presence. As a result, the film audience who has never read the book may not even notice the very timid and implicit reference to Kersha's homosexuality: they can finish watching the movie without even realizing that Kersha is a homosexual. The movie only represents

Kersha's authority in the alley and his tensed relationship with his son Hussein without mentioning or even referring to Hussein's reaction towards his father's homosexual tendencies.

Furthermore, although Umm Hussein does not appear in many scenes in the Midaq Alley novel, these scenes reflect her very powerful presence. On the contrary, the movie marginalizes her presence as a very passive character that can be totally removed from the movie without affecting its structure. For instance, the fight scene between her (on one hand) and her husband and his lover (on the other hand) is eliminated in the film—although it evokes laughter in the original novel. Another example is eliminating the scene in which Umm Hussein talks to Master Radwan to help her reform her husband because, simply, Master Radwan's character—that mainly tackles the Islamicate line in the novel—does not exist in the film. Therefore, the "different signifying process" that the film follows in adapting a text can lead to the loss of some core messages of the original text (Venuti 30).

It is astonishing how some critics see Kersha in the Egyptian movie "Midaq Alley"; he is treated in a very uncaring and even an erroneous manner. For example, in his article "Real Queer Arabs: The Tension between Colonialism and Homosexuality in Egyptian Cinema," Omar Hassan mentions Kersha in "Midaq Alley" as follows:

"In the 1963 film adaptation directed by Hassan al-Immam, Kirsha's homosexual tendencies are all but removed from the film. Yet, the character that remains is depicted as a menacing opportunist. He deals drugs to British troops and finds conquests for his scheming plans in dark, derelict spaces. Arguably, Kirsha's drug dealing is put down to his desire to pleasure the British troops (i.e. the colonizers). In turn, his moral degradation is put down to a western influence." (19)

This summarizes Kersha's role in the movie; however, the picture of the scary villain face in the article that refers to Kersha in the movie is not for Kersha actually, it is for the character of Zeita and mistaken for Kersha. Thus, this reflects the tendency to demonize Kersha not to try to explore his dilemma. Moreover, Kersha's homosexual tendencies are not omitted completely; it is timidly mentioned in only one scene in the movie.

On the other hand, the Mexican movie "El Callejón de los Milagros" of Midaq Alley adapts Kersha's character in a very explicit as well as Mexican manner. According to Noble, the Egyptian Midaq Alley could be nicely and professionally adapted to the Mexican "El Callejón de los Milagros" because of several aspects that are common between the two cultures in general and the two works in particular. This transculturalization process is a success because, first, the sexual problems in the two cultures are mainly emphasized through "the authoritarian patriarch and 'fallen woman' [figures that] are recognizable to Egyptians and Mexicans alike as stock characters who, moreover, conform to melo-dramatic conventions of gendered identity" (Noble 23). These two figures impose themselves through the characters of Hamida and Kersha and Alma and Rutilio, respectively.

The character of Rutilio in "El Callejón de los Milagros" is more faithful to Mahfouz's original text—unlike Kersha in the Egyptian movie regarding his sexual dilemma and attempts to assert his masculinity. This faithfulness is reflected in many aspects that are lacking in the Egyptian movie. First, the tension between Rutilio and his wife Eusebia because of his homosexual tendencies is reflected clearly in the movie, and it comes to its climax when Rutilio beats Eusebia after she complains to El

Poeta—the Mexican Master Radwan—about her husband's homosexuality. Although Kersha in Mahfouz's original text does not beat Umm Hussein, both Kersha and Rutilio have the same attitude towards their wives. In other words, both Rutilio and Mahfouz's Kersha have "confused and contradictory" feelings towards their wives, as Kersha—as well as Rutilio—"sometimes hated [his wife] and sometimes he loved her, but it was hatred that won when the sin dragged him down in the abyss" (Mahfouz/Davies 71). In "El Callejón de los Milagros," these contradictory feelings are reflected in two scenes: the first scene is when Rutilio beats Eusebia; the second scene is when Rutilio cries heavily in Eusebia's arms after his son beats Rutilio's lover. These seemingly contradictory attitudes reflect a very accurate translation of Mahfouz's previously mentioned line. Kersha in the Egyptian movie and Rutilio in the Mexican one clearly share one feature; that is, the continuous attempt to show and prove masculinity as well as patriarchal authority through violence—either physical or verbal (Noble 25).

Rutilio's homosexual relationship is displayed more openly in "El Callejon de los Milagros" than Mahfouz's Midaq Alley. For example, the bathhouse scene in the Mexican movie is not originally available in Mahfouz's text; in fact, the Egyptian novel does not include any explicit demonstration of Kersha's homosexual affair. This difference is related to the time as well as cultural difference between the Mexican movie and the Egyptian novel. Moreover, although homosexuality is an issue of debate, it is a taboo in the Islamicate cultures. It can be suggested that the Mexican non-Islamicate culture gave more space to the filmmakers to demonstrate the explicit representation of homosexuality.

Moving to The Yacoubian Building, the Egyptian movie adapted from the same novel "was also screened in a lot of film festivals including London Film Festival, AFI Film Festival, Chicago Film Festival and Berlin Film Festival" (according the director Marwan Hamed's official website http://marwanhamed.com/#), Al-Aswany as well as his novel made it across Egypt may be because of tackling homosexuality which is "revolutionary in the context of Egyptian cinema but also is likely to be controversial for Western [audience]" (Deborah). Michael Allan states that when the movie "The Yacoubian Building" was "initially screened in the summer of 2006, 112 members of the Egyptian parliament banded together to demand that profane scenes depicting homosexuality be censored" (1). The main fuss that the movie caused was because of homosexuality, neglecting the fact that the movie contains many scenes, not related to homosexuality, which can be considered erotic or provocative. Thus, this kind of phobic reaction towards homosexuality and manhood is clearly reflected in such an attitude.

The cinematic representation of the Abduh-Hatim relationship in "The Yacoubian Building" movie has some major differences than the novel, although Hatim and Abduh have many of the physical features mentioned in Al-Aswany's novel. First of all, the novel represents the intimate details of the Abdu-Hatim sexual relationship, while the film veils these sexual details although "[this movie] has indeed broken a number of rules, not only because of the visual representation of a gay relationship… but also because of the portrayal of the severely distorted relationships" and also the film's "frank treatment of homosexuality in the context of Egyptian cinema" is greatly noted (Mostafa 11, Debora). The usage of dimness and transparent curtains in Hatim's apartment reflect this veiled representation of the

details of the Hatim-Abduh relationship. Second, it is interesting to note that the character of Abduh in the movie disappears after the death of his son, the audience only sees Hatim in Abduh's empty room on the roof of the building lamenting the loss of his lover. Consequently, at the end of the movie, Hatim is robbed and killed by someone who Hatim himself brings to sleep with. Abduh flees to the unknown and Hatim is killed, with no one of them having power over the other. Thus, the movie presents both characters defeated: Hatim is killed and Abduh goes to the nowhere. On the other hand, the novel presents Abduh's moral victory—according to Abduh—over Hatim by killing the latter—according to the revenge-for-honor concept spread in Upper Egypt (*al-tha'r*).

Coletta also raises a very interesting point about the audience's reception of adapted movies. First, the three movies tackled in this chapter were exposed to national as well as international audience; moreover, this audience—whether national or international—may have read the original texts of Mahfouz and Al-Aswany. The reader who came across the original texts "enters the adaptive process with a varied set of experiences, memories, competencies, biases, emotional, as well as conceptual presuppositions, namely with a 'horizon of expectations'" (Coletta 14). Thus, the "reader audience" is a very challenging audience, as well as critic, to the adaptation's crew and filmmakers as this kind of audience has his/her own prejudices and expectations that need to be met—if not exceeded. I believe that this kind of audience urges the filmmakers to get the utmost of the original text; in other words, the filmmakers want and need to impress the reader audience even if they defy his/her expectations.

The second kind of audience is the international audience that, most probably, the adapted movie went to him/her not vice versa. The process of watching an adapted movie is a bit complicated here because the audience is introduced to a second phase of a text that is not born in his/her culture; in other words, the audience can feel alienated. Coletta believes that this should not be the standard case as "understanding a different horizon does not involve crossing over into alien world unconnected in any way with our own but, rather, achieving that fusion of horizons that allows us to see the world from a larger perspective" (14). Indeed, being an outsider does not necessarily mean being alienated. The fusion between different cultures in adapted movies can help widening the scope of reception and makes the embedded messages clearer to this kind of audience. Again, adaptation here cannot be considered a limited genre; on the contrary, it is very challenging, opening new scopes, and thought provoking.

In sum, movie adaptation is a major genre in Egypt's cultural realm as Egypt "was the first Arab country to create a national cinema industry and its production still exceeds, at least in quantity, those of other Arab nations" (Shafik 2). Moreover, just like literature, realism in many of the Egyptian movies—for example, "Midaq Alley" and "The Yacoubian Building"—serves as a "socially critical and anti-imperialist" cultural continuous movement to assert nationalism (Shafik 3). Thus, the representation of homosexuality in both Egyptian movies "Midaq Alley" and "The Yacoubian Building" reflects the tragic position of Egyptian nationalism in the presence of colonialism and political oppression, respectively. In the Mexican Midaq Alley "El Callejón de los Milagros," homosexuality mainly reflects the manhood crisis, embodied in Rutilio, which results from social oppression.

Conclusion

According to Samia Mehrez, in her book Egypt's Culture Wars: Politics and Practice, Cairo is a "construct that continues to be reinvented by the writers [like Naguib Mahfouz and Alaa Al-Aswany], each according to his experiential eye and personal encounter with it" (144). In other words, Mahfouz and Al-Aswany reconstruct and rebuild pieces of the Cairene society and condense it in the "*hara*"(alley) and the "*imara*" (building), respectively, and enable this "fragmented Cairo [to be] reconstituted into more or less coherent wholes, each clearly revealing deep social differences" (Mehrez 145). Indeed, Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building reflect many social as well as psychological maladies in the modern Egyptian society. Homosexuality in both works acts more than a motif; in other words, it reflects different levels of oppression and hypocrisy. Thus, homosexuality serves as an attention grabber to other social vices.

In Midaq Alley, Kersha's homosexuality is popular among critics and researchers mostly because it is the first homosexual representation in modern Arabic literature. However, Kersha's homosexuality subtly exposes the social façade and the individual's defeat in this social environment. Kersha's homosexuality is more than a "fondness for young boys"; it is a multileveled stimulus to different social maladies (Hasssan and Darraj 120). Kersha, as a homosexual character, combines very seemingly contradictory features; for example, Kersha is vulgar and violent with his son, wife, and alley, but at the same time he is kind, generous, and sometimes uses Qura'nic verses when he is talking to the "young boy." Moreover, Kersha is judged by most of the characters of the novel, including the narrator—who seems to be objective

throughout the novel—through the animalistic physical description that the narrator offers about Kersha.

According to Joseph Massad, Mahfouz equates homosexuality with social maladies as "[the latter] used the term *shudhudh* (deviance) to refer to Kirsha's sexual practices with men, that term was not limited to homosexual sex, but to all nonnormative sex…and general public conduct" (278). In other words, Mahfouz uses the motif of homosexuality to reflect other social as well as individualistic maladies: anything that is against the norms or ethics, for example, Hamida's destructive ambition, Hussien's lack of the nationalist dignity—as he accepts to work with the colonizers in order to make money, and the dirty business of Dr. Boushi and Zeita, that is, cripple making and deforming others to earn their living as beggars.

Although Mahfouz's omniscient third narrator is not as objective as he seems when it comes to Kersha's homosexuality (as previously discussed), it can be suggested that Mahfouz himself was not condemning Kersha like his narrator. Mahfouz subtly connects homosexuality—which is openly rejected by the society—to other social sins the society commits with acknowledging them as sins or unethical. Mahfouz with this connection wants to make his readers pay attention to the sins that they commit without realizing. In other words, Mahfouz equates Kersha's sexual deviance to Hamida's perversion and Dr. Boushi's and Zeita's business of cripple making.

Kersha is never reformed, just like his peers in Midaq Alley. Kersha's young boy disappears after Umm Hussein beats him publicly in the alley in Chapter 12; the

last impression that the readers get about him, after Umm Hussein "knocks off his tarbush and gives him a bloody nose," is seeing him fleeing with no return (Mahfouz 93). Then, in Chapter 25, Kersha finds another "teenager of striking good looks and pleasant demeanor" who satisfies his fantasies; that is, Hussein's brother-in-law who is, again, unnamed (Mahfouz 200). The fight scene between Kersha and his wife in front of the alley residents reveals "the comic style that Mahfouz uses to deal with matters of sexual desires and practices" (Massad 289). Indeed, this scene evokes the smiles of the readers and the laughter of the alley residents. Again, this reflects how Mahfouz demonstrated this kind of deviance: it is the least kind of deviance tackled in Midaq Alley—which may remind us of what Al-Samman mentioned as "*adab al-zurafa*" in the Arabic Medieval era in which homosexuality was discussed and deliberated in a humorous manner.

Fifty years later, Al-Aswany exposes another—and a more explicit—phase about homosexuality in The Yacoubian Building. The Abduh-Hatim relationship is very tragic. It explores more than the sexual practice itself: it shows the psychological ups and downs, turns and twists, pleasure and guilt, and love and revenge. Hatim and Abduh are both victims and victimizers. Hatim is a victim of his bourgeoisie self-centered parents, while Abduh is a victim of poverty and ignorance. On the other hand, Hatim victimizes Abduh in order to get him involved in their sexual relationship, while Abduh victimizes Hatim as he exploits the latter's money and authority in an attempt to get a humanized life.

Moreover, both Abduh and Hatim face tragic deaths—Wael's death and Hatim being murdered, respectively—that can be interpreted as either a heavenly punishment

for their sin or a means which represents social injustice and cruelty. In other words, these deaths can be interpreted either as both characters have gotten what they deserved or that they could not find tolerance or justice in their societies and were doomed to pay for their queerness. According to either interpretation, Al-Aswany meant to highlight the double-standards through the Abduh-Hatim relationship.

It is not just an almost 50-year gap that separates The Yacoubian Building and Midaq Alley, many details emphasize the difference between the homosexual representations in the two novels. Abd Rabbuh and Hatim Rasheed are a different—almost contradictory—case to Kersha's case. Al-Aswany is more explicit and more specific, and he even puts an end—either physically or virtually—to the lives of his homosexual characters within the pages of the novel. Mahfouz keeps Kersha's life going on after the novel ends, with a glimpse of a new homosexual relationship, but Al-Aswany gets Hatim killed by Abduh and Abduh gets his son dead—thus, both are dead.

Furthermore, both writers present a secondary representation of homosexuality away from Kersha, on one hand, and Abduh and Hatim, on the other hand. In Midaq Alley, Mahfouz presents the character of Susu who is the belly dancing trainer that Hamida meets at Farag's place—it is never openly mentioned that Susu is a homosexual, but he is described as effeminate. In The Yacoubian Building, Al-Aswany demonstrates how Taha is raped by the police while being investigated—and that incident will fix him on the path of terrorism. Susu and Taha seem to have no connection at all; however, both are signs of social deviance. Susu is meant to be a distorted figure that not only is present in Hamida's new life, but also trains her to

become a part of this life. Taha faces governmental injustice because of his social status (when he was rejected to join the military), and when he tries to take religious refuge, he is raped. Again, through the motif of homosexuality, Mahfouz and Al-Aswany represent as well as assert deviance and injustice through homosexuality and, as Allan puts it, "ignoring this parallel [between sodomy and homosexuality] means overlooking the delicate operation complicating the terms of a civilizational discourse that would place the homosexual and the terrorist at opposite ends of a divide" (14).

On another level, the cinematic representations of Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building were approached from an almost different angle. The movies were approached mainly through two points; that is, how homosexuality is adapted in the movies and how the audience responds to this adaptation. First, Kersha's homosexuality in the "Midaq Alley" movie is very timidly mentioned in only one scene in which, one can suggest that, some of the audience cannot notice or realize Kersha's homosexuality that is defined in the movie as follows: Kersha is "ill," says Sheikh Darwish. Thus, Kerhsa's homosexuality is almost eliminated. In "The Yacoubian Building" movie, the case is totally different: Hatim and Abduh are present in the movie that depicts the struggle that both characters face. However, there is a major difference: Hatim is killed at the end of the movie, but not by Abduh; he is killed "by a random stranger, who first strangles him and then steals his money" (Allan 9). After his son's death, Abduh simply disappears—to focus on Hatim's dark end as if he is paying for his sin of seducing Abduh.

Beyond the frame of the Egyptian cinema, the Mexican "El Callejón de los Milagros" represents a different case of Midaq Alley adaptation. The Mexican

Kersha, Rutilio, is very similar to Mahfouz's Kersha: he is violent with his family and delicate with his beloved. However, there is one difference; in Midaq Alley, the youth disappears after being beaten by Umm Hussein in an almost comic scene, but in "El Callejón de los Milagros," the youth, Jimmy, is beaten to death by Rutilio's son. This movie attempts to show the psychological dilemma of Rutilio; the audience feels sorry for him—especially when he heavily cries in the arms of his wife. The movie does not represent homosexuality as a vice that should be abolished, but rather as a malady that should be cured. Thus, Rutilio in the movie is a subject of sympathy more than rejection.

Since homosexuality is more than a motif as discussed earlier, the translation of homosexuality from one language to another, from one culture to another, and from one medium to another, is of extreme importance. In the translations of Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian Building, although Humphrey Davies and Trevor Le Gassick use different approaches, that is, foreignization and domestication, respectively, both translators succeed in their missions. However, it is worth noting that Davies' translations for both novels tend to reflect the Egyptian spirit and *wigdan* of the original texts as he mixes the English structure of words with the Egyptian expressions and idioms. If Davies' reader is not Egyptian or Arab, he/she will get grasp of the Egyptian social atmosphere; and if the reader has any Egyptian experience (and especially experience with the colloquial Egyptian Arabic language), he/she will most probably feel like visualizing not only the novel's setting but also the original Arabic words of Mahfouz's and Al-Aswany's previously mentioned texts.

Adapting the motif of homosexuality from the medium of books to the medium of motion picture is not an easy task for two main reasons. First, cinematic adaptation is still an issue of debate among critics because "adaptation involves a process of 'transcoding' and reculturalization of diverse intertexts that defies the primacy of an authoritative literary source over its reverential cinematic replica" (Coletta 4). In other words, an adaptation of a text depends mainly on how the filmmakers decrypt the text itself and how they define their own criteria of the selection process. As previously discussed, filmmakers are licenced to select, add, or eliminate some of the original text's elements; thus, this selection process helps in defining the audience's reception of the movie—that might be different to the perception of the original text's reader.

Second, homosexuality is a taboo that is not smoothly received when presented in books; thus, it is even more challenging to depict and visualize homosexuality on screen. The three movies tackled in this thesis: "Midaq Alley," "El Callejón de los Milagros," and "The Yacoubian Building" present three different cases of adapting homosexuality in movies. Coletta defines adaptation as "the cinematic understanding of a literary work that comes into being through the director's own recoding" (11). Coletta then explains that all the filmmakers and film crew—including technicians—recode a text through adaptation by the guidance and "orchestration" of the director.

Last but not least, translation and adaptation share the same goal if "translation is intended not as the achievement of an absolute 'likeness to the original' but, rather, as 'a transformation and renewal' by which the original undergoes a change" (Coletta 5). A good translation, regardless of the translator's fidelity to the original text, transforms the original text's syntactic system into the system of the target language

and renews the target language by weaving some new words, expression, places, and whole realms into its texture. Thus, the translator can remain faithful to the original text and, at the same, time transforms and renews the original text through his/her own mixture of the two languages and the two cultures. Although translating/adapting homosexuality is not an easy task, I believe that Mahfouz, Al-Aswany, Davies, and Fons succeeded in conveying the embedded messages lying beneath this motif; while Le Gassick, El-Imam, and Hamid were restrained by censorship—either personally or socially: the changes they applied to the original texts, indeed, lessened or even eliminated the intended purpose of the original authors. However, by putting all of these pieces and voices together, modern man's tragedy in developing societies comes clearer, wider, and brighter. Therefore, adaptation and translation cannot replace each other; each one of them serves a purpose of its own, raises a certain question, and has its own readers/audience. In other words, translation—whether it is only one version or more—and adaptation are like the original text's sons and daughters: they almost have the same genes but with some minor—yet important—differences that personalize each one of them and reveals different purposes and, again, relates them to each other.

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