Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days*: The Allegorical Sequel of *The Arabian Nights*

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Abstract

This article examines the influence of *The Arabian Nights* on Najib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days*. *The Arabian Nights* provides an archetypal narrative structure which Mahfouz utilizes in his *Arabian Nights and Days*. The purpose of this study scrutinizes the reformulation of four narrative elements pertinent to *The Arabian Nights*, namely, plot, narrator, characters, and setting. These elements exemplify the allegorical depiction of political corruption in the Egyptian society. The study's narrative scrutiny follows a textual analysis of the cyclical plot as used in *The Arabian Nights*. The narrator's name and identity is similar to *The Arabian Nights'* traditional narrator, but he will be studied in the light of modern Egyptian citizenship. A close reading of the characters' dialogic voice will extricate the author's implicit voice in the novel's magical real context. This voice critiques the dominating political corruption transpiring in an allegorical setting which resembles the contemporary Egyptian society. The conceptual framework used in this study draws up Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogic novel; whereby the author expresses his/her monologic, or abstract ideology, through the novel's dialogic voices.

Key words: Allegory; Dialogism; Mahfouz; Magical Realism; Monologism; Political Corruption

INTRODCUDTION

The Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz stands among the most important Arab novelists of the twentieth century. Mahfouz's novels form a live foundation for the Arabic realistic novel at the time. His fictional works depict the real experience of individuals who represent Arab and Egyptian societies at large (Abu Jweid and Sasa: 2014, 164). Through his fiction, Mahfouz creates realistic characters similar to the people of his society in order to observe socio-cultural anxiety, moral decline, and political corruption in the contemporary Egypt. In so doing, he hopes to break with the traditional negative conventions towards modernity.

Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* is a magical real retelling of *The Arabian Nights*. It begins with Shahriyar's decision to spare Shahrzad's life. After happy celebrations, the town is invaded by invisible fairy creatures. Many oppressive politicians, like Sanaan al-Gamali and Gamasa al-Bulti fall victims at the hands of such genies as Qumqam, Sakhrabout, and Zarambaha. As corruption and injustice proceed, the genies rejoice at pranking people who do not see them. At the beginning of the novel, Sindbad, for example, is fed up with his hard life in the town and leaves "into the arms of the invisible." Nur al-Din and Dunyazad get married and elope with each other. Unqualified politicians, like Yusuf al-Tahir, take over the authority in the town. Finally, the novel's end depicts the characters' positions. Sindbad comes back with riches. The town is happy with his wisdom, and Shariyar turns to be a repentant wise man.

In "The Arab Artist's Role in Society, Three Case Studies: Naguib Mahfouz, Tayeb Salih and Elias Khoury," Mona Takieddine Amyuni discusses Mahfouz's concern with social problems. In his subsequent works, Amyuni contends that Mahfouz offers critical views on "all" contemporary social problems of the Arab and Egyptian world; Amyuni comments:

While Mahfouz is extremely gentle and peaceful as a human being, a constructive civil servant throughout his career, he can be a vehement iconoclast in his fiction. Indeed, he constantly attacks and breaks deeply-ingrained beliefs and traditions that have grown hollow, and he exposes with great courage double standards, unjust behavior, and corruption of all sorts. (205)

In this article, l will specify the social problems that Amyuni approaches. I will focus on Mahfouz's perspective of critiquing political issues. By using a fictional critique, Mahfouz believes that literature can help solve such problems. In *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz utilizes *The Arabian Nights* as an intertext because it exemplifies the source of Arabic allegorical styles. *Arabian Nights and Days* presents an allegorical reformulation of *The Arabian Nights*' plot, narrator (first point of view), characters, and setting. As a sequel to *The Arabian Nights*, Mahfouz's novel begins with the celebration marriage of the Sultan to Scheherazade, which resembles *The Arabian Nights*' ending event.

2. *ARABIAN NIGHTS AND DAYS* AS AN ALLEGORICAL SEQUEL OF *THE ARABIAN NIGHTS*

Arabian Nights and Days has been perceived as a novel that embodies Mahfouz's vision of the human experience and a depiction of political reality in the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular (Abu Jweid and GhadaSasa: 2020, 338). In this thesis, however, I will highlight and discuss two distinctive features of the novel, namely, the use of the magical realist elements in *Arabian Nights and Days* and the critical relevance of intertextuality to the evaluation of the relationship between *The Arabian Nights* and *Arabian Nights and Days*.

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz depicts his society's suffering from political problems. Mahfouz's allegorical novel, therefore, has the ability to belittle the negative practices of the contemporary politics. *Arabian Nights and Days*, consequently, represents Mahfouz's critical allegorical perspective on contemporary politics of Egypt. For example, Mahfouz's "abstract" critique is verbalized in Abdul Qadir al-Maheeni's discontent with the city's dominant corrupt authority; Abdul Qadir al-Maheeni says: "How sorry I am for you, O my city, which today is controlled solely by hypocrites! Why, masters are only the worst cattle left in the stalls?" (7).

 In *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, Angus Fletcher discusses the mediative literary styles of allegory. Fletcher says that the linguistic aspects of the literary text can make its "words" more concrete through allegory; Fletcher explains:

Nothing is more remarkable than the iconographic complexity of some allegorical systems, yet this ingenuity can be accounted for in terms of a belief that runs concurrent with the magic of

names, the so-called 'omnipotence of words,' which is explained as a sort of super abstract withdrawal into a verbal universe. (296)

In addition, Fletcher talks about the authors' allegorical "allegiance" to political stance in their works. Authors support some ideological concerns which they aim to accomplish in their texts:

When the allegorical author wishes to strike an immediate emblematic effect, he is likely to use something like 'a banner with a strange device.' The effect is often militant. Banners suggest one's national heritage or one's allegiance to a system of political or religious faith. (94)

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz expresses his allegiance to a fair political authority. This appears in the ninth chapter where Dandan, Shahrazad's father, tells Shahrazad of Shahriyar's new personal state: "The sultan has changed and has become a new person full of piety and a sense of justice" (129). By depicting the Sultan as symbol of political authority, Mahfouz emphasizes his allegiance to a reformed "just" political faith.

Mahfouz strengthens the relationship between the individual and the collective experience. Faced with different afflictions, the novel's characters share the same fate in a corrupt society. For example, Shahriyar's following words represent the individuals' experience which resembles real world experience: "Do you know why I kept you close by me? Because I found in your aversion a continued torment that I deserved. What saddens me is that I believe that I deserve punishment" (217).

In *The Transformations of Allegory*, Gay Glifford discusses the concept of "abstractions" in literary texts. Glifford proposes that modern allegory forms a collective expression of realities outside the text; Glifford writes:

Modern allegories substitute the individual consciousness for shared values and for belief in external hierarchies, and in doing so distance themselves from the material in which abstractions are best expressed: objective phenomena and literary and philosophical traditions. (122)

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, the "dream device" appears in many chapters. In the fourth chapter, Sanaan al-Gamali's suffering begins in a dream. He dreams about the fairy creature's voice, Qumqam, which provokes him to commit a murder which costs him his life: "Sanaan opened his eyes to the voice of Umm Saad saying, 'What's made you sleep so late?' She lit the candle and he began to look about him in daze. If it were a dream, why did it fill him more than wakefulness itself?" (13). Here, Qumqam's voice allegorizes the suffering of the ordinary people. Qumqam's following words clarify this allegorical device: "What troublesome creatures you are! You don't stop yearning to enslave us in order to achieve your vile objectives. Have you not satisfied your greed by enslaving the weak among you?" (12).

Edwin Honig tackles the use of the allegorical "dream artifice" in *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory*. Honig

asserts that the "dream artifice" symbolically expresses the thematic features of a literary work. This device connects the fictional imagination with the real world outside the text:

> The dream artifice, or the inverted presentation of a hypothetical world resembling a dream, colors the whole allegorical fiction. In fixing character and ordeal, emblem or threshold symbol, symbolic narrative language and thematic resolution, the artifice takes on an authority of its own. (80)

Through using "dream artifice," Mahfouz creates a world similar to his society's contemporary politics. Qumqam's treatment of Sanaan al-Gamali, for example, threatens the dominant political authorities. Honig continues: "In the dream artifice, as in dreams generally, objects and persons often are recognized immediately because of the patent incongruity of their associations with other objects or persons" (81). Egyptian oppressed people, exemplified in Qumqam's character, will revolt to change injustice for the sake of social reformation.

In the example below, Abdul Qadir al-Maheeni's observation of political masters reflects Mahfouz's discontent with the real contemporary political scene: "How numerous are the lovers of vile things!" (7). This is close to Honig's discussion of the "ideological" goals of allegory. Allegory is utilized as a medium for "ideological" content:

> In addition to serving the expression of ideological aims, allegory is a fundamental device of hypothetical construction. In this broad way, allegory is part of the creative process, observable in all literature generally, where the formulation of vital beliefs seems essential to maximum expressiveness. (179)

3. MAGICAL REALISM IN *ARABIAN NIGHTS AND DAYS*

By utilizing allegorical aspects to comment on thematic issues in his novel, Mahfouz writes in the mode of magical realism (Abu Jweid and Termizi: 2015, 131). Apparently, Mahfouz utilizes some magical realism presentations. The supernatural figures, such as ghosts, genies, dead people, and ifrits are mere representations of magical elements. Mahfouz's utilization of magical realism as a mode of representation helps readers perceive the external reality outside the text (Abu Jweid, Termizi and Majeed: 2015, 73).

Wendy Faris and Lois Zamora, in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, argue that magical realism texts function as a "corrective" mode of the "political" and "cultural" agitation; Faris and Zamora argue that "in magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption: magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation" (3).

Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* observes

"everyday reality" through fictional depiction of "ordinary" life of Egyptian world. This is obvious through the genie's control over Sanaan's life. The genie accuses Sanaan and the chief of police Ali al-Salouli of being exploitive political men, and he wants Sanaan to kill Ali al-Salouli: "certainly he has suspicious relations with the chief of police [Ali al-Salouli] and doesn't hesitate to exploit times of inflation, but he is the most honest of merchants, also he is charitable and undertakes his religious devotion and is merciful to the poor" (23).

Faris and Zamora further claim that "in the magical realist texts... the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence-admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism" (3). This is clear in the course of *Arabian Nights and Days* where the existential end of the novel gives a gothic picture of everyday reality. Shahriyar's repentance state suggests the ordeal of political representatives at the end of their oppressive reign. In the quotation below, Shahriyar describes his experience to the ghost of Gamasa al-Bulti:

> I give the words of a man of experience, who said: 'it is an indication of truth's jealousy that it has not made for anyone a path to it, and that it has not deprived anyone of the hope of attaining it, and it has left people running in the deserts of perplexity and drowning in the seas of doubt; and he who thinks that he has dissociated himself from it has lost his way. Thus there is no attaining it and no avoiding it –it is inescapable. (228)

In contrast, the end of *The Arabian Nights* celebrates Shahryar's happiness. Mahfouz reformulates this dénouement to achieve his allegorical purpose which contrasts with *The Arabian Nights* author's entertaining purpose. In *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Peter Childs and Roger Fowler define the double nature of magical realism in relation to reality:

> At the same time and entwined with this political engagement was a formalist impulse to use realism to expose the inner strangeness of objects.... It emphasized the urge to perceive reality as in some sense unreal, and the unreal as in some sense embodying the real. (134)

In adopting magical realism to write a political critique, Mahfouz portrays the political "oppressive systems" when Gamasa al-Butli contemplates: "he who's too decent goes hungry in this city.' And he asked himself in fun, 'What would become of us if a just governor were to take over our affairs?'" (31). Gamasa, who is a political figure, longs for justice, but does not work for it.

Brenda Cooper, in *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*, talks about the "paradoxical" nature of magical realism. Cooper argues that magical realism forms a "metaphorical" approach for unifying contradictions; Cooper writes:

> Magical realism strives, with greater or lesser success, to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites; it contests polarities such as history versus magic, the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present and life versus death. Capturing such

boundaries between spaces is to exist in a third space, in the fertile interstices between these extremes of time or space. (1)

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, magical realism depicts life in a "mysterious" way. Sindbad and his adventures, for example, have been reincarnated in Mahfouz's novel as a symbol of people's harsh life. By choosing characters who resemble real people, Mahfouz creates a world akin to the social life of Arab and Egyptian world. In the following excerpt, Sindbad voices that social state which offers an exit from the oppressive political state:

"I am fed up with lanes and alleys. I am so fed up with carrying furniture around, with no hope of seeing anything new. Over there is another life:…. It is a magical call that cannot be resisted. I said to myself, 'Try your luck, Sindbad, and throw yourself into the arms of the invisible.'" (9)

Cooper further argues that magical realism can tackle thematic issues in literary texts. Consequently, magical realism exposes the "oppressive systems" that make life more "complex"; Cooper says: "It is the belief that systems of oppression continue to determine history and also that life is complex and paradoxical, mysterious and idiosyncratic; it is the certainty that if life is thus, art is doubly so" (3).

Accordingly, Mahfouz's characters look for safe escapes through magical real situations (Abu Jweid and Termizi: 2015, 16). The cap of invisibility, for example, rescues Ma'rouf the cobbler form the Sultan's punishment in the fifteenth chapter. By resorting to the tales of *The Arabian Nights*, Mahfouz tries to find exits for his social problems. Hasan al-Attar, for example, tells Sindbad of the situation of the city after his voyages which is corrupted by political authority:

'Many have died and have had their fill of death,' answered Hasan al-Attar, 'and many have been born and have not had their fill of life. People have fallen down from the heights, and other people have risen up from the depths; some have grown rich after being hungry, while others are begging after having been of high rank. Some of the finest and the worst of jinn have arrived in our city, and the latest news is that Ma'rouf the cobbler has been appointed to govern our quarter. (208-9)

In the seventh chapter, the exit from social problems is allegorically approximated through death experience. Gamasa contemplates his life and death experience:

Indeed he was Abdullah the living and Gamsa the dead: a strange experience never before known to man. Working for his daily bread in the company of Ragab, he would remember that he was alive; then, crossing the street under his suspended head, or seeing Rasmiya and Akraman, he would remember that he was dead. (53)

After death, Gamasa becomes aware of the suffering of people in his society. This magical new life incarnates Mahfouz's perception of fair and just politics. Additionally, real experience in magical real fiction employs ghosts tales. In *The Arabian Nights*, ghost tales involves the appearance of supernatural creatures, such

as jinns, transformed people, serpents, dead people, and so forth. For example, the "Tale of the Trader and the Jinni" tells a story about jinns and people transformed into animals. However, Mahfouz adapts the ghost's features in light of social realism.

Gamasa al-Bulti's ghost, for example, features the oppressed voices of society. Here, Mahfouz's narrator describes Gamasa al-Bulti's state after death:

He would inwardly address his suspended head with the words 'May you remain a symbol of the death of a wicked man who long abused his soul,' though his heart would continually be filled with nostalgia for his short-lived persona, that persona that had crowned its life with a sincere repentance, ever stirred by the thought that a man could die when alive or live when dead. (53)

Bruce Holland Rogers's commentary on the ghost story may help us understand Mahfouz's appreciation of the influence of the supernatural ghost. In "What Is Magical Realism, Really?" Rogers argues that: "the ghost is not a fantasy element but a manifestation of the reality of people who believe in and have "real" experiences of ghosts" (2). Similarly, Mahfouz's narrator describes Gamasa al-Bulti's death-in-life state: "From above the door hung the head of Gamasa al-Bulti…. His astonishment at his appearance did not cease, neither did his sadness for his family" (51). Here, Gamasa's ghost appears among people. His invisibility refers to the reality of his society. The poor lives become invisible. In this manner, Mahfouz reveals the connection between his characters and their social atmosphere. The characters reflect the same political problems that Mahfouz's real society suffers from.

In the same manner, Mahfouz's characters are acquainted with internal ghosts. Obviously, Mahfouz projects his political "phantom" into his fiction. The Sheikh's advice to Sindbad embodies the "inner" ghost that real people believe in:

"Know," said the Sheikh, "that you will not attain the rank of the devout until you pass through six obstacles. The first of these is that you should close the door of comfort and open that of hardship. The second is that you should close the door of renown and open that of insignificance. The third is that you should close the door of rest and open that of exertion. The fourth is that you should close the door of sleep and open that of wakefulness. The fifth is that you should close the door of riches and open that of poverty. The sixth is that you should close the door of hope and open the door of readiness for death." (219)

4. INTERTEXTUALITY IN *ARABIAN NIGHTS AND DAYS*

Mahfouz indirectly exposes the public's suffering through a magical real text (Abu Jweid: 2020, 208). In addition to this thematic feature, Mahfouz supports the influence of *The Arabian Nights* on his novel through reliance on intertextual relationship.

The concept of influence is approached in terms of intertextuality because of some relative pertaining features (Abu Jweid and Kaur 8). In *The Theory of Criticism From Plato to the Present*, Raman Selden discusses Northrop Frye's treatment of intertextual influence: "The structural principles of literature… are to be derived from archetypal and anagogic criticism, the only kinds that assume a larger context of literature as a whole" (355)

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, characters' names and their positions are the same as those of *The Arabian Nights*. As such, Mahfouz's reading of *The Arabian Nights* influences his writing style because he chooses to begin where *The Arabian Nights* ends. Being so, he reformulates the characterizations of *The Arabian Nights* for allegorical purposes. This is true in the Mahfouzian borrowing some of *The Arabian Nights*' characters, notably, Shahryar, Shahrazad, Dunyazad, Nur Al-Din, Alaeddin, and Sindbad.

Sindbad's adventures, for example, appear in the middle of *The Arabian Nights*. In contrast, he leaves his homeland at the beginning of *Arabian Nights and Days* and returns at the end. This indicates the allegorical nature of the Mahfouzian styles that attack real political authorities. This is apparent in the different characterizations that Mahfouz assigns to his characters. For example, Shahriyar appears as a repentant man from the very beginning of *Arabian Nights and Days*. However, he acts like a murderer in the frame narrative of *The Arabian Nights*. Thus, Shahriyar's repentant state conveys Mahfouz's allegorical message to the political representatives of the contemporary authority.

Another key representative of the theory of intertextuality is Julia Kristeva. Kristeva gives several illustrative definitions of intertextuality. Juliana de Noody approaches Kristeva's definitions of intertextuality in *Derrida, Kristeva, and the Dividing Line*. Kristeva defines intertextuality as "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity" (270). It is therefore the contention of Kristeva that intertextuality is a process of reading another text, whereby an author's work becomes a re-writing process by reading other texts i.e., the written work is a reformulation of another one.

Using Kristeva's terminology, the reader can perceive Mahfouz's absorption and transformation of *The Arabian Nights*. As a reader, Mahfouz absorbs the text of *The Arabian Nights*, but as a writer he transforms it in a manner that suits his critical perspective. Again, intertextuality refers to the relationship between literary texts. This is explained in Martin Coyle *et al*'s discussion of intertextuality in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*. Coyle *et al* contend that:

> For deconstruction, 'intertextuality' refers to both the relationship among literary texts and the dialogue between

them and other writing. Each text takes its meaning from other texts, not merely prior texts, but other concomitant texts and expressions of culture and language. (613)

In the same manner, *Arabian Nights and Days* formulates its textual meaning from *The Arabian Nights*, yet it expresses the author's social concerns inherent in the political problems of his society.

In the same vein, postmodernist critics try to highlight the "intertextual elements" in literary texts. Ayo Kehinde discusses this intertextual issue in "Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Fiction." Kehinde tackles intertextuality in terms of its "unconscious" influence: "all literary works are to some extent 'rewritten,' although this may be an unconscious practice of the societies that read them" (373). Therefore, Mahfouz's intertexual reading of *The Arabian Nights* provides him with the whole textual style. Additionally, the utilization of the same characters' names, plot, and the setting is part of Mahfouz's rewriting of *The Arabian Nights*' text.

For example, the seven voyages of Sindbad the Seaman are similar citations of *The Arabian Nights* Sindbad's adventures. In the following excerpts, there is a similar intertextual correspondence between stories of Sindbad in *The Arabian Nights* and *Arabian Nights and Days*. In *The Arabian Nights*, Sindbad tells his story in the second voyage: "I went up to it and filled my pockets and shawl girdle and turban and the folds of my clothes with the choicest diamonds" (310). Similarly, in *Arabian Nights and Days*, Sindbad describes his second adventure:

> Then I noticed that the earth was giving out beams that dazzled my eyes. When I investigated, the surface of the ground revealed uncut diamonds. Despite my wretchedness, my avidity was aroused and I tore out as many as I could and tied them up in my trousers. (212)

As argued earlier, I will study the intertextual relationship between *The Arabian Nights* and *Arabian Nights and Days* depending, at least, on Kristeva's appropriation of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. In *The Kristeva Reader*, Toril Moi talks about the relation between Kristeva's and Bakhtin's intertextual theories. Moi argues:

> In this context Kisteva's insistence on the importance of the speaking subject as the principal object for linguistic analysis would seem to have its roots in her own reading of Bakhtinian 'dialogism' as an open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee, an analysis which also gives rise to the Kristevan concept of 'intertextuality.' (34)

In a similar way, Mahfouz's text represents a dialogic relationship between the reader and the author. For example, the following discourse between Sakhrabout and Ugr embodies the communicative relationship between the author and the reader (addressee):

> May God honor His Majesty the Sultan, for the palace astrologer has indicated that the state of the kingdom will not thrive unless its affairs are taken over by vagabonds. So His Majesty has

ordered that the vagabonds be apprehended so that he may
choose from among them those to fill the various commands.
(126)

Here, Sakhrabout represents the Mahfouz's political
critique. In turn, the reader absorbs the text's meaning
(Abu Jweid and Termizi: 2015, 1070). Simultaneously, the
author's critical notion is conveyed from inside the textual
discourse (Abu Jweid: 2020, 103). In *Arabian Nights and
Days*, it is obvious that "the language of communication"
is presented by "a unified subject." The speaking subject
incarnates the authorial "monologic" voice, as Qumqam
tells Sanaan al-Gamali: "What troublesome creatures
you are! You don't stop yearning to enslave us in order to
achieve your vile objectives. Have you not satisfied your
greed by enslaving the weak among you?" (12).

Here, Sanaan, the political statesman, is threatened
by the genie who embodies the public discontent with the
prevailing authority. The fictional authority in Mahfouz's
novel is dominated by Shahriyar and his statesmen, among
them Sanaan al-Gamali, Gamasa al-Bulti and others. The
speaking subject in Mahfouz's novel reveals the authorial
abstract voice in the text. In the above example, the
dialogic relationship between the genie and Sanaan refers
to Mahfouz's disappointment with the outer political
reality.

Michael Holquist echoes the same idea in *Dialogism*:
Bakhtin and His World. Yet, Holquist discusses the
relationship between Kristeva's and Bakhtin's concept
of the textual "voice." Bakhtin, Holquist argues, replaces
Kristeva's "singular unified subject" with the common
relation between the "self" and "others." According
to Bakhtin, every person is influenced by others in an
inevitable close way; thereby no voice can be said in
isolation. Holquist comments:

> In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based
> on otherness. This otherness is not merely a dialectical alienation
> on its way to a sublation that will endow it with a unifying
> identity in higher consciousness. On the contrary: in dialogism is
> otherness. More accurately, it is the differential relation between
> a center and all that is not that center. (18)

Furthermore, Kristeva discusses the textual subject.
According to Kristeva, the subject's position indicates the
writer, characters, and the pronoun "I." Therefore, it is
divided into "the subject of enunciation" and "the subject
of utterance." In *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary
Literary Theory*, Jeremy Hawthorn comments on these
terms as follows:

> We can note that the important distinction between *utterance*
> and *statement* is that the former term links that which is uttered
> to its human originator, whereas the latter term concentrates
> attention on to the purely verbal result… *utterance*, that is
> to say, it calls to mind the *act* of producing a form of words
> which involves a human SUBJECT. In contrast, when enonce
> [enunciation] is used the intention is normally to consider a form
> of words independently from their context-bound association
> with a human subject. (69)

Consequently, in *Arabian Nights and Days*, the subject
of utterance and the subject of enunciation interweave
with each other. The following discourse between Umm
Saad and Sanaan Al-Gamali illustrates the function of
the subject of utterance and the subject of enunciation:
"What's got into people, father of Fadil? The girl's
been raped and murdered under the elementary school
stairway. A mere child, O Lord. Under the skin of certain
humans lie savage beasts" (19). Purportedly, Umm Saad's
reporting of the murder to Sanaan reveals the subject of
utterance where her words are directly uttered to Sannan.
This clarifies the textual nature of discourse. In contrast,
the subject of enunciation does not interact with the
present discourse.

Graham Allen discusses the nature of the subject of
enunciation in his book *Intertextuality*, Allen says: "The
subject, as poststructuralists like Kristeva and Barthes are
fond of declaring, is *lost* in writing" (39; interpolation in
origin). As such, Umm Saad's words undergo the subject
of enunciation since they correspond to the world outside
the written text. In this sense, the author, Mahfouz,
implicitly informs the readers of his critical perspective
on the contemporary social chaos caused by political
corruption.

In addition, intertextual theorists, however, tackle
the loss of the subject in language (Abu Jweid: 2016,
530). This explains the "apersonal" nature of language
in general to allude to both the speaker positions and
other people (Abu Jweid and Termizi: 2014, 178). This
is clear in John Anthony Cuddon's and Claire Preston's
Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory.
Cuddon and Preston maintain that:

> He [The French linguist, Emile Benveniste] distinguishes
> between the 'personal' and 'apersonal' aspects of language. In
> one sense 'I' is personal; in other, apersonal. When apersonal,
> '*I*' is nothing other than 'the person who utters the present
> instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance '*I*.'" (875;
> interpolation in origin)

To bring that into play, the following discourse
between Fadil and Sahloul embodies the linguistic
feature of the pronoun 'I': "you are the Angel of death!
Fadil exclaimed in even greater surprise. But Sahloul did
not reply. 'I want justice,' Fadil said brusquely" (193).
Here, the pronoun 'I' refers to Fadil, who exemplifies
the subject of utterance. Being so, it represents the
'personal' linguistic nature of the subject of utterance.
Simultaneously, this pronoun refers to the 'apersonal'
linguistic discourse since it is "lost" in textual writing, i.e.,
the 'I' refers to the authorial instance which directs the
'personal' linguistic instance of the character (Fadil) in the
text. In this 'apersonal' utterance, Mahfouz, as an author,
longs for a more just and fair political authority.

In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Bakhtin
focuses on "various forms and degrees" of the dialogic
relationship in discourse. Bakhtin argues that utterances in
literary discourses are directed towards some objects:

Discourse lives, as it were, beyond itself, in a living impulse [napravlennost] toward the object; if we detach ourselves completely from this impulse all we have left is the naked corps of the word, from which we can learn nothing at all about the social situation or the fate of a given word in life…. The whole matter consists in the fact that there may be, between "languages," highly specific dialogic relations; no matter how these languages are conceived, they may all be taken as particular points of view on the world. (292-93)

In the course of *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz provides a variety of dialogic discourses which relate to the authorial points of view. The quotation below, for example, reveals such authorial position. The following utterance is initiated from the omniscient point of view where the author's narrator directly addresses the reader:

The fever heat of those in positions of responsibility did not abate, nor does the harsh measure taken by them. As for the rest of the people, they became used to the accident grew bored with talking about it, then forgot about it. Soon the demands of life took over from the events of history. (61)

In this situation, the object of the discourse's utterance is, therefore, directed toward the corrupt political authority which is the subject of Mahfouz's critique. Moreover, the Sheikh and Abdul Qadir al-Maheeni mediate on political indifference and its tragic effect on society:

"People are poor creatures, master, and in need of someone to enlighten them about their lives."

"May a righteous soul will save a whole people," said the Sheikh with confidence."

"Ali al-Salouli is the governor of our quarter-how can the quarter be saved from his corruption?" inquired the doctor, suddenly showing resentment.

"But those who strive are of different ranks," the Sheikh said sadly.

"I am a doctor and what is right for the world is what concerns me." (6)

Again, the Sheikh and Abdul Qadir al-Maheeni strive to find the solution to their social problems. However, the nature of their dialogic relationship accentuates the author's insistence on the importance of reforming the political authority so as to make the contemporary society more peaceful.

Bakhtin provides another concept, namely, the "monologic voice." This authorial voice is characterized by the author's own voice. However, the dialogic voice relates to Bakhtin's notion of discourse that is initiated independently by the characters in the text. The following discourse exemplifies the dialogic relationship between the fairy creatures Sakrabout and Zarmbaha. Simultaneously, it implicitly reveals the relationship between the reader and the author: "The trick we played has become excessively complicated and will have exciting consequences," Zarmbaha replies, "Let's just let things take their course, seeing that they don't require our intervention" (91).

Furthermore, Bakhtin maintains that in the monologic voice the characters do not appear in the author's abstract voice. Instead, they depend on the author's monologic voice to carry out his critique in the text. Bakhtin *et al*, in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, put it in these terms:

Language is regarded from the speaker's standpoint as if there were only one speaker who does not have any necessary relation to other participants in speech communication. If the role of the other is taken into account at all, it is the role of a listener, who understands the speaker only passively. The utterance is adequate to its object (i.e., the content of the uttered thought) and to the person who is pronouncing the utterance. Language essentially needs only a speaker-one speaker-and an object for his speech. (68)

Additionally, the multiplicity of voices in *Arabian Nights and Days* provides rich examples which illustrate Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Bakhtin talks about the dialogic or heteroglossic novel: "It [heterrroglossia] serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (324).

Here, Bakhtin describes heteroglossia synonymously with dialogism. Examples of heteroglossia are evident in Mahfouz's narrative discourse. In the following excerpt, the author portrays the savage political position of Gamasa al-Bulti who, with the authority, became more corrupt:

He reacted to the defeat with the savagery of a man who regards everything as permissible in defense of his authority. Authority has completely absorbed him and had created of him something new so that he had become oblivious to the goodly words he had learned at the hands of the Sheik in the prayer room in the time of innocence. (40)

Here, heteroglossia provides a kind of interaction between the reader and the author. The description of Gamasa al-Bulti represents the author's monologic perspective on the dominant politics. In the same way, *The Arabian Nights*' narrator, Scheherazade, for example, tells the story of "The Three Apples" to Shahryar to thwart his misogyny.

The dialogic nature of this story involves Scheherazade and Shahryar simultaneously. Here, Shahryar recognizes his bloody misogyny of killing a virgin every night, and he stops at the end of *The Arabian Nights*. By its nature, dialogism occurs when the anonymous author of *The Arabian Nights* reveals his anti-misogyny ideological vision through the characters' discourse. At the end of Mahfouz's novel, however, Shahriyar suffers from his existential oppressive defect and stops his political tradition: "'Traditions are the past and of the past there things that must become outdated'" (214).

Scheherazade stands as both an intradiegetic narrator within the frame-tale of *The Arabian Nights* and heterodiegetic narrator, because she does not appear in the stories she tells to Shahryar. In contrast, Mahfouz reincarnates the narrator in *Arabian Nights and Days* by choosing an omniscient narrator.

In *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, Edward Quinn tackles the textual function of the omniscient narrator. The omniscient narrator carries out the author's ideology; Quinn writes:

A term for a type of FICTION in which the third-person NARRATOR has complete knowledge of the actions and thoughts of the characters. Frequently taken to be the 'voice' of the author, the omniscient narrator is the most common type of storytelling. (304)

In the same manner, Mahfouz's heterodiegetic narrator does not play any part in the whole narrative. Consequently, he represents the seeking eye of the authorial position who knows more than the characters themselves. For example, Mahfouz's narrator observes the textual reality through direct reporting of the author's depiction. Mahfouz describes the hard life which simple people, like the Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi, lead in times of oppressive political regime. This depiction is reflected in the eye of the omniscient narrator: "Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi lived in a simple dwelling in the old quarter" (5).

Mahfouz relies on the heterodiegetic point of view. In "The Return of Omniscience in Contemporary Fiction," Paul Dawson discusses the dual nature of the omniscient narrator. Dawson argues: "This narrator's divulgence of omniscient knowledge ranges from omnicommunication to free suppression, depending on the artistic strategy required" (147-148). To illustrate, Mahfouz's omniscient narrator observes the "omnicommunicative" relations in the text more than the characters themselves. This is because the omniscient narrator reports all *Arabian Nights and Days*' events.

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, the whole narrative is extra-diegetic. The author's omniscient narrator controls all the events of the plot. Mahfouz begins his novel with: "Following the dawn prayer, with clouds of darkness defying the vigorous thrust of light, the vizier Dandan was called to meeting with the sultan Shahriyar. Dandan's composure vanished" (1). This textual initiation reflects the extra-diegetic nature of *Arabian Nights and Days*' narration because it comes from "external focalization."

As I argued earlier, Mahfouz reformulates *The Arabian Nights*' setting. The temporal and spacious setting of *The Arabian Nights* occurs in different places, such as Iraq, India, Egypt, and Damascus during the Middle Ages (Abbasid period). In contrast, Mahfouz sets his novel in an anonymous town which suggests contemporary Arab world and Egypt in particular. The setting of Mahfouz's novel adds some critical notions that Mahfouz allegorically uses to critique the contemporary political scene. Because setting involves both time and place, I will study the interrelationship between the two. As for time, it constitutes the temporal nature of the text's time. O'Neill discusses the concepts of "order," "duration," and "frequency" in reference to Genette's narratological theory.

O'Neill argues that "the category of *order* contrasts the 'real' chronological order in which the events of the story took place and the order in which they are recounted by the particular narrative discourse" (42; interpolation in origin). In this respect, O'Neill says that Genette tackles the terms of "analepsis" and "prolepsis." These terms, according to O'Neill, "deviate" the temporal time of the literary work. O'Neill explains:

Genette catalogues a number of *anachronies* or deviations from this neutral mirroring of the chronological order, the most interesting of which for our purpose are those involving direction, namely backwards, as in the case of the *analepsis* (flashback), or forwards, as in the case of the *prolepsis* (flashforward). (42; interpolation in origin)

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, Shahriyar listens to Sindbad's adventures and immediately relates them to his past experience. Shahryiar's recalling of the past undergoes flashback in the category of order. The following excerpt illustrates Genette's flashback:

Shahryiar rose to his feet, his heart surging with overpowering emotions. He plunged into the garden above the royal walkway as a faint specter amid the forms of giant trees under countless stars. Voices of the past pressed in on his ears, erasing the melodies of the garden; the cheers of victory, the roars of anger, the groans of virgins, the raging of believers, the singing of hypocrites, and the calling of God's name from atop the minarets. The falseness of specious glory was made clear to him, like a mask of tattered paper that does not conceal the snakes of cruelty, tyranny, pillage, and blood that lie behind it. (216)

As for flashforward, the following excerpt, told by Mahfouz's omniscient narrator, describes the "foreshadowing" nature of *Arabian Nights and Days*:

He [Sanaan al-Gamali] understood the secrets of her [Umm Saad's] fears that corresponded to his own, for if mention were made of the genie, he did not know what would happen to his reputation as a merchant on the morrow, nor to what the reputation of his daughter Husniya and his son Fadil would be exposed. The dream would bring about total ruin. Also, he was sure of nothing. (14)

Here, Sanaan speculates his state after his terrible dream that will threaten his family. After his speculation, Sanaan dies and his dream comes true. His family, consequently, leads a poverty-stricken life.

Furthermore, O'Neill tackles Genette's concept of duration. O'Neill maintains that "the category of *duration* contrasts the amount of 'real' time elapsed in the story and the amount of discourse-time (which is to say, textual space) involved in presenting it" (43; interpolation in origin). For example, in the opening of *Arabian Nights and Days*, Dandan, Scheherazade's father, describes the time of Scheherazade's life with Shahriyar. Here, real time disappears through the duration of the story's time: "Three

years he [Dandan] had spent between fear and hope, between death and expectation; three years spent in the telling of stories; and, thanks to those stories, Sharazad's life span had been extended" (1). Scheherazade spends three years telling stories to Shahriyar. These years disappear in the text because they correspond to the text's time.

Additionally, O'Neill discusses Genette's concept of frequency. O'Neill says that "the category of *frequency*, finally, contrasts the number of times an 'event' really happened in the story and the number of times it is narrated" (43; interpolation in origin). In this temporal aspect, time, according to O'Neill, is restricted by "singulative," "repetitive" and "iterative narratives." The first of these "recounts once what happened once." The second "recounts more than once what 'really' happened only once." The last narrative "recounts only once what 'really' happened more than once" (43-4).

In light of this argument, the text of *Arabian Nights and Days* is "singulative" since it recounts "once what happened once." In the last two chapters, Shahriyar talks about the last ten years of his life. These ten years are not "real" because they correspond to the textual nature of the story's time:

> For the space of ten years I have lived torn between temptation and duty: I remember and I pretend to have forgotten; I show myself as refined and I lead a dissolute life; I proceed and I regret; I advance and I retreat; and in all circumstances I am tormented. The time has come for me to listen to the call of salvation, the call of wisdom. (pp.217-218)

Regarding the spacious setting, O'Neill talks about the "psychological" effects of fictional settings. These effects are made for technical goals; O'Neill continues: "the setting reflecting the mood of the action or the psyche of the characters or both, has been standard in device in literary texts for several centuries" (48). O'Neill, moreover, argues that settings elevate the reader's "interaction" with literary texts. O'Neill further says that "The reader's reaction to the story presented can thus certainly be coloured significantly by the particular setting chosen" (48). This is clear in Mahfouz's anonymous spacious setting which might help the reader to conceptualize the reality of Arab and Egyptian world.

CONCLUSION

This article has studied the critique of political corruption in Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days*. Since Mahfouz's main purpose lies in the contemporary political problems, he writes in a serious tone. The characters' threatening voices, the public ordeal, and the allegorical nature of *Arabian Nights and Days* convey the novel's message. The oppressive political dominance in Arab and Egyptian world may face the same fate that Mahfouz's allegorical political figures face.

Mahfouz's sequential writing of *The Arabian Nights* incarnates the Arab need for progress and prosperity. Apparently, *Arabian Nights and Days* represents that need in an allegorical text. Through allegory, the novel's intrinsic meaning can direct the Arab and Egyptian reader's consciousness to his/her reality in a deformed social life. Having perceived that reality, he/she may strive to escape it in different ways.

Throughout *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz relies on some magical real elements to express his hope to depart towards modernity. These elements embody the very reality of his society's people. Mahfouz tackles this theme seriously by relying on some intertextual relationships with *The Arabian Nights*.

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