

Intellectual Space in Naguib Mahfouz's *Thartharah fawq al-Nīl*

Robert J. Farley

Faculty Mentor: Dr. F. Elizabeth Dahab
Department of Comparative Literature and Classics

Abstract

Post-independence Egypt experienced a mass economic nationalization headed by President Nasser; the resulting emergence of an authoritarian socialist government became a source of alienation for the intelligentsia. Distinguished scholar Roger Allen states that Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz's 1966 novel *Thartharah fawq al-Nīl* "depict[s] the role and fate of the Egyptian cultural intelligentsia during the 1960s" (107). Employing literary, theoretical, and historical scopes, this paper investigates the way Mahfouz accomplishes this, specifically in his construction of internal and external environments. From the physical stature of the novel being shorter in length than those from his earlier period, to the confined setting of the houseboat where the majority of the story takes place, the reader experiences a constricted feeling perhaps similar to that of the intelligentsia under Nasser's socialist regime. On an internal level, the numerous mental evocations by Mahfouz's main character involve a vast historical spectrum. Moreover, the constantly shifting currents of his stream of consciousness serve to relocate and dislocate the reader. This multi-layered analysis of the author's spatial construction of both internal and external environments promotes a deeper understanding of both Mahfouz's artistry and the reality for the Egyptian intellectual in the 1960s.

There is no escape from public life. The writer does not live in isolation, he is a citizen. ... The writer has to follow his conscience whatever the price. Creativity does not accept half measures.

—Naguib Mahfouz¹

Introduction

Naguib Mahfouz, the 1988 Nobel laureate, conveys by this quote taken from *The Mahfouz Dialogs*, the hybridity of the writer; on one hand, he is incapable of living in isolation, while on the other, he cannot allow the proclaimed axioms of the hegemony to influence his work. It almost goes without saying that these two spheres of influence—those of the individual conscience and the public realm—often exist in a dichotomy, therefore prescribing the writer to the unique liminal space where he must maneuver independently of the structure while still maintaining of it an acute and constant awareness. The public role of the writer and that of the intellectual have progressively coalesced over the twentieth century. In the words of Edward Said:

[T]he writer has taken on more and more of the intellectual's adversarial attributes in such activities as speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority. (*Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 127)

So when thinking of the writer's realm, we can also understand it as that of the intellectual. With this in mind, it is most intriguing to consider Mahfouz's 1966 novel, *Thartharah fawq al-Nil* (hereafter referred to as *Adrift on the Nile*), a work by an intellectual about intellectuals, during a time of oppression of intellectuals. The novel's rich symbolism and obnoxious group of characters often draw the most attention, thus I will be focusing on an important, yet overlooked, aspect of the novel: Mahfouz's utilization of space. I maintain that both the allotted space *for* the intellectual (the physical setting) and the space *of* the intellectual (the stream of consciousness narrative) are indicative of the social environment for the Egyptian intelligentsia in the 1960s. I spend the last two sections of the article arguing and analyzing this point, but not before evaluating Mahfouz's interpretations and depictions of the era elaborated through his oeuvre and interviews.

Nasser's Space

The milieu of 1960s Egypt is largely characterized by the establishment of the Republic following the 1952 Revolution, led by Gamal Abdel

Nasser of the Free Officers. Menahem Milson attests that Mahfouz intentionally stopped writing when he finished authoring the *Trilogy*² some months before the coup on account of his political outlook, which assumed a more confident disposition in the wake of independence. Mahfouz no longer saw a need for “the impulse of a social critic” (Milson 177). However, this optimism declined with the appearance of the shortcomings of the Nasserite government. Upon his return to the literary scene with his 1961 novel *The Thief and the Dogs*, Mahfouz began employing a new style and form that continued throughout his 1960s novels,³ which Sabry Hafez defines as “a new blend of realism, mysticism, and existentialism, mixed with social criticism and contemplative and analytical elements” (Hafez 73). Perhaps this fusion of metaphysical components with the palpability of his familiar realist style enabled Mahfouz to communicate the complexity of reality under the circumstances of the new regime.

An understanding of the author’s interpretation of (post)independence events is vital to comprehending the depth of social criticism in Mahfouz’s work of this era. His 1962 novel entitled *Autumn Quail* provides a devastating image of revolution: “Flames were spreading everywhere, dancing in windows, crackling on roofs, licking at walls, and flying up into the smoke that hung where the sky should have been” (19). The image of fire, specifically of a leader burning his own land, harkens back to Montesquieu’s interpretation of a despot: that he would resort to burning his own land under the pretense of purifying his nation (Althusser 79). While the replacement of the sky with smoke intimates not only the toxicity of the event, but also that of the new taking the place of the old.

Mahfouz’s work during this period of restriction assumes the task of communicating social criticism in a method involving precise balance. Like a funambulist, one misstep can mean catastrophe. Erring on the side of caution produces a lost or incomprehensible message approved for publication, yet an overt message of opposition can result in suppression or worse, author imprisonment or exile. Mahfouz stated in an interview: “In Nasser’s time one feared the walls. Everyone was afraid. We would sit in the cafés, too afraid to talk. We would stay at home, too afraid to talk” (*The Paris Review*). For the author’s explicit opinion on the matter,

it is beneficial to look to Mahfouz's later work, 1983 novel *Before the Throne*, free from the manacles of the Nasser regime.

Before the Throne takes place in the courtroom of Osiris, ancient Egyptian god of the afterlife; one by one, Egypt's past leaders address the court of the Immortals, and Osiris determines the fate of the subject—a place among the Immortals, Purgatory, or Hell. Aptly subtitled *Dialogs with Egypt's Great from Menes to Anwar Sadat*, the novel provides a unique opportunity for the reader to gain tremendous insight to Mahfouz's own historical judgments. In his commentary concluding the English translation, Raymond Stock remarks,

[In] *Before the Throne*, he [Mahfouz] ceased to be a teller of imaginary stories. ... Rather, he became a kind of historian—even a righteous judge of the dead—personally choosing who was worthy of a hearing, the evidence presented, and their sentences as well. Here, the ultimate verdict was his. (159)

It is to no bewilderment, then that the most scathing of criticism occurs during Nasser's arraignment. Though he is praised for restoring the governing apparatus to Egyptian power after over 2000 years of occupation, his ambition for Pan-Arabism receives disapproval. The court chides him, "Your interest in Arab unity was higher than your interest in Egypt's integrity" (133). Nasser's determination turns to arrogance with his agitating statement that "Egyptian history really began on July 23, 1952," forcing Osiris to call order in the court of past Egyptian leaders (134). However, Nasser's most abominable sin is his regime's treatment of the intelligentsia. In the words of the court:

You were heedless of liberty and human rights. ... [Y]ou were a curse upon political writers and intellectuals, who are the vanguard of the nation's children. You cracked down on them with arrest and imprisonment, with hanging and killing, until you had degraded their dignity and humiliated their humanity, until you had eradicated their optimism and smashed the formation of their personalities. (136)

This reproach addressing the (post) independence oppression of the intellectuals sums up the nature of their marginalization. Nasserite policy

dictates that attaining knowledge is to take place solely under the pretense of socioeconomic functionality, while the creation of artwork is to serve the nationalist ideology (Dekmejian 140). Nasser speaks to this directly in his prologue to Sadat's *Revolt on the Nile* when he states the new Egypt's mantra is "work, produce" (7).

Besides the very nature of the intellectual as the challenger of dogmatic superstructures (Said, *Representations* 11), and therefore, problematic to an authoritarian government, one cannot help but wonder if part of Nasser's anti-intellectualism rooted itself in the principles of decolonization. In his seminal revolutionary text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon maintains that although the colonized intellectual pioneers a dialogue with the colonizers, the involvement with and exposure to colonialist ideology places the intellectual at risk of perpetuating the colonial structure (8-11). President Nasser likely maintained this image to further negate the intellectual as contrary to Egyptian well-being.

Fanon also notes another interesting characteristic of intellectuals, that they "place themselves in the context of history" (147). This ability to see historical relativity relates to Shaden Tageldin's analysis of Mahfouz's *Trilogy* character, Amina, whose marginalization and "seclusion ... from 'history' proper—from the nation—enables her to see an epistemological continuum between colonialism and nationalism" (90). However, Amina is not necessarily distinguished as an intellectual; it is her *exclusion* from the hegemonic structure—in this case, patriarchal society—that allows her insight to historical relativity. So is this astuteness unique to intellectuals or the marginalized? Said amalgamates these social groups in a series of his lectures entitled *Representations of the Intellectual*, where especially under social circumstances like that of Nasser's oppression, the intellectual is naturally on the margins, placed in metaphorical exile:

The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being.

Exile for the intellectual is this metaphysical sense of restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. (53)

Just as Fanon states about intellectuals and Tageldin does about the marginalized, Said articulates that intellectuals in exile consider the current state of life to be a result of historical choices (60).

In addition to the way the intellectual perceives situations, Said provides through his descriptions the nature of the intellectual and accordingly, his or her *needs*. Above he mentions the necessity for movement, “[a] sense of restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled.” Additionally, and just as important, “[t]he intellectual has to walk around, has to have the *space* in which to stand and talk back to authority, since *unquestioning subservience to authority* in today’s world is one of the *greatest threats* to an active, and moral, intellectual life” (121).⁴ Keeping in mind these essentials of space and movement, as well as the atmosphere of Egypt under Nasser, one discovers the depth of meaning in Mahfouz’s 1966 novel, *Adrift on the Nile*.

The Space on the River

Cited as a milestone of Mahfouz’s literary career in the Nobel Prize committee’s presentation speech, *Adrift on the Nile* has been described by esteemed scholar Roger Allen, “to depict the role and fate of the Egyptian cultural intelligentsia during the 1960s” (107). After all, this is a story of the nightly gathering of the educated Cairenes—a lawyer, a writer, an actor, an art critic, and civil servants—on a houseboat on the Nile, to chitchat over such topics as current affairs, popular culture, and the meaning(less) of life. Faithful servant, Amm Abduh, provides nightly kif and prostitutes, while main character Anis Zaki loads the kif in the water pipe, earning him the rank of master of ceremonies. Typical of Mahfouz’s 1960s novels, the book is shorter in length than his earlier works,⁵ affording limited space for the characters in which to develop. However, this is only a superficial assessment of the intellectual’s space in *Adrift on the Nile*. An analysis of the quantity (how much and how little) and the quality (the content and arrangement) of Mahfouz’s allotted space in the story provides a multifaceted portrayal of the environment for the intelligentsia in Egypt under Nasser’s rule.

One cannot evaluate space in *Adrift on the Nile* without examining the houseboat, since this is where the majority of the story takes place. In addition to providing a claustrophobic atmosphere to the novel, the houseboat also serves as a liminal space. It both removes the characters from the land of Cairo and contains them within its jurisdiction. Arabic literature scholar Shawkat M. Toorawa observes that houseboats make appearances in previous works by Mahfouz, serving as the setting in which evil resides⁶ (although he does not agree that Anis's houseboat necessarily serves such a function). One could redefine "evil" and say that houseboats in Mahfouz's work represent a place where values are not compatible with those on the land. With that said, Anis's houseboat full of intellectuals, contemplating the night away, represents the "evil" in accordance with the Nasserite ideology overwhelming the land: the intellectual should not dwell in thought, but should "transform his knowledge into productive work" (Dekmejian 104). Anis and his friends are doing exactly what the regime dictates that they should *not* be doing.

The dual nature of the houseboat is worth noting, as it is simultaneously a dwelling place and a vehicle. However, the lingering threat posed by Amm Abduh of the anchor breaking (by either will or lack of maintenance), thereby allowing the houseboat to realize its identity as a vessel, is considered to lead to ultimate destruction: "As long as the floats are sound, and the ropes and chains strong, and Amm Abduh is awake, and the pipe filled, then we have no concerns" (48). The fear of movement coupled with the moorings transforms the inherent quality of the houseboat from a hybrid residence/transportation into solely a stationary dwelling. The problem remains in that, in an effort to make the houseboat more like a house by stripping it of its nomadic potential, it experiences the vulnerability and separation from the land, but without the freedom of movement. Anis's houseboat is literally fixed to the margins of the neighborhood.

The distance between the houseboat and the rest of Cairo is manifested by the complete separation from news events. Since Anis does not read newspapers, Amm Abduh serves as a vehicle for the current affairs (70, 142). The reader understands this removal when a local woman commits suicide:

Amm Abduh approached. "A woman has just fallen from the eighth floor of the Suya Company building," he said.

Anis regarded him anxiously. "How did you find out?"
"I hurried over when I heard the scream. It was a shocking sight."

Ali's voice: "Luckily we're far from the street—we can't hear anything." (64)

Any physical space allotted to the group only serves as a removal, to dissociate them from their surroundings. The darkness, constantly mentioned through Mahfouz's narrative, serves a similar purpose.

The darkness pervades Mahfouz's sixties novels, as much of the action (or inaction in Anis's case) takes place during the night. Often, it possesses physical attributes implying solidity and even heft as in *The Thief and the Dogs*: "The dense darkness was disturbing and he groped for the door. The darkness would be even thicker inside. ... All he could see was a darkness that weighed down upon him" (50-1). At other times, the darkness is personified: "From beyond the balcony, the night observed him" (*Adrift on the Nile* 51). Perhaps by forming the darkness into a physical object capable of action (like that of observing), Mahfouz enforces its innate presence as a standalone entity, rather than simply a lack of light. This assertion of the reality of the negative, so to speak, is best summed up by Anis himself: "the power which subjects you to Nothingness is stronger than that which subjects you to Being" (126).

The interesting character of darkness allows its versatile utilization. Of course in a general sense, darkness can serve as a metaphor for the unknown, perhaps a political regime's covert operations remaining hidden from the citizen. Additionally, however, darkness plays a unique role of filling space with a void. It is at the same time a boundary: both empty and ubiquitous, yet as visually imposing as an overwhelming wall enveloping the subject from all sides. Darkness seemingly allows for movement, yet it obliterates the confidence to move *freely*. By depicting darkness as such a physically imposing structure, Mahfouz amplifies its debilitating effect.

Other than residing in darkness, the houseboat exists as such on account of the Nile River. When evaluating its symbolism, the integral

role of the Nile throughout history cannot be ignored. This timeless icon is responsible for the existence of early human civilization in the area,⁷ and the prosperity of the early Egyptians depended much on the tides. Flooding would be a sign of a flourishing harvest, which in an agricultural society means a successful year for the community. Coincidentally, and perhaps symbolically, the British constructed the Aswan Low Dam to control flooding, as did Nasser with the much larger and more effective Aswan High Dam, redirecting the water surplus into the state-owned Lake Nasser reservoir.

Toorawa explores the multiple possible meanings behind the Nile in the novel, likely not only because it is one of the primary features of the setting, but also because of how much and how often it is mentioned. He proffers that it very well could represent death, from which the whale—symbolizing life’s triumph over death—constantly reappears (Toorawa 62). I would like to postulate another possible interpretation, not completely unlike Toorawa’s. While I mentioned above that the Nile is timeless, I also believe it is time itself; after all, both time and the river are interminable. It is even described as smelling of “a dusty, exhausting journey” (*Adrift on the Nile* 31). Just as Heraclitus once said that an individual cannot step twice in the same river, implying that the person could not exist in the same river at any two instances, one can never inhabit the same space in time more than once and for more than an instant. However, this suggests all flowing bodies of water can potentially represent time. What makes Mahfouz’s Nile so especially indicative of such is the whale.

Jonah’s whale appears throughout *Adrift on the Nile* to talk to Anis, and sometimes threatens to swallow the houseboat whole; for the movement-fearing group, he poses a threat. As the biblical story goes, the whale swallows Jonah in order to make him realize his purpose. Just as Jonah hopes to evade his duty by fleeing out to sea, Anis appears to do the same, escaping on his houseboat. Mahfouz’s whale states that he “saved” Jonah (21), suggesting that this act of becoming accountable is necessary for survival. Even at the end of the book, after Anis does not entirely commit to being a responsible person, the whale is still lurking in the water (167), suggesting perhaps that the change is inevitable. Joseph Campbell references Jonah’s whale in his famous monomyth as

the stage of metamorphosis in the “hero’s journey.” Here, in order to undergo transformation, the hero must be annihilated and subsequently reborn (Campbell 90); this links to Toorawa’s interpretation of the whale as life’s triumph over death. I would venture that Jonah’s whale in Mahfouz’s story is a symbol for metamorphosis for Anis, from meaningless to purposefulness. Thus, the whale (change) occupying the Nile (time) represents the process of transformation.

The moon’s phase and position in the sky are frequently mentioned throughout the novel, connoting the passage of time. Even when first mentioned as an expression in the song “Mama, the moon is at the door” (2), its location is defined. The lunar Islamic calendar may very well be the inspiration for bestowing the moon with the role of timekeeper. Or perhaps it is the satellite’s influence over the Nile’s tides. In any case, its relationship with Anis contributes to a larger picture of vast vertical space, which will be discussed later.

While the vast majority of Cairo faces southeast to Mecca, Anis looks west. The location of prayer in relation to the reader in Mahfouz’s novels carries a multitude of meanings, one being the prevalence of religion in all matters. This is exemplified in Mahfouz’s *Autumn Quail* when main character Isa is having a highly politicized conversation with his cousin, meanwhile in the next room his mother’s prayers can be heard (*Autumn Quail* 34). In “The Poetics of Urban Space: Structures of Literarising Egyptian Metropolis,” Stephan Guth views Mahfouz’s juxtaposition of the mosque with the room of a prostitute in “The Mosque in Narrow Lane” to mean similarity: “Connecting one space of *fasād* (prostitution) with the other (hypocrisy, collaboration) raises the central question: Which *fasād* is worse? Which is a greater evil in the eyes of God?” (Guth 467). In the case of *Adrift on the Nile*, applying Guth’s method begs the critic to find the commonality between prayer and the nightly gatherings of Anis and company. The answer to this question lies in Samara’s scenario for a play, summing religion as a form of escape (93). While the concept of escapism links the acts of practicing religion and smoking hashish on a houseboat, Mahfouz spatially connects them by the act of Anis hearing the call to prayer while slipping into intoxication.

The nightly ceremony begins with Anis awaiting nightfall, watching the sunset over the Nile from his balcony. This sets the houseboat on the east bank. Keeping this in mind, and that the Nile (time) flows south to north, it is useful to visit Mahfouz's description of the houseboat's locale:

The houseboat lay still on the leaden waters of the Nile, as familiar to him as a face. To the right there was an empty space, once occupied by another houseboat before the current swept it away, and to the left, on a wide bank of the shore, a simple mosque surrounded by a mud-brick wall and spread with shabby matting. (8)

From Anis's point-of-view, the Nile (time) is flowing left to right, placing the mosque on the left (in the past) and the once occupied, empty space to the right (in the future). This timeline is reinforced by various mentions throughout the novel. The mosque, or religion rather, as a thing of the past is demonstrated in Samara's scenario for a play: "In order to simplify the issue I will say that mankind of old faced absurdity, and escaped it through religion" (93). The empty space in the future is constantly reiterated by the cohort's journey into emptiness, "from Nothingness to Nothingness" (79). This figurative expedition becomes reality in the eventful car trip.

One of the primary paradigms in the novel is that of absurdity and seriousness. The group is considered absurd, living without meaning (92), while Samara represents the seriousness: belief (93). The problem as expressed in the novel is that religion has become archaic; this problem manifests on the Hijra, when Anis and his gang decide to emulate the Prophet Mohammad by taking a voyage of their own (126). The claustrophobic setup of nine individuals squeezed into a car calls to mind the confined space of the houseboat. Mahfouz's placement of the individuals is worth mentioning. The three in front are the responsible ones, according to Samara's scenario, and the six in the back have little to offer.⁸ In fact, these six are "squashed together in the back like one flattened body with six heads" (128). If the atmosphere inside the car is not enough of a restriction of movement, the road itself aggravates the condition, not necessarily by obstructing travel, but rather by forcing its direction. The group plummets into the darkness on a road bordered on

the top and sides by colossal evergreens. This tubular scene is the only source of movement for these intellectuals, yet their freedom is more constrained on the road than on the houseboat.

While, as touched upon earlier, the houseboat's relationship with the moon creates an expanse of vertical space, the car trip shifts this vastness to the horizontal plane. Abstract artist Irene Rice Pereira eloquently states the social and existential connotations of this shift:

The development of a society depends on its ability to participate in space. If there is no participation, humanity remains in an undeveloped state and retrogresses to an instinctual level. If there is too much expansion horizontally, a society will expand materialistically and there will be very little or no creative activity. If the vertical becomes too extended, man will lose his balance and have no sense of reality in relation to the world he lives in. (qtd. in Kestner 63)

The augmentation horizontally in the form of the car ride can be seen as the group's attempt to participate in Nasser's production-based society. As Said mentions that the intellectual needs movement, the group endeavors to meet this need: "It's the journey that is important ... not the meaning" (*Adrift on the Nile* 129). The result of forcing such an action under the given circumstances is a lack of creative activity, essential to the intellectual's existence. This extreme horizontal expansion is a reaction to the intense vertical movement occurring on the houseboat.

The Space of the Stream

An important aspect to take into account when evaluating space and environment in the novel is the focus. While much of Mahfouz's concentration in his earlier work is on the external, the spotlight in his 1960s novels shifts to one character. In the case of *Adrift on the Nile*, the story is completely filtered through Anis's perspective prior to reaching the reader. Even when the voice of reason appears through Samara's scenario for a play, it is only because Anis is reading it. The narrowing inward contributes highly to the analysis of space because the external symbols discussed above interweave and interact with Anis's psyche.

The stream of consciousness narrative characterizes the story, while the technique of presentation often vacillates between direct and indirect interior monologues, omniscient description, and prose soliloquy. These techniques, according to Robert Humphrey, have proven to be “capable of carrying the strange and awkward load of human consciousness into the realm of legitimate prose fiction” (41). The primary purpose behind stream of consciousness writing is both to communicate a psychic identity and express the reality of interior life. Because the mode deals in the domain of pre-speech, and forming symbols is a primary mental process, it makes sense that Mahfouz’s novel is rich in symbolism (Humphrey 36, 81). But what is the effect of expressing the identity and reality of Anis’s psyche? Ultimately, this places the emphasis away from the action, what one *does*, and onto the identity, who one *is*. Looking at this in social context of the Nasser regime’s emphasis on actions and productivity, Mahfouz contends the validity of interior life.

As mentioned above, within the mode of stream of consciousness Mahfouz employs multiple techniques; the causal distinction among them is effectually the location of the reader, demonstrated by the nuances in the text. The fluctuation occurs almost instantaneously and seemingly unprompted. Consider these examples:

(1) You can laugh from the bottom of a heart which no longer knows fear. And, what is more, the pleasant diversion of the civil service tribunal awaits! What is your full name? Anis Zaki, son of Adam and Eve.

(2) He went out onto the balcony. Amm Abduh’s voice caught his ear; he was leading the afternoon prayer. He stood there like a mountain, dwarfing the rows of worshippers.

(3) Amm Abduh came in after prayer, but found the room already prepared for the evening. Anis returned from the balcony. (147-8)

All within a page, Mahfouz progressively increases the space between Anis and the reader. In the first quote, classified as direct interior monologue, the reader experiences the character’s psyche without the author’s interference (Humphrey 27). This changes in the second quote when the reader still follows Anis’s stream, hearing Amm Abduh’s voice

and evaluating the scene outside, but Mahfouz is now present, signified by the use of the third-person pronouns; this is indirect interior monologue. The third quote transfers to omniscient description, allowing the reader to remain in the room to experience Amm Abduh's reaction while Anis is out on the balcony. These may seem like gradual shifts, but the connotations are remarkable. First, there is a breakdown of a paradigm in the simultaneous existence of the subjective interior monologue with the objective godlike omniscient. Secondly, by constantly relocating the reader in correlation to the action, and additionally alternating between first, second, and third person points of view, Mahfouz does not allow the reader to find solace in one place. The genius exists indeed in that Mahfouz imposes upon the reader the plight of the 1960s intellectual—abundant in frustration, lacking comfort and stability.

The value of group smoking kif cannot go unmentioned. The implementation of a psychologically altering substance in order to affect the mental processes is known as a drama technique in stream of consciousness writing. The kif places Anis in a “condition which makes [his] mental processes even more chaotic and fluid than they ordinarily are. At the same time, on other thematic levels, other things are achieved ... simply because of the increased free play of the psychic processes” (Humphrey 39). This results in an objective representation of Anis's psychological existence, in other words, his hallucinations.

Historical events provide the framework for Anis's hallucinations, which have two primary functions in regard to space. The coexistence of present and past diminishes temporal space. With regards to Anis's stream of consciousness, the historical hallucinations are a product of the stream's movement. In determining the nature of such movement, we must evaluate Anis's psychological free association.⁹ Three factors control it: (1) memory lays the foundation, (2) the senses guide it, and (3) the imagination affects its flexibility (Humphrey 43). With that said, it is useful to evaluate one of Anis's many historical hallucinations. It takes place after a series of events in this order: a conversation between Mustafa and Samara, a kiss between Ragab and Samara, a mental note that Samara meets the kiss with passive resistance, another mental note that the ancient Persian occupation failed through the passive resistance

of the Pharaonic Egyptians, and finally Amm Abduh enters to clean the room. After these mental observations by Anis, the hallucination takes place:

I do not know the answer, but perhaps you do, you on whose memory history was built. He sat in front of me like a statue and I said: "Are you in truth the Pharaoh? Are you Thutmose III?"

He answered, in a voice that reminded me of Mustafa Rashid: "Yes." (90)

Beginning from the surface, Anis's imagination allows him the flexibility to have a conversation with Thutmose III. His prior mental observations guide the hallucination. The sight of Samara's passive resistance to Ragab's kiss leads to his recollection of the passive resistance of the Pharaonic Egyptians, which ultimately leads him to think of the Pharaoh Thutmose III. Amm Abduh's statuesque build inspires the comparison of the pharaoh to a statue, while the conversation between Samara and Mustafa affects the pharaoh's tone of voice. The historical foundation of the hallucination resides in the memory of Anis. This calls to mind the above-described ability of the intellectual to interpret the world through historical relativity.

From the rich symbolism of the setting, with its multidimensional space, to the complex psychology of Anis, Mahfouz artfully paints a portrait of the restricted intellectual under the Nasser regime. By itself, the magnificent use of symbols is enough to create a wealth of meaning. The confined space of the houseboat, the expansion and contraction of vertical and horizontal planes, and layout of the neighborhood all serve to represent the society at large, as well as its relationship with the intelligentsia. However, the brilliance of *Adrift on the Nile* remains in the author's ability to impose the condition of the intellectual onto the reader. The stream of consciousness narrative, shifting through techniques and points of view, forces the reader to continuously feel uncomfortable, never able to settle in one mode, style, or narrative. Through Anis's exploitations with kif, the reader additionally experiences situations in a historical context. To put it simply, *Adrift on the Nile* both depicts and provides access to the condition of the intellectual in 1960s Egypt.

Endnotes

¹ G. Al-Ghitani. *The Mahfouz Dialogs* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007) 40.

² *Al-thulathiyya* was published in 1956-57.

³ Mahfouz's novels in the sixties: *Al-liss wa al-kilab* (1961, translated as *The Thief and the Dogs*), *Al-summan wa al-kharif* (1962, translated as *Autumn Quail*), *Al-tariq* (1964, translated as *The Search*), *Al-shahhadh* (1965, translated as *The Beggar*), *Thartharah jawq al-Nil* (1966, translated as *Adrift on the Nile*), and *Miramar* (1967).

⁴ Emphasis mine.

⁵ The English translation of *Adrift on the Nile* expands only to 167 pages as opposed to *The Trilogy* spanning around 1500 pages.

⁶ "There is one in the *Trilogy* (*Thulathiyya*) to which Abd al-Jawad goes at night to seduce a young woman. It represents a refuge, a liberation, an escape from censoring and restricting society, but it is also a symbol of evil, perhaps even of depravity. ... In *The Thief and the Dogs*, (*al-Liss wa- 'l-Kilib*) the protagonist travels often from the apartment of his girlfriend or from the home of his shaykh to Rauf's villa on the Nile, and these trips become symbolic voyages between good and evil..." (Toorawa 59).

⁷ "If there had been no Nile, human habitation would have been limited to a narrow strip, in no case wider than 30 miles (48 kilometers), along the shores of the Mediterranean and Red seas" (Goldschmidt 3).

⁸ In Samara's scenario for a play, Ahmad is considered responsible while Ragab is known as "the hope of the drama;" the others are insignificant characters (92-100).

⁹ "The chief technique in controlling the movement of stream of consciousness in fiction has been an application of the principles of psychological free association" (Humphrey 43).

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