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TEXTUAL ALLUSIONS IN THE CAIRO TRILOGY OF NAGUIB MAHFOUZ: A STYLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The issue of intertextuality is discussed M. Bakhtin's work, particularly in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin claimed that "the functional text is a hybrid entity, not a single whole; it is a composite amalgamation of a variety of formulae" (76). The theory of intertextuality attained various dimensions and wider interfaces in the works of poststructuralist theorists such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. These scholars viewed texts as networks of other texts stating that a writer's strength lies in the ability to blend existing writings and emulate previously read and written gestures. Incorporating intertextuality theories into critical research on literary works provides a deeper comprehension of both intentional and hidden intertextual chains and allusions within the texts. This paper, utilizing critical and analytical frameworks, meticulously examines the intertextual references in Naguib Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy (*Palace Walk, Palace of Desire*, and *Sugar Street*), exploring their function and significance. The paper argues that the author's use of intertextuality and allusions from multiple sources in the trilogy broadens the narrative horizons and generates new interpretations. Additionally, the paper points out that the author utilizes intertextuality as a stylistic tool, infusing the texts with references to the Quran, local folklore, and popular culture for

aesthetic and thematic purposes. The integration of a diversity of intertextual references and citations from other texts enhances the portrayal of the socio-cultural dynamics underpinning the patriarchal Egyptian society, criticized in the trilogy.

Keywords: Naguib Mahfouz, Cairo trilogy, intertextuality, stylistics

1. Introduction

Historically, Egyptian fiction started in the latest years of the nineteenth century and flourished in the beginning of the twentieth century, but reached maturity in the middle of the century in the fiction of Naguib Mahfouz.[1] Mahfouz's works are deeply influenced by his childhood memories and his close relationship with his illiterate mother, who was well versed in Egyptian folklore, popular culture, and the religious traditions prevalent in ancient Cairo. Like most of the writers of his generation, Mahfouz received his early education in Quranic schools, where he memorized the Quran. Beyond his mother's influence, and the impact of his early education prominent Egyptian and western novelists had a tremendous impact on Mahfouz. During his teenage years, he read the novels of Mustafa al-Manfaluti (1876–1924), an Egyptian sentimentalist whose prose style had an impact on many educated Egyptians and Arabs in the early 20th century. Mahfouz was also influenced by classicist Egyptian writers such as Taha Husayn, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, Salama Musa, Ibrahim al-Mazini, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Mahmud Taymur, Tawfiq al-Hakim, and Yahya Haqqi. He credits these writers for liberating him from rigid thinking, drawing his attention to world literature, offering a fresh perspective on classical Arabic literature, and providing models for short stories, novels, and drama (El-Enany 11). Mahfouz also read most of the European and American literature in translation particularly the fictional works of great novelists such as Dickens, Dostoevsky, Hemingway, and Faulkner.

The Cairo Trilogy, published in Arabic[2] in 1957 and translated to English by William Hutchins, et all,[3] reflects the diverse literary influences on Mahfouz,

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[1] Mahfouz was the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize in Literature and all of his works—particularly the Cairo Trilogy—were translated into more than 15 languages.

[2] As Mahfouz Naguib, *Cairo Trilogy / Al Thulatheyya*, Dar Al Shrouq Press, 1957.

[3] The first part of the Cairo Trilogy, titled as *Palace Walk*, was translated by William Hutchins et al. and was published by Doubleday (New York) in 1991, whereas the second part (*Palace of Desire*) and the third part (*Sugar Street*) were rendered into English by the same translators and were published by Doubleday in 1992.

both in content and form. The first part of the Trilogy (*Palace Walk*) describes life in Cairo after the First World War during the British occupation. The protagonist is a dictatorial patriarch, who forces his family to behave according to the strict religious rules dictated by the Quran, while he indulges in debauchery and prostitution in the nightlife of ancient Cairo. The second novel of the Trilogy (*Palace of Desire*) is the most important part of Mahfouz's epic family saga and is integral to colonial Egypt. This second part of the Trilogy reveals the widespread impact of the 1920s on the characters and the Egyptian society. The third part of the Trilogy (*Sugar Street*) explores the geo-political and socio-economic conditions in Egypt in the aftermath of the Second World War.

An intertextual reading of the texts of the Trilogy reveals the multiple impacts on the factional world of Mahfouz. As a quintessential example of modern Egyptian literature, the Trilogy embodies Mahfouz's complicated vision of the Egyptian society from various angles. The narrative style in the books is designed to engage the intellect rather than evoke emotions, appealing more to the reader's reason rather than their heart. The Trilogy's events often seek to rationalize gender issues, which are central to Mahfouz's aesthetic vision. Using allusions, juxtaposition, parody, and intertextual references, Mahfouz highlights his perspective on Egyptian patriarchal society during the British occupation of Egypt (1882-1956). Mahfouz presents the themes of the Trilogy in a peculiar modernist style drawing upon theoretical frameworks embedded in allusions and intertextual references. However, each novel in the Trilogy follows a clear structure with a beginning, middle, and end, adhering to a chronological order. This technique reflects Mahfouz's traditional viewpoint on various themes, including the portrayal of women as submissive and insignificant. The events in the Trilogy underscore the dominant masculine image in a patriarchal society. Interestingly, Mahfouz uses fragmented narration, and other modernist techniques like flashbacks as well as stream of consciousness, to reflect his vision of a traditional society dominated by masculine cultural values.

In a related context, in the Trilogy Mahfouz aims to present a balanced and objective portrayal of Egyptian society during the colonial era, employing third-person narration as a key narrative strategy throughout the three novels. This approach allows the narrator to incorporate various old texts from local oral traditions, religious sources, and historical chronicles to address socio-political themes central to Mahfouz's aesthetic vision. The narrator, serving as an external observer, conveys the author's perspectives on various topics, particu-

larly the status of women in Egypt's patriarchal society, without passing judgment on the characters.

2. Toward a Theoretical Framework: Allusions and Intertextuality in Literary Contexts

The references to other texts in Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy highlight intertextuality as a feature of transcultural literature, which crosses linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries. Diana Haydanka and Karolina Polinko state that "intertextuality is an array of approaches that analyze and interpret the relationships between texts, their interconnections, and the ways they integrate the components of other texts, enriching their depth and meaning" (52). In a related scenario, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason suggest that "Readers accommodate the intertextual reference on the basis of their previous experience of encountering this type of text" (153). In addition, M. Ahmadian and H. Yazdani point out that the author un/consciously appeals to intertextual elements, elaborating them into his artistic career and creativity to create the intended text, a mix of prose/poetry. Accordingly, in reading literature, being aware of intertextuality seems to be important in better understanding of the text (Ahmadian and Yazdani 155).

In order to navigate the complex landscape of contemporary intertextual theories, it is essential to explore various theoretical and hermeneutical approaches to textual analysis, starting from their initial emergence in the field of intertextuality. Notably, many early proponents of intertextuality were unaware that they were laying the groundwork for this tradition, thus paving the way for future theorists. The concept of intertextuality has supplanted that of inter-subjectivity, suggesting that any text is a mosaic of quotations, absorbing and transforming other texts. Initially, Mikhail Bakhtin alludes to the term "intertextuality" in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929). Bakhtin further developed this concept in his study *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), where he clarifies that a functional text is a hybrid entity, composed of various formulae rather than a single whole. Bakhtin's argument in *The Dialogic Imagination* advances the theory of intertextuality, emphasizing a dialogue not only between texts but also between the writer and earlier writers, contrary to the views of later theorists like Roland Barthes. Central to Bakhtin's theory is the idea of an ongoing dialogue between texts as well as between writers and their predecessors (Bakhtin 76).

In a similar context, Mesut Kuleli explains that Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* laid the groundwork for the concept of intertextuality, which was subsequently embraced by numerous literary scholars. In *his book*, Bakhtin introduced the term "dialogic," suggesting that discourse is shaped within a cultural context. This context is formed through linguistic experiences and the shared rules internalized by members of a specific speech community. In this dialogic framework, Bakhtin asserts that prose is a complex network of literary elements. He emphasizes that no word in prose is neutral; instead, every discourse responds to preceding discourses within the text and simultaneously prompts the creation of subsequent discourses in response to itself (Kuleli 206). Mesut Kuleli's clarification provides valuable insight into the origins and development of the concept of intertextuality. Although Mikhail Bakhtin did not explicitly use the term "intertextuality" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, his ideas about dialogism laid the groundwork for it. Bakhtin's notion of dialogism emphasizes that discourse is inherently cultural and shaped by the linguistic experiences of a speech community.

Moreover, Julia Kristeva explained the concept of "intertextuality" in her essay on Bakhtin, which gained international recognition in literary criticism. Kristeva demonstrates that authors do not create entirely new texts from their own words, but instead compile them from previously published works. In her theory of intertextuality, she describes a text as "a permutation of texts, intertextuality in the given text… [where] several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another" (36). In a similar vein, Roland Barthes views a literary text as a web of "multiple writings" derived from various sources and discourses already existing in some form. He sees the writer as a synthesizer who intentionally reworks and reflects other texts, considering the text as a fabric of quotations drawn from the countless "centers of culture" (146).

Despite the widespread adoption of the term "intertextuality," Kristeva's definition became just one among many that emerged in subsequent studies. The core ideas that a text cannot exist or be interpreted as a self-sufficient whole and the term "intertextuality" itself have remained constant in literary theory. Indeed, the broad nature of intertextuality has led to multiple interpretations and definitions, creating what Cesare Segre aptly termed a "confused state of polysemy" (15). This multiplicity of meanings can sometimes complicate the analysis and application of intertextuality in literary studies.

Furthermore, intertextuality, in essence, refers to broad and indeterminate discursive realms. It serves to clarify numerous ambiguities and misconceptions that arise from the traditional "notion of influence" (Guillen 244). Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein highlight that in contemporary critical frameworks, the idea of influence, which depends on the author's intentions and background, is replaced by the concept of intertextuality (3). Intertextuality thus undeniably presents a dual aspect. The intertextual analysis of a modern text through references to an older one should shed light on both, as understanding the older text enhances comprehension of its contemporary counterpart. Therefore, prior knowledge of both texts is crucial for readers to draw analogies and highlight parallel connections and common themes. Consequently, it is beneficial to compare a text with other works by the same or different authors, whether from the present or the past, considering inherent affinities and intertextual similarities. Based on this, Jonathan Culler views intertextuality as a literary technique that involves drawing specific analogies and establishing connections between texts:

> Intertextuality is less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture. Study of intertextuality is not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived, it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practice of later texts. (Culler 103).

In other words, Culler's perspective on intertextuality emphasizes its broader cultural context rather than just specific textual relationships. He argues that intertextuality involves a text's participation in the wider discursive space of a culture. This approach moves beyond traditional investigations of sources and influences to encompass anonymous discursive practices and codes, whose origins may be obscure but are crucial for the signifying practices of later texts. This view aligns with the idea that texts are part of a larger cultural and social dialogue, continuously interacting with and reshaping each other. It highlights the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context in which texts are produced and interpreted.

An intertextual analysis of two or more texts based on their allusive connections might not always yield a complete understanding. Intertextuality transcends the boundaries of time, place, familiarity, allusions, and influence. The intertextual proximity between texts can be determined by their exploration of

similar themes, projection of identical motifs, portrayal of similar characters, depiction of parallel situations, and treatment of common issues. When viewed through an intertextual lens, texts expressing similar themes may be temporally and spatially distant, and the authors may not have alluded to, influenced, or even known about each other. In the same vein, Paul Ricour points out that intertextuality involves a deeper engagement with the themes and issues that resonate across different texts, regardless of their temporal or spatial proximity:

> Each text is free to enter into relation with all the other texts which come to take the place of circumstantial reality referred to by living speech. This relation of text to text engenders the quasi-world of texts of literature (Ricour 149).

The preceding fascinating quote from Paul Ricœur highlights the concept of intertextuality, where texts interact with and reference each other, creating a rich tapestry of meanings and interpretations. This idea is particularly relevant in the study of literature, where understanding the connections between texts can deepen our appreciation and analysis.

In addition to the various perspectives on intertextuality discussed earlier, it is pertinent to note that T. S. Eliot can be considered a precursor to the theory of intertextuality. His works, particularly "The Waste Land," are rich with references, allusions, and quotations from a wide range of texts, demonstrating how literature is a tapestry woven from multiple sources. Eliot's approach to writing, which involves synthesizing and reworking existing texts, aligns closely with the principles of intertextuality as later articulated by scholars like Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva.

T. S. Eliot's contributions to the theory of intertextuality are profound and remarkable. It is pertinent to suggest that T. S. Eliot was a forerunner of the theories of intertextuality. In "Tradition and Individual Talent," Eliot emphasizes the interconnectedness of literary works, suggesting that no writer creates in isolation. He posits that the literary heritage of a culture forms an organic whole, where each poet's genius is a culmination of previous works. Eliot famously states that "the most individual parts of work may be those in which the dead poets, his [her] ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" ("Tradition" 71). Apparently, Eliot posits that the literary heritage of a nation is an interconnected whole, and no poet can create meaning in isolation, as their genius is shaped by preceding works. Furthermore, in "The Function of Criti-

cism," he describes tradition as paradigms or "systems in relation to which individual works of individual artists have their significance" ("Function" 77). This perspective aligns closely with the concept of intertextuality, where texts are seen as part of a larger dialogue, continuously referencing and reshaping each other. Eliot's views underscore the importance of understanding literary works within the broader context of their cultural and historical influences, highlighting the dynamic and interdependent nature of literary creation.

3. The Use of Allusions and Intertextuality in the Trilogy

A scrutinized critical reading of Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy from an intertextual perspective reveals new aesthetic and thematic dimensions embedded in the texts. Imad Ababneh illustrates that "literature is perceived as a transcending medium for language, culture and a sense of nationalism through which thematic convergence across different texts can be utilized. This convergence enables the critic to unite a set of texts that may differ in the means of expression and language through the universalism of the literary theme, and thus, purpose ultimately" (217). In the Trilogy, Mahfouz employs intertextuality for both thematic and aesthetic purposes. He integrates religious traditions and popular culture narratives to shape his portrayal of women, drawing on his extensive religious knowledge to infuse the text with Islamic and local culture references.

The three texts of the Trilogy are rich with Quranic and popular culture allusions used for thematic purposes. Likewise, the author incorporates elements from local poetry, folk songs, and Sufi heritage, reflecting the collective memory of the nation at a historical juncture. Mahfouz's deep understanding of Islamic faith allows him to weave cultural and religious references, including Prophetic traditions, into his fiction. This approach resonates with traditional readers who value piety and Islamic beliefs. In other words, In the Trilogy, Mahfouz extensively incorporates allusions from religious sources particularly the Quran and the biography of prophet Mohamed. M. Zabidin and E. Eldesoky illustrate that

> religious intertextuality is the first source that the writer employs in his literary creativity, as there is no text devoid of being influenced by ancient or contemporary texts. It is formed through his life experiences and readings of different and previous references, including the fictional text, which is characterized by the ability to contain heritage texts and transform them into an artistic and intellectual act. (285)

Further, Mahfouz incorporates references from the Quran to confirm his expectations of the inevitable defeat of the British occupation forces and their subsequent withdrawal from Egypt. In the first novel of the Trilogy (*Palace Walk*), the author incorporates the following citation from the Quran: "The Byzantines have been defeated in a nearby land but after their defeat, they will be victorious" (*Palace Walk* 469). The quote is extracted from the Quran, *Surat Ar-Rum* (*The Romans*), in which the defeat of the Romans at the hands of the Sassanians was prophesied: "1. Alif-Lâm-Mîm. 2. The Romans have been defeated. 3. In the nearest land and they after their defeat, they will be victorious'" (The Quran, 30:2–3).[4] The reference here is to the Byzantine–Sassanian War of 602–628 AD, when the Byzantines were defeated in the nearest land[5] leading the Persians to conquer Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Rhodes, and enter Anatolia. Mahfouz associates the Egyptians—who were conquered by the British invaders—with the Byzantines, who were defeated by the Persians. He prophesies that the Egyptians will win the battle with the British colonizers following the example of the ancient Byzantines in their conflict with the Persians.

In the Trilogy, Mahfouz's frequent allusions to the Quran serve not only literary and aesthetic purposes but also ethical and moral ones. He uses these references to highlight his critique of a patriarchal society that has long oppressed Egyptian women, often using religious narratives as justification. Additionally, Mahfouz occasionally uses references to superstitious beliefs rooted in local religious culture incorporating verses from the Quran. For instance, in *Palace Walk*, the author uses verses from the Quran, *Surat Al-Falaq* (*Daybreak*), to illustrate a common superstitious belief in Egyptian society about the fear of envy. An example is when a mother, in a moment of happiness, anxiously recites the verse, "And from the mischief of the envious person in his envy" (the Quran, 113:5), to protect her loved ones from the evil eye until they are out of sight.

In the Trilogy, Mahfouz incorporates verses from the Quran, often used by Muslims as incantations against evil, black magic, and witchcraft, for thematic purposes. For instance, Khadija, the daughter of the male protagonist of the Trilogy, Ahmed Abdul-Jawad, recites verses from *Surat Al-Falaq* to describe her Quranic schoolteacher associating his unattractive appearance with Satan. In

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[4] All quotations from the Holy Quran are cited from the following version: Abdulla Yusuf Ali, translator, *The Meaning of the Holy Quran (English, Arabic and Arabic Edition).*

[5] According to Muslim historians, the battle took place at the border region between Southern Iraq and Northern Syria.

Egyptian popular culture, verses from *Surat Al-Falaq* are traditionally recited to ward off the temptations of Satan or other evil spirits and frequently used in exorcising rituals. However, in the Trilogy, these verses are employed within the popular cultural context, where unattractive or repulsive individuals are metaphorically linked to Satan. In essence, Mahfouz incorporates these inter-texts from the Quran to allude to the widespread of ignorance and backwardness in the Egyptian society in the first half of the twentieth century. The author smuggles the hidden agenda of his novels between lines through intertextuality. He wants to illustrate that the Egyptians will never be able to defeat the British colonial forces occupying their country unless they get rid of a stagnant culture, which oppresses women and endorse superstitious beliefs.

At the same time, Mahfouz takes into consideration the requirements of his traditional audience. He selects allusions and intertextual references, which fulfil the horizons of expectations of highly conservative readers. For instance, the names of the female characters in the Trilogy evoke religious sentiment, as they are reminiscent of the Prophet's wives, Aisha and Khadija. This choice reinforces Mahfouz's complicated representation of the Egyptian society. Ironically, Khadija, one of the daughters of the male protagonist, Ahmed Abdel-Gawad, is portrayed as a simple-minded girl who lacks the beauty and feminine allure of her sister, Aisha, who has a singer's voice. Khadija embodies the stereotype of a girl who conforms to the patriarchal image of women, while Aisha challenges this image. Khadija, the conservative woman, criticizes her sister Aisha, saying: "Listen, madam, this is the home of an honorable man. There would be nothing wrong with his daughters having voices like donkeys, but it's a disgrace for them to be nothing but pretty pictures of no use or value" (*Palace Walk* 26).The references to the voice of donkeys is cited from some verses from the Quran, where the prophet Luke gives advice to his son: "And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys" (the Quran, 31: 19).

Additionally, Khadija adheres to local traditions, with her role confined to serving her father and brothers and assisting with household chores. Despite feeling abandoned by society, Khadija cannot protest against her social position. The narrator, however, shows no sympathy for Khadija's plight. Instead, the narrator describes her as a good-hearted person despite her sharp tongue, overlooking her psychological and feminine needs. Khadija's frequent outbursts are attributed to her being less attractive than Aisha. This lack of understanding

of Khadija's emotional needs aligns with the traditions of a society that has marginalized women for centuries.

Further, the narrator generally maintains a detached stance from the attitudes of both major and minor characters in the Trilogy texts. Throughout the Trilogy, the narrator describes socio-historical events neutrally, without intervening in the unfolding events. This neutrality is evident in the narrator's reluctance to judge the male protagonist's behavior. The narrator refrains from commenting on the male protagonist's demeaning attitude towards his illiterate wife, Amina. Similarly, the narrator does not express any disapproval of the protagonist's moral contradictions, such as visiting both the mosque and the brothel simultaneously. Moreover, the narrator does not reflect on the social conditions in Egypt that led to the proliferation of prostitution in downtown Cairo and remains impartial regarding similar traditions and values. In essence, the narrator's stance on immorality, patriarchy, and masculinity is neutral, neither endorsing nor criticizing prostitution or male moral transgressions. Historically, prostitution houses in big cities in Egypt such as Cairo and Alexandria increased dramatically during WWI and WWII in response to the demands of the British authorities, who encouraged the establishment of brothels to provide entertainment to the British soldiers anchored in Egypt during the two world wars.

Ahmed Abdel-Gawad, the male protagonist, was a regular visitor of brothels epitomizing masculine oppression through his numerous affairs with prostitutes. He embodies moral contradiction and ambivalence, being diligent in his prayers while simultaneously frequenting brothels. The narrator refrains from commenting on Abdel-Gawad's contradictory nature, reflecting the societal norms of the time where men indulged in debauchery while women were restricted from going out alone.

Mahfouz highlights the social and moral corruption stemming from economic disparities, which exacerbate class divisions. He frequently depicts the immoral relationships between the male protagonist and local prostitutes, suggesting that prostitution is a societal disease. However, the narrator reveals that the prostitutes in the brothel are victims of masculine exploitation and harsh economic conditions. In *Palace Walk*, one prostitute expresses her anger towards social hierarchies and criticizes the double standards and religious hypocrisy of a male-dominated society. She scornfully remarks "I'm afraid I would have to repeat my ritual ablutions." In response, Abdel-Gawad longingly asks,

"May I hope we can pray together?" He immediately seeks God's forgiveness for this joke, showing his internal conflict between his humor and his troubled conscience. The woman, with ironic coquetry, asks, "Do you mean, revered sir, the kind of prayer the muezzin says is better than sleep?" "No, prayer which is a form of sleep" (*Palace Walk* 93). In the preceding passage, the author plays on the meaning of the word "sleep" in Egyptian popular culture, where it refers to the sexual act and its religious connotations. In Muslim societies, the man who calls Muslims to prayer from the minaret of mosques is called the muezzin. When he calls for dawn prayers, he usually uses the phrase (prayer is better than sleep) urging worshippers to wake up and go to the mosque to perform congregational prayers. In the citation above, Mahfouz alludes to the contradiction and hypocrisy of the male community in Egypt, where men are indulgent in prostitution while keeping their prayers in mosques.

In other words, the author clearly plays on the dual meaning of the word "sleep" in the previous sentence to shed light on the character of the protagonist. The muezzin, who calls Muslims to prayer at the mosque, typically announces during dawn prayers that this ritual is better than sleeping. In her conversation with Ahmed Abdel-Gawad, the prostitute in the brothel alludes to a different kind of "sleep" associated with sexual activities. This situation underscores the duality, contradiction, and ambivalence of the male protagonist's character, who maintains his religious duties while simultaneously visiting both the mosque and the brothel.

Throughout the Trilogy, the author uses indirect references from the Quran to highlight the protagonist's immoral behavior. Employing a marvelous prose style and intertextual techniques, verses from the Quran (*Surat Al-Hadid*) are incorporated to comment on Abdel-Gawad's manners. Sultana, the prostitute, openly criticizes him. She could not keep herself from saying with a laugh, "What a man you are! On the outside you are dignified and pious, but inside you're licentious and debauched" (*Palace Walk* 94). The preceding phrase includes allusions to the holy Quran cited from *Surat Al-Hadid:* "On the [same] Day the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believed, 'Wait for us that we may acquire some of your light.' It will be said, 'Go back behind you and seek light.' And a wall will be placed between them with a door, its interior containing mercy, but on the outside of it is torment" (the Quran, 56:13). Apparently, the Quranic citation refers to the gloomy destiny of hypocrites such as the male protagonist of the Trilogy.

In addition to the use of religious intertextuality and allusions, the author, in various situations, refers to local superstitions integral to Egyptian society in the 1940s and 1950s, forming part of the popular cultural beliefs of that era. These superstitions are linked to the fear of envy and the harmful effects of envious eyes. Ironically, the narrator often alludes to Quranic verses related to envy when describing the status of prostitutes. In one incident in *Palace Walk*, a musician in the brothel claims that a singer/prostitute is subjected to envy because she has over a hundred lovers (*Palace Walk* 267).

In a similar fashion, Mahfouz, in the Trilogy, integrates references from Egyptian proverbial culture to serve thematic purposes. In another encounter with Ahmed Abdel Gawad, in the second book of the Trilogy (*Palace of Desire*), a prostitute crossed her arms over her chest and feigned surprise. Mockingly, she asked,

> [a]re you hungry, my master? We have mallow[6] greens and rabbit that will melt in your mouth Ahmed Abdel Gawad laughed loudly and said, "Fine! It's a deal. Mallow greens and rabbit supplemented by a glass of whiskey… then we'll amuse ourselves with some lute music and dancing and stretch out together for an hour while we digest the food." She waved her hand at him as though to tell him to back off. Then she said, "My God! If we don't speak up, he'll try to bring in his donkey too. Keep your distance. (*Palace of Desire* 102).

The reference to the donkey above evokes a famous Egyptian proverb, which means that in order to deter people from interfering in one's private life one should not remain silent but should speak up expressing discomfort. Part of the proverb says: "because we remain silent and do not speak up, he entered our house with his donkey."

Similarly, the author incorporates popular Egyptian folklore songs into the texts to highlight the moral duality of the male protagonist, who embodies the hypocrisy of a patriarchal society. After completing his prayers, he visits Zubayda, his favorite prostitute, and indulges in debauchery: "He took the tambourine and smiled as he rubbed it with his palm. His fingers began to strike it skillfully,

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[6] The reference here is to a famous Egyptian meal, which includes a kind of locally grown vegetable called *Molikeyah* in Arabic. Willian Hutchins, the translator of the *Trilogy*, was supposed to transcribe the formally mentioned word in order to show the local peculiarity of the word as a domestic Egyptian meal, but he did not.

and then the other instruments started playing. Zubayda glanced at the eyes fixed on her and sang: 'I'm an accomplice against myself/When my lover steals my heart'" (*Palace Walk* 103).

Moreover, the behavior of the protagonist who pursues the prostitute lusting after her occurs in various contexts: "She (Zubayda, the prostitute) escaped from his hand without any resistance this time. She gave him a lengthy look. She smiled and recited softly: 'My sparrow, Mother, my little bird/I'll play and show him what I have learned'" (*Palace Walk* 96). In the preceding lines, there are references to an Egyptian vernacular song using bird imagery, symbolizing eroticism and lovemaking in local folklore. Furthermore, in *Sugar Street*, the third part of the Trilogy, there are allusions to another folkloric song about diving and falling in love: "She took a drag on the water pipe and then sang: 'Teacher of girls show them how/to play instruments and sing'" (*Sugar Street* 100).

In the Trilogy, it is unsurprising that the narrator does not criticize Mr. Ahmed Abdel-Gawad, the oppressive husband and strict father who spends his time with prostitutes. Paradoxically, aspects of faith and pity are associated with his personality especially after his meeting with a cleric (Shaikh) in his shop: "The Shaikh left the store in a hurry and disappeared from sight. Abdel-Gawad kept on thinking. He was mulling over the dispute that had flared up between him and the Shaikh. Then he spread his hands out in entreaty. He mumbled, 'God, forgive me both my bygone and recent sings. God, You are clement and merciful'" (*Palace Walk* 44). In another context, the narrator justifies Mr. Abdel-Gawad's behavior: "After a brief laugh, he replied, 'How can you fault me for that? Didn't the Messenger of God (the blessing and peace of God upon him) speak of his love for perfume and women?'" (*Sugar Street* 40). In these references, the author incorporates allusions to the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad for thematic purposes.

In a similar manner, the author alludes to famous lines from local folklore songs to illustrate that Mr. Ahmed Abdel-Gawad's son, Yassin, follows his father's example. Yassin, like his father, spends his nights with women indulging in illicit desires through his involvement with prostitutes: "No matter how much his father's voice terrorized him, it could not silence the tunes the comedians had sung at the theatre. They leapt to his mind, in spite of himself, like ghosts appearing to a frightened person at night, and whispered: I'll sell my clothes for a kiss /From your creamy cheek, you Turkish delight,/ You, there, sweet as a tart/ You're a pudding too or even smoother" (*Palace Walk* 314). Moreover, the

narrator neither reprimands nor praises Yassin for marrying his father's ex-mistress, the prostitute, Zanouba. The narrator maintains a generationally neutral stance regarding the behavior and moral transgressions of the male characters. Overall, the narrator does not pass judgment on the societal value system or the characters' moral conduct. Therefore, the narrator neither favors nor blames one generation over the other. Instead, the narrator neutrally describes the continuation of masculine traditions inherited in patriarchal societies, which prioritize men and marginalize women. This is central to the traditional and conservative vision of the Trilogy; therefore, the author punctuates the texts of the trilogy with references and allusions cited from traditional and local sources.

4. Conclusion

Intertextuality is part of a radical rethinking of human subjectivity and expression, suggesting that meaning is generated by language itself rather than human intention. This view of intertextuality stems from 20th-century insights into the nature of language use and existence. Since no speaker invents their language anew, all linguistic expressions rely on the reuse of pre-existing utterances. Scholars argue that individual texts emerge from and are understood within the vast network of cultural discourses and languages. This perspective asserts that no text exists in isolation; instead, every text derives its meaning from an almost infinite array of preceding texts and significations. Initially expressed in the radical texts of early post-structuralism, intertextuality became a popular concept in literary criticism. From the 1970s onward, various critics and theorists have used the term to highlight formalist, political, psychoanalytical, feminist, postcolonial, postmodernist, and other interpretive approaches. These approaches sometimes align intertextuality with humanistic concepts like influence, allusion, citation, and appropriation, while at other times they continue to deconstruct traditional notions of intention.

Scholars used the concept of intertextuality for different purposes, focusing on the connections between texts. Despite differing interpretations, all theories and practices of intertextuality share a need to reimagine the act of reading. On this basis, reading is no longer seen as a simple encounter with a single, stable text. Instead, intertextual theories and practices demonstrate the necessity of moving beyond the Author-Text-Reader model to approaches that treat all texts as interconnected, challenging the very limits of interpretation. In order to map contemporary intertextual theories, one must explore various theoretical ap-

proaches to text analysis from their inception within the intertextual field. Each interpretation of intertextuality has its own precursors, which influenced the development of subsequent theories. In this context, intertextuality in Egyptian novels of Naguib Mahfouz highlights significant arguments and controversial issues as explicated in the paper.

The paper begins by discussing major issues about the use of allusions and intertextuality theories as a critical framework to analyze Mahfouz's Trilogy, examining its narratives and traditional elements in relation to classicist literature. It proposes a new critical perspective to uncover thematic and narrative aspects of the Trilogy, as well as characterization. Essentially, the paper aims to present a fresh critical reading of Mahfouz's Trilogy, distinct from previous analyses of his novels. Furthermore, it argues that Mahfouz is a classicist who integrates numerous traditional stylistic devices in his fiction, reflecting the aesthetic and thematic dimensions of his works. The Trilogy is enriched with allusions and references to the Quran, local folklore, and popular culture, displaying the novels' depth.

In the Trilogy, the author extensively incorporates allusions and inter-texts cited from religious sources and popular culture to express his aesthetic vision of the Egyptian society under the British occupation. Moreover, Mahfouz uses verses from the Quran, (*Surat Al-Falaq / Daybreak*)[7] to allude to popular/superstitious beliefs inherited in Egyptian society, particularly about the fear of envy (*Palace Walk* 23). He frequently refers to backward traditions resulting into masculine hegemony and marginalization of women and other vulnerable communities. The multiple allusions to the Holy Quran, in the Trilogy, serve literary and aesthetic purposes in addition to ethical and moral ends. In different parts of the text, the author uses allusions and references from Islamic holy books, Egyptian vernacular songs, local proverbs and popular culture origins to underline his vision about a patriarchal society, which has oppressed women for centuries using religious narratives as justifications.

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[7] Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak. From the evil of that which He created. From the evil of the darkness when it is intense. And from the evil of malignant witchcraft. And from the evil of the envier when he envied (the Quran, 113:5).

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TEKSTUALNE ALUZIJE U *KAIRSKOJ TRILOGIJI* NAGIBA MAHFUZA: STILISTIČKA PERSPEKTIVA

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Pitanje intertekstualnosti obrađeno je u djelima Mihaila Bahtina, posebno u *Problemima poetike Dostojevskoga* i *Dijaloškoj imaginaciji*. Bahtin ističe da je „funkcionalan tekst hibridna cjelina, a ne jedinstvena cjelovitost; složeni amalgam različitih formula" (Bahtin 76). Teorija intertekstualnosti dobila je različite dimenzije i šire aspekte u djelima poststrukturalističkih teoretičara poput Rolanda Barthesa i Julije Kristeve, koji su tekstove promatrali kao mreže drugih tekstova, ističući da snaga pisca leži u sposobnosti miješanja postojećih tekstova i oponašanja ranije pročitanih i napisanih gesta. Uključivanje teorija intertekstualnosti u kritička istraživanja književnih djela omogućuje dublje razumijevanje namjernih i skrivenih lanaca intertekstualnosti i aluzija unutar tekstova. Ovaj rad, kroz kritičke i analitičke okvire, pomno ispituje intertekstualne reference u *Kairskoj trilogiji* Nagiba Mahfuza (*Palača čežnje*, *Palača želja* i *Šećerna ulica*), istražujući njihovu funkciju i značenje. Rad tvrdi da autorova upotreba intertekstualnosti i aluzija iz različitih izvora unutar trilogije širi narativne horizonte i generira nova tumačenja. Nadalje, rad ističe kako autor rabi intertekstualnost kao stilistički alat, unoseći u tekstove reference na Kur'an, lokalni folklor i popularnu kulturu u estetske i tematske svrhe. Integracija raznovrsnih intertekstualnih referenca i citata iz drugih tekstova pojačava prikaz sociokulturne dinamike koja podržava patrijarhalno egipatsko društvo, a koje trilogija kritizira.

Ključne riječi: Nagib Mahfuz, *Kairska trilogija*, intertekstualnost, stilistika