
Language in the World of Naguib Mahfouz: A Textual Linguistic Criticism of Literary Discourse in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*

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Abstract: *Throughout his writing career, which lasted for more than 70 years, the Egyptian novelist and Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz was aware of the role of language and its relationship to society. For Mahfouz, language is not only a medium of representation, but also a means of intervention into the sociopolitical context. In al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb (The Thief and the Dogs), particularly, Mahfouz detaches standard Arabic from its regular territory in order to provide a clear view of the turbulent social life in Egypt after the 1952 revolution. He creates instead a new assemblage of classical fuṣḥā (heritage), contemporary fuṣḥā (modern), colloquial Arabic of the educated, and colloquial Arabic of the illiterate. The purpose of using this multi-level linguistic style by Mahfouz, it will be argued, is to give voice to the marginalized cultural groups in the post-revolutionary era. Therefore, the paper examines al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb from a linguistic perspective, aiming at analyzing and demonstrating the interaction between its linguistic style and polyphonic narrative structure. This analysis ultimately reveals that by using a multi-level linguistic style, Mahfouz is able to open a kind of foreign language within standard Arabic which escapes its monotypic mode of representation.*

Keywords: deterritorialization; discourse; language; Mahfouz; polyphony

1. Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 262) defines the novel as “a diversity of social speech types” and “a diversity of individual voices” which are “artistically organized.” This stems from “linguistic stratification” through a convergence of various social dialects and diversified ways of expression of specific social groups. The stratification relates to specific professions or literary genres, or may belong to various generations and age groups, which embrace multiple

philosophical and intellectual doctrines. In this sense, each single day could feature its unique lexis and reflections.

Language is a key fictional component. It is a social mirror, reflecting social interactions and interrelationships, including verbal ones. To create a novel, novelists use those verbal relationships among society members more than they use their own individual languages and styles. They employ the language of society, with all its contradictions and diversities, to create a fictional world reflected in the dialogical relationships among people. Hence, the novel is a multi-level linguistic product that orchestrates the creative novelist's logic and his/her worldview. The used language gives voice to people, unfold events, explains what is going on and makes the reader appreciate the experience handled by the writer (Othman 1989: 199). Language, moreover, is the main carrier of narrative elements and determines the bedrocks of thinking. It carries the set of interpretations and perceptions embedded in time and place. This makes a careful use of language in fiction very essential for the work's general fabric. In fact, both language and fictional content are inseparable. Given the ambiguity surrounding language as a system, and being a central element in the novel, the fictional language is a special variety of language.

With this in mind, the relationship between linguistics and fiction is inevitable. The speaker uses fictional discourse to address the reader, not to make a request or complaint *per se*, but to transform, practice and control language. In this way, language is renewed and turns into strings of words that want to deliver something new; discourse itself is the novel message (Volochnov 1986: 155). But linguistics here goes beyond sentence level in syntactic terms. It goes beyond *traditional* linguistics to include various linguistic branches and levels, to give way to critical interpretations and to have a perspective that matches many other critical theories of literature.

How can linguistics unfold the sociopolitical dimensions of a fictional work? This research is designed to answer this question. It attempts to approach Naguib Mahfouz's *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* [in English, *The Thief and the Dogs*]¹ from a linguistic perspective. The novel will be viewed as a full-fledged linguistic message delivered by a creative novelist who is aware of his society, to a conscious recipient who can decipher the codes of the message, trying to probe its meanings and implications. The paper is structured to cover the following key issues in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*:

- The nature of fictional language
- The use of *fushā* (Heritage)
- 'Contemporary' *fushā*
- Colloquial Arabic of the 'illiterate'
- Language Deterritorialization and Socipolitical Critique

2. Arabic linguistic criticism and its core components

Linguistic criticism is the product of the relationship that brings linguistics and literature together. A literary work is a linguistic discourse in which the critic – as a recipient – tries to understand discourse semantics and decipher its codes, describing the linguistic work using linguistic tools and on linguistic grounds, while avoiding unfounded judgments. In this way, linguistic criticism is closely related to linguistics. Some researchers even view it as a linguistic discipline in its own right, no less than linguistics proper, since it represents objective methodological application of various linguistic theories, validating them accordingly (Boushanab 2005: 94).

A linguistic critic needs a range of competencies that qualify him/her for the job. To begin with, *linguistic competence* stems from mastering linguistic tools. The critic should be aware that applying this knowledge to literary discourse is very critical. The linguistic critic produces a scientifically and artistically balanced work. While the scientific aspect relates to linguistic approaches and tools, the artistic one emanates from the literary work itself, yet while striking a balance between the two. Here stems the critical role of linguistic competence, which qualifies the critic to describe the levels of a linguistic work in a way that combines critical art and linguistics. In this way, the mission is based on critical foundations and systematic insights, ensuring that the linguistic critic has a clear vision and a systematic correlation between premises and conclusions and can come up with research questions and problems before heading to answers. Such criticism can feature coherent and consistent analysis (‘Alawi & Ahmad 2009: 194).

Another competence for a qualified linguistic critic is *contextual competence*, which enables the critic to understand the cultural context of the linguistic work and perceive its relationship with the world. As society is a key component of literary production and consumption, the linguistic critic must understand the dynamism and struggle that the novelist experienced with his/her society. The producer of a literary work is an active agent in a society, addressing his/her linguistic message to a recipient in the same society, which hosts this process along with its dynamisms and other forms of knowledge. It is this contextual space surrounding the literary work that the contextual competence is expected to cover.

Finally, a *deductive competence* allows the critic to probe the linguistic work as units of reference to their signifieds at phonological, morphological, structural and textual levels. It gives an interpretive ability that leads from premises, drawn from the linguistic work, to conclusions and interpretations.

These competencies help the critic *interpret* the literary work, not just *evaluate* it. Here, the major difference between a linguistic approach and other approaches to criticism in the Arab culture becomes clear. Those approaches feature a “syntactic view combined with making generalizations, unexplained overall impressions and portraying sentiments in a more poetical fashion” (Abbas 1981: 13). Their critical benchmarks do not go beyond meaning and semantic accuracy. Explaining these norms, al-Jurjani writes: “The Arabs only evaluated the quality of poetry in terms of meaning and accuracy – how poets used eloquent lexis in the right place and for original descriptions” (qtd. in Sobhi 1978: 291). Linguistic criticism shifted from exploring denotations to exploring the meaning originating from linguistic ranks. Indifferent to traditional approaches to the intended meaning, the new trend is preoccupied with describing and exploring the meanings emanating from various linguistic ranks and those resulting from this dialectical interaction with the text.

Arabic Linguistic criticism, especially following de Saussure’s linguistics in early twentieth century, has become more scientific and descriptive, distancing itself from judgmental normative evaluations. Discourse is studied as a linguistic message sent by a writer/ speaker to a recipient in a sociocultural setting. Linguistic criticism exhibits four characteristics, describing its scientific nature as a procedural tool with a cognitive perspective. These include:

- A. Relative vs. absolute,
- B. Dynamic vs. static,
- C. Deductive vs. projective,
- D. Descriptive vs. normative (Al-Ghadami 1987: 74).

Arabic Linguistic criticism has developed a more accurate view to the linguistic text primarily. Methodologically, therefore, the study adopts a *linguistic* approach in the scientific sense of the term.

3. *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* between text and discourse

First published in 1961, *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* came at an already shifting historical context following the 1952 revolution, a context rife with socialist slogans and principles of justice. However, *would Naguib Mahfouz see society as everybody else did?* Of course not. As every writer has his/her own view of social and cultural reality, Mahfouz saw how these slogans were flouted. Some people exploited the historical transformation of society and made huge fortunes for their own pockets. Their illicit profits even exceeded the wealth of those people whom the revolution considered *feudals* – a grave violation of revolutionary principles.

In this context, Mahfouz released in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* his linguistic message, with its complex fictional world, to his readers to report this historical moment:

As such, the novel takes us directly from an epic atmosphere to tragedy proper. The desired change took place in an atmosphere that was just highly turbulent. There was no political organization to lead the socialist aspirations of the public. Individual, official decisions took effect by coercion and without accountability. Revolutionaries are unable to help correct wrongdoings. ... Amidst this complete absence of organization and democracy, along with the official decisions which were inconsistent with the executive tools of the old hegemonic state, revolutionaries fell into a new violent crisis between the revolutionary side – joining the new fledgling class yet becoming traitors – and the profoundly loyal side to both the book and the gun. (Shukri 1982: 356)

Here, the linguistic text turns into a discourse laden with various meanings across multiple levels, targeting an audience that can decipher the message. Critics argue that the work belongs to critical realism. It depicts the progress of the Egyptian society after the 1952 revolution and the Free Officers Movement following the shifts of the Egyptian personality, which believed in and advocated for revolutionary principles, yet was shocked at seeing the revolution serving the interests of those profiteers – in the absence of authority – whom the revolution broke out primarily to overthrow.

4. Linguistic diversity and richness in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*

4.1. The nature of fictional language

If poetry is the optimal use of language, or ideal language, and if this level of language is under the complete control of the poet's consciousness – often called 'poetic function' (Al-'Awf 1993: 168) – then language, in the fictional discourse, goes beyond this poetic function and this ideal level. It turns into a social mirror that reflects the members of the social institution in a fictional world. It depicts people's tendencies, thoughts and emotions and presents a true portrayal of their living standards. Making a comparison between the language of poetry and that of fiction, Robert Scholes (1994: 189) argues that poetry is exquisite; its words are fixed in the text, and is therefore untranslatable. Fiction (narration) proved to be largely translatable since its essence does not lie in its language but in its narrative structure. The closer is fiction to poetry, the subtle nature of fictional words becomes more significant. The more poetry moves towards fiction, poetical language becomes less significant.

Above all, fiction is a linguistic form carrying various linguistic levels. In this way, it “is not based on its theme or its artistic form, although they are essential components, as much as it is based on the connection between its language and reality” (Barakat 1998: 72). The novel always holds an organic relationship with society, a relationship that goes beyond its own themes or the author’s opinions (69). With this in mind, the fictional language cannot be viewed separately from its context, nor as a phonological or syntactic structure governed by fixed laws. It has to be viewed as a mirror to the world and a conscious representation of the dialectical relationship among fictional characters in their human dimension.

Since his early years of writing fiction, Mahfouz was aware of the nature of fictional language and its relationship with society. He was able to create a mixture of standard and colloquial levels, carefully choosing a certain level for each character. Mahfouz was able to provide a clear and subtle depiction of the language of each character in a realistic framework. In an interview, Mahfouz describes his fictional language by arguing that:

في الحقيقة يصعب الفصل لأنني أندمج في الشخصية، فهي لغة الاثنين، الرواي والشخصية معاً، ولم أضبط نفسي مثلنسا بالبحث عن لغة تخص هذا الرجل أو هذه المرأة، وإنما المشكلة التي صادقتني من اليوم الأول لكتابة القصة هو الازدواج اللغوي بين لغة الكلام ولغة الكتابة، فلغتي تبدو كما لو أنها عامية، وهي ليست كذلك بل أحاول توحيد الفكر واللسان في الكتابة، أحياناً أستخدم ألفاظاً يعتقد البعض أنها عامية، وهي فصيحة، ويعتقد البعض الآخر أن هذا تعبير شعبي غير فصيح التركيب، ولكنه نحوياً فصيح التركيب، يبدو لي أن هناك روحاً للغة، أنا أكتب بالعربية الفصحى حقاً، ولكنها العربية الحية بالروح العصرية، بالمجاهدة الذاتية حولت العربية إلى المصرية دون تقنين، وهي عملية أخذت وقتاً لأنها مضت ببطء والتطور اللغوي في أعمالي يتم-إذا تم- دون وعي أو تعمد من جانبي.

[In fact, it is difficult to make a distinction since I relate to the character itself. It is the language of both, the narrator and the character together. I have not found myself looking for a language for this man or woman. The real problem I encountered from the first day of writing novels was the diglossia between the spoken language and the written one. My language seems colloquial. It is not colloquial, however. I only try to combine both thought and tongue in writing. Sometimes, I use words which some people think are colloquial, while they are standard. Others think that a given expression is colloquial and follows non-standard structure, but it is structurally standard. It seems to me that there is a spirit in language. I really write in standard Arabic. But it is live Arabic in a modern spirit. With personal efforts, I Egyptianized Arabic with little rules, a process that took time because it was slow, and the linguistic development in my works takes place - if it really does - unconsciously and unintentionally.] (qtd. in Shukri 1988: 64-65; *my translation*)

4.2. Language levels and polyphony in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*

Language levels in Mahfouz’s *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* are as varied as the fictional characters. Each character speaks its own language. Each situation invokes a unique variety. This gives the work a value, as it is only viable and effective through dialogue and laden ideologies. Each character has its own viewpoint and expresses a certain ideology as opposed to competing ideologies embraced by other characters. This prompted Bakhtin to argue that each fictional character must embrace an ideology, almost introducing a complete character for every opinion (Al-Gahidah 2016: 66). This is noticeably clear in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* as each character speaks up while having a discussion with the protagonist Said Mahran. Here, we notice five levels of standard Arabic used by Mahfouz in his fictional depiction of the sociopolitical atmosphere in the Egyptian post-revolutionary era:

- 1- **'Heritage' *fushā***: A traditional standard variety corresponding largely to Classical Arabic.
- 2- **'Contemporary' *fushā***: A variety particularly influenced by modern culture.
- 3- **Colloquial Arabic of the 'highly educated'**: A colloquial variety influenced by both heritage and modern culture.
- 4- **Colloquial Arabic of the 'enlightened'**: A colloquial variety influenced by modern culture.
- 5- **Colloquial Arabic of the 'illiterate'**: A colloquial variety, relatively influenced by nothing, neither by heritage nor by modern culture.

A closer look at *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* illustrates how the work aptly reflects this linguistic diversity.

4.2.1. Religious language ('heritage' *Fushā*)

A 'Sufi' religious sense often permeates Naguib Mahfouz's works. Mahfouz tried to explore the depths of the human self in search of solutions to man's existential crisis, which occupied him in most of his novels. This shows the early insights that drew Mahfouz to mysticism as a feature of life, as he reflects:

لقد أخذت التصوف في البداية على أنه أدب روحي رفيع لكنني تأثرت به تأثراً خاصاً، فالتصوف بالنسبة لي لم يجعلني أنفصل عن الحياة أو أزهدها فيها، بل العكس جعلني أتخذ من تربيته الروحية وسيلة لتحسين علاقتي بالحياة ومن ثم الناس وبالعمل

Initially, I viewed sufism as a fine spiritual literature, but I was particularly affected. For me, sufism did not make me detached from life or make me ascetic. On the contrary, it made me draw from its spiritual doctrines a means to improve my relationship with life and then people and work" (Salmawy 2020; *my translation*).

This language variety is clear through the relationship between Mahran and Sheikh Ali al-Junaydi, whom Mahran visits often. The following turns by Sheikh al-Junaydi illustrate this:

- "واباب السماء كيف وجدته؟" [And the door of Heaven? How have you found that?] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 25).
- "أما تستحي أن تطلب رضا من لست عنه براض" [Aren't you ashamed to ask for His good pleasure while you are not well pleased with him] (26).
- "ضعف الطالب والمطلوب" [Weak are the seeker and the sought] (27).
- "اللهم إنك تعلم عجزتي عن مواضع شكرك فاشكر نفسك عني، هكذا قال بعض الشاكرين" [Lord, you know how incapable I am of doing You justice in thanking you, so please thank yourself on my account! Thus speak one of the grateful] (27).
- "خذ مصحفاً واقرأ" [Take a copy of the Koran and read] (28).
- "توضأ واقرأ" [Wash yourself now and read] (28).
- "توضأ واقرأ" قل إن كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله، واقرأ "واصطنعتك لنفسي" وردد قول القائل "المحبة هي الموافقة أي الطاعة له فيما أمر، والانتهاه عما زجر، والرضا بما حكم وقدر" [Wash and read the verses: 'Say to them: if you love God, then follow me and god will love you' and 'I have chosen thee for Myself.' Also repeat the words: 'Love is acceptance, which means obeying His commands and refraining from what He has prohibited and contentment with what He devrees and ordians'] (31).
- "ألا تصلي الفجر؟" [Aren't you going to perform the dawn prayers?] (81).

This variety shows how Mahfouz employs the Quranic text not only for sheer citation nor for evoking a religious dimension for characters or for using a classical variety, but as an investment that serves the fictional plot. The variety makes a detachment between Mahran, an educated youngman preoccupied with the issues of his homeland, and Sheikh Junaydi, a representative of the religious perspective in the work. Al-Junaydi's words could not touch Mahran's heart. Unlike his late father, a former follower of Junaydi, the protagonist fails to make sense of this linguistic level. The sheikh wants to move away from the epicenter of events, always directing Mahran to God to "Wash and read the verses".

The language of religious discourse turns even into a persuasive one to accept the *fait accompli*. The mystic says:

- "المحبة هي الموافقة أي الطاعة له فيما أمر، والانتهاه عما زجر، والرضا بما حكم وقدر" [Love is acceptance, which means obeying His commands and refraining from what He has prohibited and contentment with what He decrees and ordains] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 31).
- "الصبر مقدس تقديس به الأشياء" [Patience is holy and through it things are blessed.] (162)
- "التوكل ترك الإيواء إلا إلى الله" [Trusting God means entrusting one's lodging to God alone.] (163)

There is a gap between a man experiencing the social crisis of the time and falling victim to his principles and the fictional voice of faith. The breakdown of communication between the two personae is strengthened by the nature of semantic ambiguity intended by Junaydi. This prompts Mahran to say, من المؤسف أنني لم أجد عندك طعاما كافيا ... كذلك عقلي يتعذر عليه فهمك، وسأدفن وجهي في الجدار [It is regrettable that I didn't find sufficient food in your home.... Also my mind does fail to comprehend you and I will turn my face to the wall] (87). Mahfouz's desire to keep Mahran and al-Junaydi detached is what led him to employ this highly mysterious, mystic use of language:

The Sufi language is an uncommon variety. It surprises and betrays a sense of dissatisfaction. It shocks the commonsense. The terms are not only new, but the words also take on a different function and novel meanings. The Sufi gives the common word, that which everyone knows, a spirit and an attitude it never denoted. He makes it carry a sense that cannot be carried by other words. (Zayour 1984: 46)

Al-Junaydi's language illustrates the use of *fushhā* (heritage) in the novel, including its phonological features that follow the standard rules of pronouncing consonants and vowels and other sound idiosyncrasies. These qualities give this level a special phonetic character.

Language power also is reflected through al-Junaydi's choice of lexis and syntactic structures. Through Junaydi's choices, Mahfouz is able to portray an ideal level of language. Consider, for example, the following structure: المحبة هي الموافقة أي الطاعة له فيما أمر، والانتهاه عما زجر، والرضا بما حكم وقدر [Love is acceptance, which means obeying His commands and refraining from what He has prohibited and contentment with what He decrees and ordains] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 16). The clauses are structurally harmonious. They feature consistent parts, beginning with the subject, *love*, then comes a multi-predicate to define this subject, with each adding a new meaning to the previous one. More meaning unfolds as more words are introduced. This level best suits poetry, which uses language in its ideal form. This is clear through a dialogue between Mahran and Junaydi:

ردد الشيخ على الجنيدى ثلاثا "الله" فردد الآخرون النداء في نعمة... وعند ذاك علا صوت رخيم مترنما:

واحسرتي، ضاع الزمان، ولم أفز
 منكم، أهيل مودتي بلقاء
 ومتى يؤمل راحة من عمره
 يومان، يوم قلى، وبم تناء
 وارتفعت التأوهات في الأركان، ثم ارتفع صوت آخر يترنم:
 وكفر غراما أن أبيت متيما
 شوقي أمامي والقضاء ورائي

[Sheikh Ali al-Junaudi chanted the word ‘Allah’ three times and the others repeated the call, with a melody that brought the memory of the notion of the mystic dance to his mind once more: Allah...Allah...Allah.

At that point a full, fine voice arose in a chanted meoldy:

My time in vain is gone

And I have not succeeded.

For a meeting how I long,

But hope of peace is ended

When life is two days long;

One day of vexation

And one of separation.] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 169)

Aesthetically depicting sincere feelings, this highly poetical language failed, however, to make sense to the addressee, Mahran, within the fictional mode. The linguistic level creates a gap between the two personae. It is a one-way communication in which Mahran cannot decipher the linguistic message. By doing so, Mahfouz is able to make this level, *fushhā*, lay idle outside its typical religious circles represented by Sheikh Junaydi and his addressees.

The novelist wants to show how the religious institution’s choice of language to address the public is not an uncalculated decision. It is carefully selected for a specific ideological purpose that serves their interests in interacting with authority. This style only makes sense to those belonging to the religious enclave, a logic that saves Junaydi from getting involved with Mahran and empathizing with the protagonist’s real problems. Mafouz aptly portrays this in the following part:

فابتسم سعيد مرة أخرى، كاد يبأس من التلاقي، ثم تساءل في حرارة:
 هل تذكرتني؟
 فغمغم الشيخ دون مبالاة:
 -ولك الساعة التي أنت فيها!

- [Said smiled again, though he’d almost given up hope for being able to communicate, and asked, ‘Do you remember me?’
- “Your concern is the present hour?” (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 24)

It is also noticeable that most of Junaydi’s language uses the Koran and the Hadith, such as *ضعف الطالب والمطلوب* [Weaker are the seeker and the sought] (27), and features several

supplication-like answers, such as *اللهم إنك تعلم عجزى عن مواضع شكرك فاشكر نفسك عني، هكذا قال بعض الشاكرين* [Lord, you know how incapable I am of doing You justice in thanking you, so please thank yourself on my account! Thus speak one of the grateful] (27). The religious text dominates the linguistic structures of the fictional language, borrowing from “heritage” to create an aura around the speaker who cannot communicate with others unless they possess this particular variety. Desperate of communication, Mahran ultimately expresses this disconnection by telling al-Junaydi, *كم أعرضت عني حتى خلثك تطردني طردا، [My father could understand you. But me you turned away from, treating me as if you were turning me out of your house]* (25).

Mahfouz tries to flag this gap in order to urge his readers to decode the message that he wants to convey. In chapter eight, he refers to a “dream” that Mahran has, in which Junaydi assesses the communication between them. Here, the message becomes clearer. Mahfouz (1961 [2015]: 82-83) writes:

فاندس سعيد في حلقة الذكر التي يتوسطها الشيخ علي الجنيدى كي يغيب عن أعين مطارديه فأنكره الشيخ وسأله: من أنت؟ وكيف وجدت بيننا؟ فأجابه بأنه سعيد مهراى ابن عم مهراى مریده القديم وذكره بالنخلة والدوم والأيام الجميلة الماضية، فطالبه الشيخ ببطاقة الشخصية فعجب سعيد، وقال إن المرید ليس في حاجة إلى بطاقة... فأصر على مطالبته بالبطاقة قائلا: إن تعليمات الحكومة لا تتساهل في ذلك فعجب سعيد مرة أخرى وتساءل عن معنى تدخل الحكومة في المذهب، فقال الشيخ إن ذلك بناء على اقتراح للأستاذ الكبير رءوف علوان.

[Escaping his pursuers, Said then slipped into the circle of Sufi chanters gathered around Sheikh al-Junaydi, but the Sheikh denied him. ‘who are you?’ he asked. ‘How did you come to be with us?’ He told him he was Said Mahran, son of Amm Mahran, his old disciple, and reminded him of the old days, but the Sheikh demanded his identity card. Said was surprised and objected that a Sufi disciple didn’t need an identity card, that in the eyes of the mystical order the righteous and the sinner were alike... but the Sheikh insisted on seeing his card; the government instructions, he said, were stringent on this point. Said was astounded: why did the government interfere with the affairs of the order? He asked. The Sheikh informed him that it had all resulted from a suggestion by their great authority Rauf Ilwan.]

4.2.2. Authortative language (contemporary *Fuṣḥā*)

Concerned with contemporary life, ‘contemporary’ *fuṣḥā* is used for broadcasting, newscasts and political commentary. ‘Contemporary’ *fuṣḥā* is, therefore, a written record of modern day knowledge. In this level, “speakers may not follow grammar proper (*i’rāb*); it is safe, as it were, to use neutral grammatical endings (*taskīn*)” (Badawi 1973: 90). Sentence structure depends on word order, not grammatical endings. This makes sentence structure contextually free and flexible. Yet, the speaker can hide the meaning if he/she flouts the natural order of Arabic syntax. Consider the following example:

(ضرب أحمد محمد)

Lit. *Jack Has beaten Michael.*

Based on natural order, it was *Jack* who has beaten *Michael*. *Michael* is the patient. The speaker can rearrange the sentence based on the context. Meaning can only be made explicit by the speaker.

Absorbing social knowledge and contextually changing, this wide linguistic level, aptly called ‘authoritative’ language, is befitting Rauf Ilwan, the novel’s antagonist who is criticized by Mahran as “the naked reality—a partial corpse not even decently underground” (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 25). Although he was once a staunch critic of wealthy people, Ilwan, a former law student, becomes a wealthy influential figure in a short time. He turns into an opportunistic figure who can use his tactics to achieve his goals and personal interests through the poor grassroots. Historically, those people always stand under the spotlights as they look to be success stories to follow. They have to use this ‘contemporary’ *fushā* to express themselves. Some illustrations include:

- "كنت في انتظارك، على أتم استعداد، بل ورسمت لك طريق السير، وددت لو يخطئ ظني، ولكن [I've been waiting for you, fully prepared. In fact, I even drew up your plan of action. I'd hoped my expectation would be disappointed. But evidently no mistrust in you can prove groundless.] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 52)
- "لإفائدة، لن تنتهي من حقارتك، وستموت حقيراً، وخير ما افعله الآن أن أسلمك إلى البوليس" [It's no use. You'll always be worthless and you'll die a worthless death. The best thing I can do now is hand you over to the police.] (52).
- "أنت تفصح عن عداوتك، نسيت الإحسان وتركزت في الحقد والحسد، إنني أعرف أفكارك بقدر ما أعرف حركاتك" [‘what have you come for?’ Rauf demanded angrily. ‘You treat me as an enemy. You’ve forgotten my kindness, my charity. You feel nothing but malice and envy. I know your thoughts, as clearly as I know your actions’] (54-55).
- "لا عذر لك، أنا أقرأ أفكارك، قرأت كل جملة مرت بعقلك، كل جملة، الصورة الكاملة التي [There's no forgiving you. I can read your thoughts, everything that passes through your mind. I can see exactly what you think of me. And now it's time I delivered you to the police] (55).
- "إن رأيتك مرة أخرى فسأسحقك كحشرة" [‘If I set eyes on you again,’ Rauf bellowed, ‘I’ll squash you like an insect’] (56).

Ilwan is able to shape his ‘contemporary’ *fushā* – from phones to semantics and syntax – to influence Mahran. Saying, "كنت في انتظارك" [I've been waiting for you], shows how this type of people is ready for any reaction by any person belonging to any social class. Ilwan’s social stratum is well aware of the animosity it bears against other classes. The class knows it has to use its hegemony to stay vigilant against the revolution of the ‘malice’ and the ‘envious’ classes.

In addition, using nominal structures at this level shows how Ilwan is strict in responding to any threat to his place closer to power. He says, "لإفائدة" [It's no use], "لا عذر لك" [There's no forgiving you], "إننا أقرأ أفكارك" [I know your thoughts, as clearly as I know your actions’], "إن رأيتك مرة أخرى فسأسحقك كحشرة" [I'll squash you like an insect]. These structures illustrate how this class is powerful and dominating. Nowhere is this clearer than when Mahran says, “If I set eyes on you again...I'll squash you like an insect”. Mahran’s words show Ilwan’s savage nature. The antagonist is able to adapt to the changing contexts, an ability that brought him both money and power. He lives in an imposing mansion, drives a luxurious car and is escorted by security detail wherever he goes.

Ilwan’s language is highly inquisitive. The interrogative mood is semantically very significant. Rhetorists typically identify one meaning and one purpose for a question (Al-Hashimi 2002: 65-66) – a misconception in rhetoric publications because they often include

decontextualized examples. Speaking to Mahran, however, Ilwan's questions go beyond traditional definitions of questions. These include:

- "سعيد، كيف حالك يا رجل، ومتى خرجت؟" [How are you, Said? When did you get out?] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 37).
- "هل جئتي في الجريدة؟" [Did you look for me at the paper?] (38).
- "هل انتظرت طويلا؟" [Have you been waiting long here?] (39).
- "وكيف حال بنتك؟... ولم بت ليلتك عند الشيخ علي؟" [And how is your daughter? ... Why did you spend the night at Sheikh Ali's?] (39).
- "هل فكرت في المستقبل؟" [Have you thought about your future?] (43).
- "أترغب في أن تفتح دكان خياطة؟" [So you want to set up a tailoring shop?] (44).
- "أترجع إلى اللصوصية؟" [You're going back to burglary?] (44).
- "ماذا جئت تريد؟" [What have you come for?] (52).
- "إذن لم تسللت إلى بيتي؟ لم تريد أن تسرقني؟" [Then why did you break into my house? Why do you want to rob me?] (55).
- "كلا، ألا تستحقه؟" [No? Don't you deserve it?] (56).

With context in mind, these questions go beyond baseline semantic purposes to introduce something the speaker does not know. Ilwan knows all answers but gives the questions another layer of meaning through this linguistic level. Mahran is the only man Ilwan fears as he knows Ilwan's secrets and revolutionary 'socialist' opinions that he no longer holds. The structural nature of these syntagms, in this context, suggests a threatening undertone to Mahran. They enable Ilwan to create an investigative setting to defeat Mahran's spirits. That is why using 'contemporary' *fushā* is appropriate as it gives way to using semantically rich questions.

4.2.3. Marginalized people's language (colloquial Arabic of the 'illiterate')

Spoken by Nur and Tarzan, this variety carries a strong semantic competence in the novel. It falls under the colloquial Arabic of the 'illiterate.' As it appears, the variety reveals the illiteracy of its speakers. This is a reason why no broadcast adopts it as a primary language and is only heard in public communication outside the media (Badawi 1973: 91). The vernacular variety conveys the vibes of Egypt's popular spaces with its oral and colloquial reference structures. Often attacked by critics and linguists for flouting the rules of classical Arabic, it is noticeable that this variety, however, is the natural choice of both Noor and Tarzan, who are able to help Mahran in his struggle against traitors (i.e. the dogs).

Nur is a prostitute. She has led a harsh life as much as Mahran and several Egyptians at the time did. She falls in Mahran's love, but he does not reciprocate her passion. She shows him sympathy and gives him refuge when everyone else abandoned him, giving him everything he needs such as housing and food. When she disappears, Mahran is lost and his life destroyed after losing a truly kind heart. Tarzan, a café owner, is a friend of Mahran. He is excited when Mahran is released from prison and is always there for him.

The vernacular is very suitable for this type of characters. As its purpose is only communicative, this variety does not celebrate verbal embellishment. For example, Nur says:

- "انت!! ياكسوفي..، انتظرت طويلا..؟" [it's you!' she said, breathless and happy, seizing his arm. 'I'm sorry. Have you been waiting long?] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 94).
- "أحطك في عيني واتكل عليك." [Don't worry; I'll keep you hidden all right] (95).

That language carries sincere feelings for Mahran. Nur gives him a psychological balance against his vengeful thoughts. Nur's words carry flowing charges of emotional warmth to enable him to face these hardships. The novelist makes her a ray of hope in Mahran's life, perhaps due to the affinity between them. Both represent the lower levels of the Egyptian society, experiencing the bitter reality of social class distinction, which made Mahran a thief and Nur a prostitute, to make ends meet. All this is a reason why Mahfouz calls for shifting the social system for balance.

Nur makes several attempts to dissuade Mahran from seeking the revenge that he always thought of. But she ultimately, despite all the kindness and compassion she shows him, fails to keep away the hatred and revenge controlling him. Then she disappears, so do her kind feelings, leaving Mahran to surrender to despair.

The novelist demonstrates how the two characters are closely connected, experiencing similar feelings and social reality, by noting that:

لن يرى نور مرة أخرى، وخنقه اليأس خنقا، ودهمه حزن شديد الضراوة لا لأنه سيفقد عما قريب مخبأه الأمن ولكن لأنه فقد قلبا وعطفا وأنسا، وتمثلت لعينيه في الظلمة بابتسامتها ودعابتها وتعاستها فانعصر قلبه، ودلت حاله على أنها كانت أشد تغلغلا في نفسه مما تصور، إنها كانت جزءا لا يصح أن يتجزأ من حياته الممزقة المترنحة فوق الهاوية، وأغمض عينيه في الظلام وأعترف اعترافا صامتا بأنه يحبها، وأنه لا يتردد في بذل النفس ليستردها سالمة

[he would never see Nur again. The thought choked him with despair, not merely because he would soon lose a safe hiding place but also because he knew he'd lost affection and companionship as well. He saw her there in the dark before him—Nur, with all her smiles and joking, her love and her unhappiness—and the terrible depression he felt made him aware that she had penetrated much deeper within him than he had imagined, that she had become a part of him, and that she should never have been separated from this life of his which was in shreds and tottering on the brink of an abyss. Closing his eyes in the darkness, he silently acknowledged that he did love her and that he would not hesitate to give his own life to bring her safely back] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: 158)

With Nur's disappearance in this way, Mahfouz makes everyone sympathize with a woman who has never led a happy life. Although she is a prostitute, she gives psychological comfort to Mahran:

This is how we receive the image of 'the prostitute' in Naguib Mahfouz's novels, always wrapped in a noble human framework, to confirm that social conditions, no matter how complicated, do not uproot everything human in people. Only hardships make the body sin, but the soul keeps its essence (Wadi 1973: 302).

With this in mind, all characters in the novel have their own language, logic and awareness of what is going on around them. It is language, through which characters unfold, which carries all this. It is the bedrock featuring multiplicity and diversity. Using multiple characters entails using several levels and tones of language, a 'dialogized heteroglossia' to use Bakhtin's words again, which feature their personal traits to play their role in the fictional work. This dialogized system created by Mahfouz is based on diverse 'images' of language, belonging to a diverse range of social groups. Above all, language heteroglossia becomes "a powerful condenser of unspoken social evaluations" (Bakhtin 1983: 26). Charged with

symbolic and suggestive energy, fictional language, thus, is both the medium and the locus of sociopolitical critique.

5. Language deterritorialization and sociopolitical critique in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*

Finally, it is argued that the polyphonic style used by Mahfouz in *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* is pervaded with a high level of language deterritorialization, not only as a practice of linguistic improvisation but also as an act of sociopolitical intervention. Language deterritorialization describes a practice of linguistic experimentation in which a writer detaches language from its regular patterns of usage. Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 17) first used the term 'deterritorialization' to refer to the process whereby language is detached from its conventional configurations and becomes no longer controllable or recognizable. Deterritorialization makes the standard language strange and, subsequently, prevents straightforward representation or interpretation. The deterritorialization of language, however, is not merely a matter of stylistic experimentation. Rather, it is a practice of political intervention into the cultural enclosure which is defined by both its rigidity and its capacity to preserve existing power relations. As language always operates within the wider social apparatus, language deterritorialization becomes a means of resistance to how the dominant social group perceives reality and assigns social roles for other marginalized groups.

Therefore, when Mahfouz deterritorializes the standard language by subverting its phonetic, syntactic and semantic conventions and consistencies, it is argued, he intends to disrupt the conventional patterns of static power relations that language imposes. For example, Mahfouz's deterritorialization of standard Arabic is closely linked with the main issue recurrent in the novel: the modern individual alienation from both God and society. Said's alienation is not only social, but also linguistic. As discussed earlier, Said is unable to indulge in the teaching of Sheikh Ali due to his obsession with worldly pleasures. The gap between Said and the mystic is introduced in the novel through the juxtaposition of Said's colloquial language and that of al-Junaydi's *fushḥā*. Said's deterritorialized language is used as a metaphor for his alienation from God and society. They are, as El-Enany (2005: 103) explains, "the emblems of two worlds that cannot meet: the mystic has achieved peace with the world by completely withdrawing from its harsh reality and creating an inner invisible one for himself, while Said is too enmeshed in the ugliness of reality to be able to see or seek a way to deal with it other than by self-condemning confrontation." The inconsistency between the two levels of language, i.e. colloquial and *fushḥā*, is purposefully used by Mahfouz as a tool to shed lights on competing ideologies in the post-revolutionary era: the revolutionary Said and the conservative mystic.

The minorization of language in the novel is also political because language is basically a discourse of power. Following a psychoanalytical perspective, Deleuze argues that the subject is produced through language in the sense that language acquisition is accompanied by the internalization of social power structures. That is, when the subject enters the Symbolic phase, he/she learns language and discovers that social power is located in the phallus – for example, the Father, the Law or the White man. Thus, language is not only used to communicate information. Its primary function is to act upon the world (Patton 2010: 73). Language acts upon the world by naming, categorizing and coding objects. It is language that provides the terms through which individuals identify themselves and the world around them and, thus, it "reflects the modes of feeling, seeing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power" (Eagleton 1990: 25). In

addition, language maintains social power as it produces the “incorporeal transformations” which enforce regular patterns of social action, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 81) argue. Social roles, racial prejudice, class distinctions and gender discriminations are all practiced as effects of these incorporeal transformations which are inevitably involved in the generation of power relations within a given society.

When Said enters the post-revolutionary Symbolic order, he discovers that power now is located in the hands of previous criminals. Rauf, as a symbol of the new power order, uses authoritative language as a means to impose upon Said certain social roles rather than others. Said is coded as a thief even after his release from jail. He visits Rauf, his old friend, to help him getting a new job in order to start a new life. He asked Rauf to help him find a job as a journalist on his paper, but Rauf’s reply was that “أنت خرجت امس فقط من السجن!” [you got out of jail only yesterday] (Mahfouz 1961 [2015]: ٣٥). Rauf’s refrain to help Said increases Said’s sense of social marginalization which brought him back to the path of crime. He is unable to cope with the new social order in which revolutionary ideals are abandoned and previous criminals are cherished.

With the notion of language deterritorialization, Mahfouz adds a political dimension to the polyphonic style he used in the novel. Through language deterritorialization and the subsequent disruption of imposed power relations, Mahfouz succeeded in casting a minor mode upon its marginalized characters. This minor perspective destabilizes the authority of the major language and sets in disequilibrium the sociopolitical forces that permeate ‘major/proper’ speech. Instead of giving voice to only one ideological group, Mahfouz creates a linguistic metonymic gap by incorporating various levels of language (i.e. *fushā*, colloquial, and authoritative) through which each cultural group is represented in a metonymic way. That is, each form of language used becomes the part that stands in for the whole cultural group. Thus, each level becomes an index of the character’s ideological background and cultural group. Through the use of this linguistic tactic, Mahfouz is able to assert the polyphonic voices permeating the novel’s narrative structure which, corresponds to the various ideological voices operating within the post-revolution Egyptian society at that time.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has examined the interplay between language deterritorialization and sociopolitical critique in Mahfouz’s *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*. Central to the argument developed here is Mahfouz’s approach to language and society. For Mahfouz, language is a social entity that plays a key role in eliminating the elements of power operating within the socio-political domain. It uncovers the secrets and defects a society does not wish to know about itself. The critique of power operating within the social entails the critique of the means of representation functional to society since the dominant mode of representation, i.e. language, conform to the dominant social system. Language, thus, becomes a *critical*, rather than representative, tool used to approach the political. The novel’s narrative is permeated with a diversity of social types and voices, and, therefore, Mahfouz used multi-levels of language to represent each type: *fushā*, contemporary *fushā* of the educated, and colloquial Arabic of the illiterate. The gap between these linguistic levels reflects the tension permeating the Egyptian society in the post-revolutionary era. Further research should consider the development of this dialogic heteroglossia in the aftermath of the Arab Spring as many significant changes have been taking place since its outbreak in 2011.

Endnotes

1. Mahfouz's *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb* is first published in 1961. The Arabic text used in this study is based on the ninth edition published in 2015 by *Dar el-Shorouk*, Cairo, Egypt. The translation of the Arabic text is based on M.M. Badawi and Trevor Le Gassick's translation of the novel published in 2015 by the AUC Press, Cairo.

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