The Whisper of Madness in Najīb Maḥfūẓ's Literary Works

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Abstract:

This paper explores madness as depicted in various works of the Egyptian writer, Najīb Maḥfūẓ. Madness is often associated with irrational, abnormal and wild elements in human conduct. However, it is also associated with saviors, visionaries, and their behavior. Both forms are shown here in their different aspects: madness as a mental disease, as an expression of a person's 'existential' crisis, as man's passion to approach the Divine, as a "safe" way to express critique of the socio-political situation in Egypt, and madness in its visionary form. In some cases, these aspects or shades of madness are correlated and intertwined. I argue that the Maḥfūẓian mad anti-heroes are somehow related to Sufism. A special emphasis is put on madness in two contradictory characters in *Malḥamat al-Ḥarāfīsh* (*The Harafish*, 1977), which is discussed through Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch*, and the paper concludes that this concept can be seen as similar to the Arabic concept of *futuwwah* (chivalry).

Key words: Najīb Maḥfūẓ – Nietzsche – Madness – Sufism – Existential Crisis – *Übermensch* – *Futuwwah* – *Jinn*.

Introduction: Madness in Literary Works

Studying madness in literature offers the opportunity to observe this illness as a narrative instead of a psychological scientific description that transforms the mad into an object that cannot generate a dialogue. In literature, readers are confronted with inner dialogues in which the self "negotiates" with itself. They "listen" to the voice of madness in itself and for itself, and follow the experience of the disturbed person in his/her monologues, behavior and responses to various social situations colored by his/her associative "thoughts".

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Yet, the problem of articulating madness lies in the fact that it can only be made in the language of reason, even when this language is metaphoric or fictional. Otherwise, all literary texts are nonsensical and unreadable. Foucault's goal to revolt against reason, and to follow the madman down the road of his exile, cannot be done without the rational capacity, argues Jacques Derrida.[1]

Reason and madness are inextricably linked, says Shoshana Felman, since madness is essentially a phenomenon of thought that can only occur within a world in conflict, within a conflict of thoughts.[2] Therefore, I believe the rational approach and conceptual tools used in psychiatry to be helpful in decoding madness in literature. We can recognize the inter-connectedness of both psychoanalysis (representing logic, clear language, reason, and scientific thought) and literature (representing rhetoric, emotions, ambiguity, and the imaginary).

This approach to madness tries to reframe the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis by disrupting the master-slave pattern that recognizes literature as inferior to psychoanalysis. Instead of a "fight for recognition", between the imaginary or fictional realm (literature) and the scientific psychoanalytic interpretation of madness, there is a dynamic relationship between the two fields. The dialogue between these two modes of 'knowledge' has an inter-implicative form, in which the two domains reciprocally implicate each other; each field should be enlightened, informed and affected by the other. Hence, the cultural division of scholarly "disciplines" of research is false; there

[1] See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 33-37.

[2] See Shoshana Felman, *Writing and Madness (Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis)*, trans. Martha Noel Evans and the author (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 36.

are no natural boundaries between literature and psychoanalysis, which clearly define and distinguish them.[1]

On the other hand, madness evoked through literature has a special status. It is related to the author as a thinker or philosopher, who uses madness as a technique to express the forbidden, the unspoken, the existential crisis of the modern human being, and above all to criticize the socio-political system. For this reason, madness in literature is related to philosophy, for it has logos in the pathos. Here we can depict the mirror-image of Wittgenstein's demand to write philosophy as a kind of poetry: literature or poetry written as a kind of philosophy.[2] According to Shoshana Felman, "literature could "serve as a transparent intermediary between madness and philosophy".[3]

In *History of Madness*, Michel Foucault realizes that madness, no matter how it is described, is a phenomenon of civilization. Madness is a production of society itself through applying different systems of exclusion and, therefore, the history of madness is not of a disease, but rather of division and separation. Foucault argues that madness has been socially and politically repressed, but has made itself shown as a sort of knowledge in the works of artists, and has survived

[1] See Shoshana Felman, "To Open the Question", in *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 5-9.

[2] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 28.

[3] Felman, *Writing and Madness*, 51. Felman discusses, in this context, the theoretical confrontation between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida concerning madness and its relation to the Cartesian Cogito. See Ibid., 43-55.

as an authentic voice of madness in the literary/ philosophical texts of Sade, Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche, and Artaud.[1]

Madness as a phenomenon of culture is the key concept of the Syrian critic Muḥammad Ḥayyān al-Sammān's book: *Khitāb al-junūn fī al-thaqāfah al-ʿarabiyyah* (Discourse of Madness in Arab Culture). Al-Sammān offers a study of madness through series of works written in the Arab-Islamic Middle Ages. He argues that the voice of madness was clear and loud in the mosques, markets, public bathrooms, and in the sanatoriums telling the painful truth about the suffering of ordinary people. Madness was related to fear, anxiety, repression of the oppressed and the marginalized, often in the form of aphorisms that contained eloquent wisdom. Al-Sammān speaks of close correlation between madness and Sufism, by commenting on another word in Arabic also used for describing the mad, *majdhūb* (the attracted one). This word has a special significance in Sufism, for it refers to the state of the mad as being attracted, charmed and enchanted by his passion towards God, and, therefore, the *majdhūb* is a wise and holy fool.[2]

ʿUqalāʾ al-majānīn (*Wise Fools*), by al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Nīsābūrī (d. 1015) provides examples of "wise fools" who appear primarily as ascetic or witty. They are excused because of their 'madness' and, therefore, can utter things that normal people would not dare to say.[3] The author states that people describe the *majnūn* (madman, fool) as a person who listens and curses,

[1] See Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), x, xiv-xvi; 530-538. See also Felman, *Writing and Madness*, 48.

[2] See Muḥammad Ḥayyān al-Sammān, *Kitāb al-junūn fī al-thaqāfah al-ʿarabiyyah* (London-Cyprus: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1993), 11-13, 50-52.

[3] See T. Seidensticker, "al- Nīsābūrī, al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad", *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (New York: Routledge, 1999) 2: 588.

throws things and tears his clothes. The *majnūn* deviates from the customs of ordinary people and behaves strangely, i.e., not according to the rules and norms of the society. For that reason, some prophets and messengers were also called mad, because they deviated from their society conventions.[1]

Al-Nīsābūrī deals with the origin of *junūn* (madness) in language, and explains that it means to hide: *janna al-shayʾ* means to hide, to conceal or to cover something: "madness in language means *istitār* (concealment)".[2] He states the Qur'an (6: 76): "*fa-lammā janna ʿalayhi al-layl raʾā kawkaban"* ("When the night grew dark over him he saw a star")[3]. Al-Nīsābūrī clarifies the linguistic correlation between *junūn* (madness) and *jinn* (demons). The *jinn* are called so, because they keep themselves out of sight, the *janīn* (fetus) for it is hidden in the womb, *janān* (heart) for it is hidden in the chest, and *janan* (tomb) for it covers the dead. The *majnūn* is the one who loses his mind, and whose behavior shows that the reasonableness of his thinking cannot be seen. The *majnūn* is the one whose reason (*ʿaql*) is veiled or hidden (*mastūr*).[4]

The paradox is that studying the formations of madness would not give us a clear definition of madness. All we know is that madness exists and that it is judged by our assumptions about what it is to be a 'normal' human being, or sane as opposed to mad. These assumptions are related to the norms of the society that contain within themselves an 'ethics' of normative human behavior.

In his study of *Dīwān Majnūn Laylā*, Asʿad Khairallah argues that madness has two interdependent forms. First, it is a deviation from the commonly

[1] See al-Nīsābūrī, *'Uqalā' al-Majānīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, (n.d.)), 8.

[2] Al-Nīsābūrī, *'Uqalā' al-Majānīn*, 16.

[3] The *Qur'an*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 138. See also al-Nīsābūrī, *'Uqalā' al-Majānīn*, 16.

[4] See al-Nīsābūrī, *'Uqalā' al-Majānīn*, 17-18.

accepted norms of behavior, whether on a personal or on a social level. Second, it seems to stem from an alien power residing in the inner self, or in the unconscious, a power which breaks loose from the control of sensible judgment. The pathological repetition of both forms makes them characteristic of the *majnūn*.[1] The mad, says Foucault, "is not manifested in his being, but if there is no doubt about his existence, it is because he is *other*".[2]

Recent critical attention to articulations of madness in the modern Arabic literature is written as a critical dialogue with Foucault's reading of historical and modern epistemological models of madness. For example, Tarek El-Ariss acknowledges the importance of Foucault's analysis of sex and power to investigate various forms of suppression of sexuality in contemporary Arabic novels. He examines madness as it takes shape at the intersection of the psychiatric clinic and the supernatural world.[3] El-Ariss mentions several texts written by physicians, philosophers, historians and prose writers in the Arab-Islamic context in the Middle Ages in order to show their interest in madness as a treatable mental illness.[4] To this list, I would add the 10th-century physician and philosopher Abu Bakr al-Rāzī (Razes) (d. 925/932). His psychological and ethical treatise *al-Ṭibb al-rūhānī*, offers a careful analysis of emotions.[5] Moreover, in chapter 10 of the first volume of his book *Kitāb al-ḥāwī fi'l-ṭibb*

[1] See Asʿad Khairallah, *Love, Madness, and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Mağnūn Legend* (Beirut: Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1980), 82.

[2] Foucault, *History*, 181.

[3] See Tarek El-Ariss, "Majnun Strikes Back: Crossings of Madness and Homosexuality in Contemporary Arabic Literature", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2013), 293-312.

[4] See Ibid., 299.

[5] This treatise is translated into English by Arthur J. Arberry as *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London: Butler & Tanner, (n.d.)).

(Comprehensive Book on Medicine) he deals with madness (*junūn*) and delirium (*hadhayān*). Al-Rāzī was aware that common people do not differentiate between epilepsy, melancholia, or mental confusion. They call someone who is afflicted by any of these conditions *majnūn*.[1] As a free thinker, al-Rāzī himself was accused with delirium and madness. His opponents described his philosophical treatises as containing nonsense. This accusation probably protected him from being killed by religious fanatics who destroyed most of his philosophical writings.[2]

Wen-chin Ouyang studies madness as an expression of the profound sense of alienation and powerlessness of the individual being in love with the nation-state, a love that is rather mad. When the imagined Utopia of nation-state falls short of the ideal and turns into a new site of oppression, madness appears as rebellion against the status quo.[3] The poetry of the Palestinian national poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (d. 2008) is taken as a paradigm in the context of madness and crisis of identity, alongside other writers. Ouyang sees Maḥfūẓ's Kamāl, in *Qaṣr al-shawq*, as modeled on Majnūn-Laylā (the most famous love-mad poet in the Arabic literary tradition) who sees the world through the prism of his love, or *ʿishq* for ʿĀydah. His madness provides him with a 'critical consciousness' that

[1] See Michael W. Dols, *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 57-60.

[2] See Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, "Al-ʾItilāf wa-l-ikhtilāf bayn ar-Rāzī wa-l-ʾinsāniyyah al-ʿalmāniyyah" (Convergence and Divergence between Abū Bakr ar-Rāzī and Secular Humanism), in *Al-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature*, 32-33 (2011-2012), 205, 223-224.

[3] See Wen-chin Ouyang, *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel: Nation-State, Modernity and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 77-110.

allows him to see and critique the hypocrisy of his father's patriarchal authority and the ignorance of tradition by which his mother lives.[1]

Kamāl (whose name means ironically 'perfection') is described as devoid of any physical charm or beauty. He is painfully conscious of his unattractive appearance. Having an unusual large head and protruding forehead, the children of the neighborhood called him *abu rāʾsayn* (two headed). This nickname is of great significance. It alludes to Kamāl's "attraction to Western thought and literature on the one hand, and his attachment to his own cultural heritage on the other".[2] Yet, it also alludes to Maḥfūẓ's struggle between devoting himself to philosophy or to the writing of fiction. He studied philosophy at the University, in the hope of 'capturing' the ultimate truth that provides meaning to life. When this quest turned out to be irrational and even absurd, he left his MA studies (in 1936) and decided to become a professional writer.[3] Kamāl is more than a romantic fool. He is an outsider who feels alienated in an imperfect world that lost its compass.[4]

The exploration of madness offers us a mode of reading that makes connections between the diverse works of Maḥfūẓ in his different periods of

[1] See Ibid., 81. Foucault identifies four consciousnesses in medieval comprehension of madness: the critical, the practical, the enunciatory, and the analytical. The critical consciousness "identifies madness and designates it against a backdrop of all that is reasonable, ordered and morally wise". Foucault, *History*, 164.

[2] Menahem Milson, *Najib Mahfuz: The Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Jerusalem: The Magness Press, 1998), 221.

[3] See Ibid., 31-33; See also Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, *Naẓariyyat al-istiqbāl fī-l riwāyah al-ʿarabiyyah al-ḥadīthah: Dirāsah taṭbīqiyyah fī thulāthiyyatay Najīb Maḥfūẓ wa-Aḥlām Mustaghānamī* (Baqah Al-gharbīyah, Israel: Al-Qasemī Arabic Language Academy, 2011), 264-265.

[4] For an analysis of Kamāl's crisis see, Srouji-Shajrawi, *Naẓariyyat al-istiqbāl*, 264-281.

writing. Madness as a cultural phenomenon and as a mental illness is brought forward here by merging two distinctive horizons: the Arabic-Islamic tradition and modern European thought. The use of other fields of knowledge in studying the literary text liberates it from the confinement of the local and opens it to wider horizons. Understanding a modern literary text cannot be obtained if it is disconnected from the past or the tradition (*turāth*), in the same way, that the modern reader of Arabic literature cannot insulate himself/herself from Western theories. Literary understanding becomes dialogical, claims Hans Robert Jauss, only when the otherness of the text is sought and recognized from the horizon of our own expectations, and when one's own expectations are extended by the experience of other.[1]

Listening to the voice of the different types of the madman figure, in Maḥfūẓ's works, sheds light on madness in a special way. This way is specific because Madness is not something or an object that one can ask a question about in order to get a strict answer and a single definite meaning. Maḥfūẓ defines madness as "an obscure state, much like life and death. You can know a lot about it, if it is seen from the outside. Yet the interior, the essence, is a closed secret".[2]

Madness is a universal phenomenon that reflects the unresolved problem of human life in a particular place and time. It is connected with the systems of prohibitions and exclusions, with limits that cannot be crossed in every culture.

[1] See Hans Robert Jauss, "The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding", in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 9. On the "fusion of horizons" in the act of understanding see, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 306, and 374.

[2] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Hams al-junūn* (1938), in *al-Mūʾllafāt al-kāmilah*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1990), 1: 5. All references to this story are my own translation.

Therefore, only in the fabric of the text madness 'writes' itself, it makes itself appear in a kaleidoscopic manner, it changes its form according to the specific context. For this reason, madness should be seen as a sudden change of character, as the reflection of one's emotional and existential crisis, as rebel against social norms and conventions, as articulating the forbidden.[1]

My method in this paper is to follow in the footsteps of the mad to 'encounter' the different types of madness, each type with its own configurations and implications. My argument is that both the writer and the reader cannot understand, articulate and write about this elusive theme of madness in fiction without a 'reasonable' frame. This suggests a dialectic nature of the relationship between madness and reason. The synthesis between these two contradictories should contain a new knowledge that is not pure reason or pure madness. I claim that Sufism is this synthesis, by bringing back the true meaning of the Sufi practice *futuwwah* (chivalry) that has the same ambiguity of Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch*. This may seem at first sight as getting outside the topic of madness, but this is the nature of dialectic.

Behind the veil of madness, in Maḥfūẓ's multilayered literary texts, there is a philosophy concerning the relationship between the individual and the collective. The mad figures, in his literary texts, those who appear and behave as outsiders, alienated, unsuccessful, schizophrenic, paranoid, are painfully alone. Yet the paradox is that the crazy can turn to be successful whenever he/she surpasses his/her individuality towards the benefit of the collective. This view is compatible with Maḥfūẓ's and Hegel's philosophy of time and progress of the *Volksgeist* (the spirit of nation/people).[2]

[1] See Foucault, *History*, 541-549.

[2] See Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, "The Shadow of Hegel in *The Cairo Trilogy*", in *Middle Eastern Literatures* 17 (April 2014), 3-5.

I argue that through the representations of different types of madness Maḥfūẓ aims to allude to his own vision of salvation. Each figure of the mad, in the works discussed here, provides a situation or condition that must be negated or contradicted. These conditions represent the cases that prevent the achievement of salvation. These include: isolation, religion or 'passive Sufism', individual impulsive rebel, waiting for a savior, unjust power. Each case will be presented by the mad figure that typifies it.

Through the theme of madness in literature we encounter the tension between the symptom and the metaphor, hallucination versus hidden knowledge, the exoteric (*al-ẓāher*) against the esoteric (*al-bāṭen*). The psychological reading of the literary work offers the 'surface' meaning (*al-ẓāher*), while the philosophical reading offers the 'hidden' meaning (*al-bāṭen*). One realizes that the literary madman, in Maḥfūẓ's works, is most often a distressed cryptic philosopher.

The literary works discussed in this paper can be divided into two sections. The first section discusses the theme of madness in the literary works of Najīb Maḥfūẓ from 1938-1965: *Hams al-junūn* (*Whisper of Madness*, 1938), *Zaʿbalāwī* (1962), *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb* (*The Thief and the* Dogs, 1961), and *al-Shaḥḥādh* (*The Beggar*, 1965). Here madness is an internal romantic or existential crisis, but also a mental illness, experienced by the main character, without the author using a supernatural creature as a literary device. He rather alludes to figures or places that have a connection to Sufism, not in the aim to suggest Sufism as a way of living, but to negate this form (antithesis), for it is not the road for salvation. Madness is shown at the intersection between the psychiatric and the unjust socio-political environment that is, at least partially, responsible for the person's crisis. Madness is related to existential themes such as alienation, despair, loss of faith in God and, thus, loss of meaning to life.

The second section deals with the relation between a *jinnī* (demon) and a *majnūn* (madman) presented in two works: *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* (1977) and *Layālī alf laylah* (*Arabian Nights and Days*, 1982). Here also we encounter the tension between the individual and the unjust socio-political environment, but the technique used by the author is different and much more sophisticated than in his previous works. Instead of modern Western narrative techniques, such as stream of consciousness, Maḥfūẓ revives the Arabic classical tradition or literary heritage (*turāth*). Here we encounter madness as having two faces, a destructive one that must be avoided, and a visionary productive face that revives the Sufi practice of *futuwwah* or the Nietzschean *Übermensch*.

Forms of Madness in Najīb Maḥfūẓ's works from 1938 to 1965

Maḥfūẓ's interest in the issue of madness is obvious in his early short story *Hams al-junūn* (*Whisper of Madness*, 1938), the story from which the collection takes its title.[1] This collection, according to Aḥmad Muḥammad ʿAṭiyya, reveals the beginnings of Maḥfūẓ's concern for the Egyptian social reality, especially for its despairing and poverty-ridden classes.[2]

The extended description of the main character's condition makes it obvious that the transition from sanity to madness may occur suddenly, at any time and place. The individual becomes unpredictable, rather like a wild animal that must be kept isolated.

This short story provides a good example of understanding the development of manic-depressive disorder in its different stages. This means that a

[1] See Maḥfūẓ, *Hams al-junūn*, 5-7.

[2] See Ahmad Muhammad ʿAtiyya, "Naguib Mahfouz and the Short Story", in *Critical Perspectives on Naguib Mahfouz*, ed. Trevor Le Gassick (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1991), 11. ʿAṭiyya considers *Hams al-junūn* a weak short story, because of its long introduction about madness.

psychoanalytic interpretation can be applicable to this story. However, the question here is what happens if we restrict ourselves to this interpretation only? A psychoanalytic reading is correct, says Felman, but "it misses the most important thing: it is blind to the very textuality of the text".[1] Therefore, we need to "blend" the psychiatric with the socio-existential/philosophical reading.

The anonymous main character is described as an absolutely calm person with low level of energy. He lives alone, and prefers not to join others in any tasks. He lacks motivation. Hence, he does not work, but instead spends his day sitting idly in a café for hours, staring at people without feeling tired. He looks like a statue.

The turning point in his life occurs when, one day, he sees some laborers covering the road with beautiful yellow sand. Their behavior seems to him unreasonable, illogical, and even absurd. The sand rises up, fills people's noses and, therefore, hurts them. The laborers quickly sweep away the sand, but they return to spread it on the road again. The scene bewilders him and makes him feel as though he is facing a big cosmic question. Nothing before had succeeded in arousing, exciting or astonishing him as much. He felt a great inclination to laugh, and he began to laugh violently without stopping, until his eyes were full of tears. It was not a normal laugh for it moved him out of his dreadful silence.

The scene of the laborers spreading the sand, sweeping it up, collecting it, and then spreading it again took him out of his emptiness to an inappropriate elation. Obviously, the main character suffers from manic-depressive disorder.

However, from a philosophical point of view, the main character represents symbolically, in his pre- and post-incident behavior, the problem of doing things in our daily life in a definite style. Why do we behave in such and such manner?

[1] Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation", in *Literature and Psychoanalysis,* 117.

What obliges us? Isn't doing the same acts, repeatedly every day, an absurd process? Thus, we face here two different, but intertwined questions: the question of free will within the borders of social and moral standards, and the absurdity of recurrent acts.

Both interpretations, the psychiatric and the philosophical, may be appropriate for describing the character. His abnormal external activity strengthens the description of a person who suffers from an affective disorder. Yet his "internal speech"[1] points toward philosophical questions about the nature of free will and the possibility of rejecting the established social norms.

The change in the character's external behavior and internal state of mind continues on the following morning and becomes increasingly worse by the end of the day. We may discern different phases in the development of the character's condition, yet all these phases develop in only two days as an accelerating sequence of symptom progression. This may point to the character's severe mental illness. It also emphasizes the condensed nature of Maḥfūẓ's style.

Typical to manic-depressive disorder is that minor changes in the patient's behavior seem insignificant at first. Looking into the mirror, the main character in *Hams al-junūn* feels so confused. He does not understand why he puts on such a cravat and wearies himself in choosing its color. Therefore, he starts to laugh as he had on the previous day. For him there is no logical reason for "shrouding ourselves" (*takfīn anfusinā*)[2] in clothes, rather than staying nude as God created us. Nevertheless, he leaves home after getting dressed, though he cannot tolerate the idea of being confined by clothes that strangle him. He is angry and irritated. He discovers that he had not been living until then as a free human being.

[1] The questions raised by the character are not delivered directly by using a monologue, but through an omniscient narrator.

[2] Note that "takfīn" in Arabic is used only for wrapping the dead.

His enthusiastic declaration that he is a free human being brought him back to the joy of life, or rather transferred him from the depressive phase into hypomania.

> He solved the problem of free will in one second, and saved it from the burden of causes. He felt, amazingly, so happy and superior. He looked at people with disdain for they were walking enchained, having no power of free choice for the better or worse. He, on the contrary, is free. He walks if he wants to walk and stops whenever he wants, disdaining all power, law or instinct.[1]

He continued to walk, facing life anew. On his way to the café, he saw in the restaurant, where sometime earlier he had taken his dinner, a man and a woman facing each other and sitting at a table covered with many kinds of food and drink. Yet, at a short distance from them, there were boys sitting on the floor with worn-out clothes and dirty faces. This inharmonious scene irritated and upset him. His free will and his sensitive heart urged him to do something so that the boys could also eat. But those eating would not agree to give some of the chicken to the boys. Therefore,

> he approached the dining table quietly, reached the plate, took the chicken and threw it in front of the bare feet of the boys. He left the dining table and continued his walk as if he had not committed any forbidden act, and without becoming worried about the roaring voices that kept following him, laden with intense insults and curses. He laughed so much till his eyes were full of tears, and sighed from the depth of his soul feeling pleased with what he did.

[1] Maḥfūẓ, *Hams al-junūn*, 6.

> His deep sense of tranquility, confidence and happiness returned to him.[1]

This description of a weird behavior coming from a madman, highlights, at the same time, social injustice and the resistance to social norms. Hence, madness here is a deformed kind of rebellion.

As his symptoms deteriorate, sitting in the café no longer can grant him the serenity he had once had in the past. He cannot even sit quietly. He catches sight of a familiar man, who used to come to that café. He does not like the man's arrogant behavior and disdain toward other people and, therefore, he returns to his weird laugh that had begun to control him two days earlier. The nape of the man's neck appears to him seductive. He approaches the man, raises his hand and beats the man's neck with all his strength, and then he laughs loudly. He feels courageous and happy, because he is behaving freely. But this time, the character's experience of practicing his full freedom does not end peacefully. The man gets very angry, hits him and kicks him violently. He leaves the café breathing heavily, without regret or anger but, rather, with feelings of pleasure and delight that he had never experienced before. Madness here takes the form of unprovoked aggression.

The character next enters into a new mental phase of full-blown mania. He becomes violent, beating, kicking and spitting at people. His unrestricted behavior now becomes a habit, and he faces all kinds of insults and threats without feeling afraid of losing his life. His madness takes the form of unbridled sexual passion when he notices a pretty young woman wearing a transparent silk dress, walking with a handsome man. He felt an urge to touch her nipples, and by doing that he brought upon himself the angry reaction of the people around.

[1] Ibid.

They cursed and insulted him, beating him all over his body. Yet they got afraid of his crazy bizarre laugh and mad gaze, and, therefore, left him.

During the sunset of that same day, he remembers his question to himself when he was looking into the mirror. He, therefore, takes off all his clothes and becomes as God had created him. Madness here takes the form of rebellion against the social and cultural norms which limit human freedom. Yet nudity represents man's wish to return to nature.

The story is narrated after living for a while in *al-khānkah,* as a remembrance of things past. The narrator takes on the role of a reliable historian (*mūʾrrikh āmīn*) who wants to record how a person, hitherto is seen as normal, becomes abnormal or insane. Thus, the narrator and the main character become identical, at least in the narrative process.

From the context we understand that *al-khānkah* is an asylum for the treatment of mental illness, or rather a place of excluding the mad to protect the society. Yet this word has a special significance for it also means a Sufi convent or monastery.[1] According to M. Peled, "we are faced with a sane madman in a Sufi convent, that is, with one of the *ʿuqalāʾ al-majānīn*".[2] Yet M. Peled does not explain the relationship between sanity, madness and Sufism in the context of *Hams al-junūn*. In fact, the relationship is not obvious in this story but seems to occupy Maḥfūẓ's thoughts in other writings.

In the short story, *Zaʿbalāwī* (1962),[3] for instance, the relation between sanity, madness and Sufism is much more obvious. The anonymous narrator is suddenly attacked by a strong feeling that he cannot be happy, or live in harmony

[1] See Matityahu Peled, *Religion, My Own: The Literary Works of* Najīb Maḥfūẓ (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983), 49.

[2] Ibid.

[3] See Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Zaʿbalāwī*, in *al-Mūʾllafāt al-kāmilah*, 3: 155-160.

with himself, unless he finds *Zaʿbalāwī*, a holy man (*waliyy*) that his father had known and spoken about when he, the narrator, was still a child.[1] His journey in the search for *Zaʿbalāwī* ends without finding him in reality but only in his state of a dream, after he had become drunk. Running out of the *ḥānah* (bar), to follow *Zaʿbalāwī*, the boys in the street laughed at him and treated him as somebody who had lost his mind for he was staggering in his walk and calling out *"Zaʿbalāwī"* at every corner.

Drunkenness and dreaming are both used as aesthetic tools to present the impossibility of reaching the Ultimate Truth (God) in real life. To meet and even to speak about *Zaʿbalāwī* (the saint who symbolizes only a form of the Ultimate Being or Truth) is impossible unless one is in a state of drunkenness, oblivious to the world, and dreaming.

The frequent use of alcohol (*khamr*), specifically wine, to symbolize ecstasy, spiritual love and union with the creator is a recurrent theme in Sufi poetry.[2] A famous ode, recalled in *Zaʿbalāwī*, by the great Egyptian Sufi poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235), illustrates the relationship between ecstasy, recalling (*dhikr*) of the beloved (*ḥabīb*), and wine (*mudām*): "Recall and mention the one that I love, even if only to blame me, because talking about the beloved is my wine".[3]

[1] On the Sufi dimension in *Zaʿbalāwī*, and as representative of the conflict between science and religion, see Sasson Somekh, "*Zaʿbalāwī* –Author, Theme and Technique", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 1 (1970), 24-35.

[2] See Ibid., 28.

[3] Maḥfūẓ, *Zaʿbalāwī*, 158. My translation. See also Michael Beard, "Homage to Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Nostalgia in 'Zaabalawi'", in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Naguib Mahfouz*, ed. Waïl S. Hassan and Susan Muaddi Darraj (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2012), 169.

The spiritual wine is at once the fire of Divine Love and the light of illuminative knowledge and gnosis.[1] Wine and drunkenness in Sufism symbolize the yearning for God and mystical ecstasy. In the context of Mahfuz's works, it may also suggest rebelliousness because alcoholic drinks are strictly forbidden in Islam.[2]

An important symbol in both *Hams al-junūn* and *Zaʿbalāwī* is the mirror. The narrator in *Zaʿbalāwī* enters *ḥānat al-najmah* (The Star Tavern) where he finds hajj Wanas, the alcoholic, sitting in an isolated corner behind a large pillar, its four sides covered by mirrors. The name of the tavern implies the difficulty in overcoming the great distance that has to be traveled before reaching spiritual ascension and Sufi illumination. The mirrors (in the plural, for emphasis) symbolize the inner being, the unconscious, and a way for being in touch with the Divine, as in the state of a dream. The highest Truth can never be perceived directly and fully, but appears only partly as a reflection in a mirror, or as a part of a vague, ill-defined dream.

Looking at his reflection in the mirror, the main character in *Hams al-junūn* becomes aware that he is trapped inside social norms and habits that make him feel ill at ease. His awareness implies self-judgment and, as a result, he decides to change his regular behavior according to his inner feelings. As such, this story can be understood as an example of a person who deviates from society's norms and principles. In deviating from society's norms, his behavior would be

[1] See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 109. In the tradition of Arabic-Islamic poetry, the consumption of wine represents the communion of devotees with their Lord. See Roger Allen, "Teaching Mahfouz's 'Zaabalawi'", in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Naguib Mahfouz*, 162.

[2] See Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, 103.

considered crazy. The relation to Sufism is very superficial (alluded to only by *al-khānkah*).

Maḥfūẓ's striking attraction to Sufism in his fictional writings reflects the extent to which Sufi activities have spread in modern Egypt.[1] The allusion to Sufism appears in two novels by Maḥfūẓ: *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb* (*The Thief and the* Dogs, 1961),[2] and *al-Shaḥḥādh* (*The Beggar*, 1965).[3]

Maḥfūẓ refers to Sufism in *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb* by describing the good relationship between Saʿīd Mahrān (the thief in the title) and the Sufi sheikh ʿAlī al-Junaīdī. The latter reminds us of the great Sufi of Baghdād "Junaīd" (d. 910).[4] Released from jail on the anniversary of the 1952 revolution, Saʿīd (ironically means happy) seeks refuge temporarily in the house of sheikh ʿAlī al-Junaīdī. Whenever Saʿīd asks him for an advice, the sheikh, as a religious figure, has only a religious solution to offer: "*tawaḍḍāʾ wa-qrā*" (wash/purify yourself and read).[5] The sheikh's mystical utterances cannot relieve Saʿīd, or calm down his disturbed soul, or help him find a practical solution to his needs. The ideology of religion and its practice turn to be unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the ideology of socialism and reading Marxist writings fail to help Saʿīd find a way out of his social and spiritual crisis.

[1] See Nedal al-Mousa, "The Nature and Uses of the Fantastic in the Fictional World of Naguib Mahfouz", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 23, no. 1 (March 1992): 37.

[2] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb*, in *al-Muʾllafāt al-kāmilah*, 3: 3-47; translated as *The Thief and the Dogs*, trans. Trevor Le Gassick and M. M. Badawi (Cairo: AUC, 1984).

[3] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Al-Shahhādh* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1965); translated as *The Beggar*, trans. Kristin Walker Henry and Nariman Khales Naili al-Warraki (Cairo: AUC, 1986).

[4] See Milson, *Najīb Maḥfūẓ*, 227-228. On the aesthetic function of the characters' names in *The Thief and the Dogs* see Ibid., 226-235.

[5] Maḥfūẓ, *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb*, 9.

Saʿīd recalls the advice of his former mentor (turned to enemy) Raʾūf ʿAlwān: "*tadarrab wa-qrāʾ*" (train and read).[1] Raʾūf used to say to Saʿīd, when they were students and friends in the past, that "a revolver is more important than a loaf of bread. It's more important than the Sufi sessions you keep rushing off to the way your father did".[2] When Saʿīd stole a small amount of money to pay for his mother's treatment, Raʾūf congratulated him, for he considered stealing from the rich an absolutely legitimate act. Raʾūf becomes now a famous rich journalist closely associated with the regime. He abandoned the principles of socialism and turned to be a traitor in the eyes of Saʿīd.

Breathing the air of freedom once more, Saʿīd found that the socio-political conditions have not changed for the better after the revolution. He decided to set the world to rights and to take revenge from all those who deceived him: his infidel wife Nabawiyyah, his former henchman ʿIleish, and above all his former mentor Ra'ūf ʿAlwān. But all his ceaseless attempts to kill them ended by failure. Instead, he kills poor innocent people.

His situation in the media and among the people worsens. "The papers accused Saʿīd of being mad, craving for power and blood: his wife's infidelity had made him lose his mind, they said, and now he was killing at random".[3] Articles were written to warn people against any sympathy for him. He knew

[1] Ibid., 18.

[2] Mahfouz, *The Thief and the Dogs*, 59.

[3] Mahfouz, *The Thief and the Dogs*, 130. It is important to note that in Arabic, instead of "craving for power", Maḥfūẓ writes "*junūn al-ʿazamah*" that is an accepted translation of paranoia. Also, in the original, instead of "killing at random", we find "*yuṭliq al-nār bi-la waʿy*", literally "shooting without conscious awareness". See Maḥfūẓ, *al-Liss wa-l-kilāb*, 40.

that he was behaving madly, and earlier he described himself as the "*shayṭān*" (devil) himself who will continue in his plan to punish those who betrayed him.[1]

This novel is an example of the idea that madness is an extreme form of error in judgment.[2] Saʿīd's failure to achieve his goal signifies, according to Rasheed El-Enany, that true revolutionary action cannot originate in a personal vendetta but rather in an organized action. El-Enany considers this novel a powerful metaphor for modern man's alienation from God wherever he may be. Saʿīd's alienation is not only social but also spiritual.[3]

As I see it, Saʿīd's failure is the outcome of his own paranoid personality that held him back also from the true love of Nūr, a prostitute whose name means "light". She beseeched him to leave all the problems of the past and begin a new life. His story is an example of the inability of adjusting oneself to the social circumstances, and to challenge wisely the disappointments of life.

His paranoid personality makes him feel, both in everyday life and in his dreams, that he is pursued by the police, by Raʾūf ʿAlwān, and even by the Sufi sheikh. The latter demands from Saʿīd (during the dream) his identity card, according to the suggestion of their great authority Raʾūf ʿAlwān.[4]

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[1] See Mahfouz, *The Thief and the Dogs*, 72, and 131.

[2] See Carroll B. Johnson, *Madness and Lust: A Psychological Approach to Don Quixote* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983), 34.

[3] See Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 102.

[4] See Mahfouz, *The Thief and the* Dogs, 76-78. On the aesthetic function of dreams see, Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, "Tawẓīf al-ḥulm fanniyyan fī *Zaʿbalāwī, al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb wa-l-Shaḥḥādh* li-Najīb Maḥfūẓ", in *Al-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature* 36 (2015), 53-98.

Saʿīd's dream or, rather, nightmare, is very profound and shows Maḥfūẓ's highly artistic style. Its structure looks like a short story that links all the threads of the novel, the past, the present and the future, condensing everything within the few minutes of the dream. This dream discloses how terribly confused was Saʿīd Mahrān, and reveals his psychopathic character. At the same time, the dream shows his great suffering in actual life, because he sees himself as innocent, one who has been betrayed by his wife and close friends. He was whipped "despite his good conduct, screaming shamelessly, but not offering any resistance".[1] This last sentence foreshadows the sad end of the main character in the novel. Saʿīd Mahrān finally had to succumb to the police (represented by the dogs in the title as also all the other traitors) surrounding him in the cemetery. "He was slipping away into endless depths, not knowing either position, place, or purpose. […] He surrendered. Not caring at all now".[2]

This novel discloses the role of the media, prison, police, and religion as institutions of confinement to control madness or unreason. These forms of repression cooperate to silence the voice of unreason, but in the literary work they represent indirectly means of suppressing the resistance of the political regime.

Foucault speaks of the radical separation of reason and unreason/madness, in the 17th and 18th century, that created different institutions of confinement, like those of prisons and asylums for the treatment of criminals, mad ones and even those with sever diseases. The aim of such places, especially the asylum, is the homogeneous reign of morality. These houses of confinement or punishment aim to reduce differences, repress vice, eliminate irregularity, and to distance 'unreasonable' people from the supposed healthy normative society. This

[1] Mahfouz, *The Thief and the* Dogs, 76.

[2] Ibid., 158.

process of distancing or isolating such persons made the 'unreason' an object for a calm scientific psychiatric study, and threw it mute for centuries. Only through literature the voice of the 'unreason' will speak again.[1]

ʿUmar al-Ḥamzāwī, the main character of *al-Shaḥḥādh* (*The Beggar*, 1965), is a schizophrenic person, but also represents one of a series of alienated characters typical of Maḥūfẓ's novels of the 1960s. He is a successful lawyer, a father of two daughters, and lives happily with his Christian wife who converted to Islam, when they married, because she loved him. Yet at the age of forty-five, he is struck by depression and angst. He feels no interest in his pregnant wife or in his work. Everything in the universe seems to him boring and meaningless. Even staying alive is absurd, since the only truth that awaits all beings is death. He tells his friend Mustafā that "death represents the one true hope in human's life".[2]

ʿUmar can be seen as an example of mid-life crisis. This crisis is an emotional second adolescence, a rebellion that affects all aspects of men's lives, including their marriages, jobs, friendships, and social commitments. In its most extreme form, it consists of wild shifts of direction and bizarre behavior.[3] He tried to find the joy of life through love at first, then through sexual affair with any occasional woman or prostitute. He hoped to experience some kind of mystical ecstasy through enjoying the beauty of women's bodies. His failure stems from his inability to ascend from the beautiful details to the absolute

[1] See Foucault, *History*, 101-103, and 493-497.

[2] Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, 32. For an extended analysis of this novel see Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, "Love, Sex and Mysticism in the Search for the Meaning of Life: Naguib Mahfouz's *Al-Shaḥḥādh* as the Herald of Modernism", *Al-Majmaʿ: Studies in Arabic Language, Literature and Thought* 5 (2011): 25-76.

[3] See Johnson, *Madness and Lust*, 37-38.

beauty of God, according to the Platonic theory of love as a religious quest for contemplation of the ultimate Beauty.[1] Arabs and Persians were acquainted with the Platonic ideas concerning love as a divine madness. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, the sufi martyr who was executed in Baghdad in 922, had been condemned for his declaration to be in a direct relationship of love with the divine.[2]

ʿUmar's illness accelerated for he is unable to experience himself as a complete and happy person. Life has no valid meaning without the possibility of communion with the Divine. He looks forward to that day when memory would lose its tyranny so he can merge into emptiness. In this new phase he is unable to differentiate between reality and imagination or illusion. In other words, he loses a vital contact with reality. This experience by a schizophrenic patient can be traced back to Freud, according to Lysaker, in particular to his assertion (1957) that:

> Schizophrenia occurs when one detaches from the world and internalizes one's energies to the point that all consensually valid meaning is lost. In such a state, one has removed all emotional or personal investment from the world and descended into radical narcissism.[3]

One may conclude that schizophrenic people are hyper-reflective, which suggests that common sense withers under an inward gaze of radical intensity because schizophrenia is a matter of too much rather than too little self-

[1] See Srouji-Shajrawi, "Love, Sex and Mysticism", 30-31; idem., "Tawẓīf al-ḥulm", 61-63; Plato, *The Symposium*, ed. M. C. Howaston and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, trans. M. C. Howatson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 49-50.

[2] See Khairallah, *Love, Madness*, 98.

[3] Paul Lysaker and John Lysaker, *Schizophrenia and the Fate of the Self* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 27.

experience.[1] In contrast to this perspective, it is claimed that people suffering from schizophrenia maintain a sense of self, but they find themselves threatened by powerful subjective experiences. Thus, they become alienated from both self and others, living a life that is out of joint, which often results in feelings of emptiness.[2] Paradoxically, though schizophrenia involves a sense of intensified self-consciousness, it also includes a strong feeling of worthlessness or diminution of the self.

On the other hand, ʿUmar's condition is an example of "madness" with a mystical significance. The Arabic word *shaḥḥādh* is *darwīsh* in Persian, and this Persian word is used to designate a Sufi. The *darwīsh* renounces all worldly concerns to become totally engaged in an unceasing quest for the ultimate truth. This Sufi connotation of 'beggar', says Menahem Milson, is what Najīb Maḥfūẓ had in mind when he named this novel *al-Shaḥḥādh*.[3]

Al-Shaḥḥādh represents the crisis of human existence in general, questioning the purpose of human life with no support from providence or the Divine. He wants to escape from everything in life, including his self-existence and awareness, so that he can "see" the Divine image underlying the secret of life, and attain the level of ecstasy.

The repetition of the verb "to see" in the last chapter of the novel, has a special significance in the context of hallucinations and dreams.[4] Seeing here is counterpart to the act of shutting his eyes as tight as possible to the truth, or to what life demands from him (*nidāʾ al-ḥayah*). Seeing here occupies the very place of blindness. It is related to the veil (*ḥijāb*) in Sufi texts, as a "generic term

[1] See Ibid., 32.

[2] See Ibid., 33.

[3] See Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, 246.

[4] See Srouji-Shajrawi, "Love, Sex and Mysticism", 52-60.

for the obstructions that block the path to God".[1] Veil here refers to that which separates the seeker from attaining the state (*ḥāl*) of union with God. A veil is anything other than God.[2] The veils, in Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 1240) terms, are simply the things; everything that we perceive and all our acts of perception are veils. God in Himself is no "thing". Hence, to see God as He is in Himself is impossible. The finite can never embrace the Infinite in its infinity.[3]

ʿUmar leaves his family, friends and business to live in a solitary cottage in the countryside, waiting for the moment when everything around him would fall silent. He becomes monomaniacal about his love of God which, in itself, is a sign of madness that characterizes the Muslim holy fool in Sufi literature.[4] Yet the ability to be united with the Absolute, or to "see" God, is not actualized and, therefore, his psychic condition becomes worse. He concludes that ecstasy has become a curse and paradise is a stage for fools.[5] His quest for the meaning of life and the secret of being (*sirr al-wujūd*) ends in madness.

ʿUmar's recurrent yearning "to see" should be connected to the last sentence in the novel: "If you really wanted me, why did you desert me?" This question points to the 'hidden' answer: we do not have to look for the meaning of life in any form of transcendental escapism, rather we should put meaning in life by an active work for the benefit of society.

At the close of *al-Shaḥḥādh*, the police come to arrest ʿUmar's friend, for his illegal political activity against the regime. ʿUthmān was released from prison

[1] William Chittick, *Sufism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 187.

[2] "It is not granted to any mortal that God should speak to him except through revelation or from behind a veil". *Qur'ān*, 42:51, translated by Abdel Haleem, 489.

[3] See Chittick, *Sufism*, 189-193.

[4] For further details about the holy fool in Sufi literature, see Dols, *Majnūn*, 388-410.

[5] See Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, 118.

after twenty years, but he has not lost his Marxist dream to establish a just society. ʿUthmān is the opposite of ʿUmar, for he is assertive, determined and an active revolutionist. Yet he behaves madly as Saʿīd Mahrān, without a reasonable collective plan, and therefore, returns to prison without accomplishing his ideals. He is a tragic-hero.

The recurrent theme of madness in *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb* and in *al-Shaḥḥādh* is, therefore, related to the socio-political situation of Egypt. Both novels from the 1960s are centered around the failures of the 1952 revolution, and represent Maḥfūẓ's increased alienation from the society created in its wake.[1] The reality was far from the ideological claim that society was progressing. On the contrary, there were abundant oppression and injustice that left Maḥfūẓ wondering whether Egypt was moving towards socialism or neo-feudalism.[2]

As part of the innovative movement of the 1960s, many Arab writers shifted from realism to symbolism and surrealism. These modes of writing seemed more suitable for depicting the conflicts and contradictions in their societies, the complexities of modern life, and the struggle of the individual for freedom and personal identity.[3] Thus "literary madness" has become the language of despair

[1] See El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, 102. See also Ziad Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 28.

[2] See Elmarsafy, *Sufism*, 28. It is relevant to mention in this context Maḥfūẓ's novel *al-Karnak* (1974) in which he describes the suppression of free thought and the brutality of the secret police in Egypt during the 1960s.

[3] See Dalya Abudi, *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 230.

and alienation, protest and rebellion, anguish and salvation in the writings of leading Arab authors.[1]

Madness, Demons and the Real *Übermensch*

The two literary works in episodic form, *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* (*The Harafish*, 1977)[2] and *Layālī alf laylah* (*Arabian Nights and Days*, 1982)[3] are representative in that they use both traditional and modern techniques.[4] Both works are series of short tales, linked together by a frame story. The stories of *Layālī alf laylah* are based on tales or characters from *The Arabian Nights (Alf laylah wa-laylah*) and mix the mundane with the supernatural, the real with the magical.[5] Maḥfūẓ "utilizes the fantastic potentialities of *The Arabian Nights* mainly to investigate and comment upon the socio-political conditions in the modern Arab world".[6] In *Layālī alf laylah*, the "madman" is introduced as a literary device in order to say obliquely what cannot be said directly, to criticize the society and to show the contradictions in Egypt of the seventies. One can observe that "the new economic

[1] See Ibid. See also, Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, "Naguib Mahfouz: A Liberal in a Conservative Society". In: *A Companion to World Literature*, edited by Ken Seigneurie. USA & UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2020, vol. 5a, 2954.

[2] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Malḥamat al-Ḥarāfīsh* (Cairo: Dār Miṣr lil-ṭibāʿah, n. d.); translated as *The Harafish*, trans. Catherine Cobham (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

[3] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Layālī alf laylah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2009); translated as *Arabian Nights and Days*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (Cairo: AUC 1995).

[4] On the return of modern Arab writers to classic Arabic narrative, see Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 71-115.

[5] See Ferial J. Ghazoul, "Naguib Mahfouz's Arabian Nights and Days: A Political Allegory", in *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context* (Cairo: AUC, 1996), 141. See also al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Novel*, 375-387.

[6] al-Mousa, "The Nature and Uses", 42.

policy of privatization and primacy of profit ruptured the social fabric and toppled the ethical codes of the people".[1]

Madness, as depicted in both novels, affects the life and the destiny of the individual characters, but has implications on society and other characters or events as well. In *Layālī alf laylah* madness has a "positive" aspect while in *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* it is seen as a negative feature. As for madness in its "positive" significance, it is found in the tale of Jamṣah al-Bultī in *Layālī alf laylah*. Al-Bultī, the chief of police, influenced by the words of his good *jinnī,* murders the despotic governor. He is, therefore, sentenced and executed. However, the one who was killed was not al-Bultī but a figure (*ṣūrah*) of him made by his *jinnī*. Al-Bultī, in his role as a *majnūn* (madman), survives in all the tales with his new face and new name, and sets out to expose social evils and corruption in modern Egypt.[2] He is the symbol of the power of good, the embodiment of providence, who is always able to interfere at the critical moment to save those who are worthy of saving.[3] According to El-Enany, Maḥfūẓ wants to say that the spirit of right and heroism is an omnipresent human spirit that never dies. Although this or that individual manifestation of it might die, the spirit of right lives on in the species, renewing itself from generation to generation.[4]

[1] Ghazoul, "Naguib Mahfouz's Arabian Nights", 138.

[2] See al-Mousa, "The Nature and Uses", 44-48.

[3] See Clara Srouji-Shajrawi, "Tawẓīf al-sard al-ʿjāʾibī fī *Layālī alf Laylah* li-Najīb Maḥfūẓ" (The Employment of the Fantastic in *Layālī alf Laylah* by Naguib Mahfouz), in: al-sard al-ʿjāʾibī fī as-siyāqāt al-ʾdabiyyah, ad-diniyyah wal-falsafiyyah" (The Fantastic Narrative in the Literary, Religious and Philosophic Contexts), edited by Yasīn Kittānī (Baqa al-Gharbiyya: Al-Qasemi Arabic Language Academy, 2021), 164-165; 171-172.

[4] See El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz,* 161. See also al-Mousa, "The Nature and Uses", 45.

ʿ*Afārīt* and *jinn* (the plural forms of ʿ*ifrīt* and *jinnī*) intervene in the life of the characters in almost all the stories of *Layālī alf laylah*, yet in *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* the *jinnī* is introduced only in the seventh tale when Jalāl "asks" to be immortal. Maḥfūẓ uses the religious belief in demons (ʿ*afārīt* and *jinn*) in order to allude to his philosophical views about human nature.[1] The *jinnī* represents the inner voice, the subconscious and wishes of the human being. Yet the human is responsible for all his/her acts. In fact, al-Bultī's good *jinnī* states twice: "You have a mind, a will and a soul",[2] to remind him that every human being must choose his/her deeds carefully and reasonably.[3]

Jalāl, the main character in the 7th tale of *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*, fails to become immortal despite his Faustian pact with a *jinnī*. His failure stems from the fact that he accepts the demons' (*jinn*) command to build a very tall minaret (*miʿdhanah*) without a mosque. The mosque, in this context, is a recognition of God's existence, and symbolizes His height above all creatures. It also represents the virtuous religion with its moral system which is the basic principle for good relations between humans. Yet the tall minaret as a home for the *jinn* and ʿ*afārīt*

[1] Although belief in the *jinn* is not one of the five pillars of Islam, writes Amira el-Zein, "one can't be Muslim if he/she doesn't have faith in their existence because they are mentioned in the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition". Amira el-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009), x.

[2] Mahfouz, *Arabian Nights and Days*, 43.

[3] It is worth mentioning that the Qur'ān speaks of *jinn* as rational beings, having a free will like humans, and therefore, they are responsible (*mukallafūn*) as humans are. Humans and *jinn* resemble each other with regard to their capability of either good or evil. Hence God will either recompense them or punish them in accordance with their deeds. See for example Qur'ān, 72: 11-15, 55: 39, 7:38; El-Zein, *Intelligent World of the Jinn*, 15-19.

without a mosque, alludes to the human's abandonment of God. On the other hand, it symbolizes Jalāl's will to be above all people, to replace God as immortal and omnipotent. Consequently, everything will be permitted in the absence of God.

The name, Jalāl, alludes to the character's wish to attain God's attributes. *Dhū al-jalāl* means God or God's Greatness, and the word *al-jalāl* is used only for God.[1] The word *jalāl* means greatness, splendor, glory, exaltedness but means also the delusion of grandeur, the unshakeable belief that one possesses superior qualities such as genius, fame and omnipotence.

Delusion of grandeur can lead to Nietzsche's widespread perception of an *Übermensch* (a 'superman'), that is, according to David M. Black, Nietzsche's "essentially manic fantasy". The *Übermensch* is depicted as a hero who would be "joyful and defiant despite the essential futility of life in the godless, post-Darwinian universe".[2]

The figure of Nietzsche as a philosopher and a madman coincides here with two characters in *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*, Jalāl and ʿĀshūr the second (in the 10th tale). Maḥfūẓ's allusions to Nietzsche's declaration of "the death of God" and "the will to power" (represented by Jalāl) show his familiarity with the work of the German philosopher.[3] The "will to power" and to become immortal brings

[1] See Ibn Manẓūr, "j-l-l", *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣāder, 1990) 11: 116. "*Wa-yabqā wajhu rabbika dhū al-jalāl wa-l-ʾkrām*" (all that remains is the Face of your Lord, full of majesty, bestowing honor). *Qur'ān*, 55: 27; The *Qur'an*, trans. Abdel Haleem, 533.

[2] David M. Black (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century: Competitors or Collaborators?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), Introduction, 2.

[3] See Muhammad Siddiq, *Arab Culture and the Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 15, 211-212 (note 57).

Jalāl to madness. On the other hand, ʿĀshūr, by understanding the true meaning of the Sufi practice *futuwwah* succeeds to become the crazy savior of the marginalized and oppressed people.

Jalāl's madness is rooted in his childhood, in the traumatic scene in which he witnessed his mother's horrible death. Jalāl and his maternal half-brother Rāḍī were with their mother when Muḥammad Anwar, her ex-husband and the father of Rāḍī, approached the pretty woman with a heavy stick in his hand. He hit Zahīrah's beautiful head savagely, indifferent to the children's screams, until her head was smashed to a pulp.[1] All the splendor and beauty of his lovely mother's head have gone. Instead, there are broken bones drowning in a pool of blood. Jalāl, the little boy, was terribly shocked by the horrific death of his mother, and did not understand why this brutal man had brought her life to an end. "The sight of his beautiful mother's shattered head was imprinted deep in his soul, a permanent nightmare, tormenting his waking hours and troubling his dreams."[2]

The relationship between the mother and her child, in his early infancy and adolescence, has a well-known importance in the development of one's personality, and surely affects the emotional life deeply. This theme is dealt by Maḥfūẓ also in *The Cairo Trilogy*. A metaphorical death of the mother happened to little Yāsīn when he saw a man making love to his divorced mother. He screamed from the depths of his heart and wept until the woman came to him trying to calm him down. He cannot forget this scene, though he is no longer a young child.[3]

[1] See Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 269.

[2] Ibid., 272-273.

[3] Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk*, in *The Cairo Trilogy*, trans. William Maynard Hutchins, Olive E. Kenny, Lorne M. Kenny, and Angele Botros Samaan with an Introduction by Sabry Hafez (New York, London: Everyman's Library, 2001), 85. For

The image of his mother as a pure and ideal woman has been damaged for Yāsīn, early enough in his childhood. “He closed the door of forgiveness and pardon on her and barricaded it with anger and hatred”.[1] For him his mother does not differ from any other beautiful woman who seduces men, for her sole concern is sex. All women are alike, “a filthy curse”.[2]

Yāsīn’s mother died metaphorically for him, because he stopped respecting her, and that affected his relationship with women afterwards when he became an adult.

Jalāl’s reaction to all the rumors surrounding his mother as a collector of husbands, a tyrant, deceiver, servant, and social climber, was totally different. He refused to see anything shameful in her actions. The image of his mother remained, for him, as the symbol of a beautiful angel, who had no luck in her short, miserable life.[3] Jalāl’s respect and love for his dead mother affected his love for Qamar rendering it romantic and tender. It changed his behavior for the better. Yet this was to be only for a short period, because Qamar became ill and died, right before their marriage.

The emphasis on the similarity between a mother and her son in their behavior and personality is shown by Maḥfūẓ in the characters of Yasīn and Jalāl. Both of them were termed “the son of his mother” (*ibn ummih*). In Arab society this is intended to insult the son. “In school and out in the alley Jalāl was the

further details about the effect of the scene on Yāsīn’s behavior as an adult man see, Srouji-Shajrawi, *Naẓariyyat al-istiqbāl*, 248-255.

[1] Mahfouz, *Palace Walk*, 88.

[2] See Ibid.

[3] See Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 275-277.

victim of vicious attacks. The boys insulted him. "Zahīrah's son!" they would jeer".[1]

The scornful and spiteful attitude of the boys toward him forced Jalāl to change. He was good and affectionate but became known as 'the devil' as he won against the boys, his strong body braving against all provocations. Thus, he worshiped power and grew drunk on it.[2] Becoming 'a devil' has a special meaning in this context for it reminds us of '*Iblīs*' (the Satan) who refused the command of Allah to bow down before Adam.[3] Jalāl has already chosen the way of Satan when he accepted the *jinnī*'s command to build a high minaret, and when he refused to be mortal.[4]

In her attempt to connect *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* to Sufism, Hālah Aḥmad Fuʾād writes that Jalāl, by choosing the way of the devil, reminds the reader of the statement in al-ʿAṭṭār's book *Mantiq al-ṭayr* (trans. *The Conference of the Birds*, 1984), about *Iblīs* talking to God as follows: "I saw the people demand your mercy, but I […] preferred your curse. I am the slave of your curse who will never abandon it".[5]

In a similar vein, Badīʿ Muḥammad Jumʿah, in his introduction to *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, writes that some Sufis, such as Shiblī, were jealous of *Iblīs* because he argued with God who uniquely cursed him many times. Therefore, some Sufis

[1] Ibid., 275.

[2] See Ibid., 276.

[3] See Qurʾān 18: 50.

[4] See in this context Ibid., 2: 27-28, and 4: 119-121.

[5] Hālah Aḥmad Fuʾād, *Qirāʾāt ṣūfiyyah fī adab Najīb Maḥfūẓ* (Sufi Readings in Najīb Maḥfūẓ's Literature) (Cairo: al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʾĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 2014), 217. The writer does not provide a page number of this quotation from *Mantiq al-ṭayr*. See its location in, Farīd ad-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 1220), *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, translated with an introduction by Badīʿ Muḥammad Jumʿah, (Beirut: Dār al-Āndalus, 2002), 360-361.

yearn that God may address them, even if only with curses.[1] While Jalāl's ambition, in my reading, is not to win God's mercy or curses, but rather to be the rebellious devil who passionately tries to replace God.

Both Zahīrah and her son Jalāl enjoyed strong personalities, intelligence, and beauty. They believed that good life was only for people like them, but, ironically, were killed by their "weak" lovers.

After the death of Zahīrah, Jalāl moved, against his will, to live with his father ʿAbd Rabbih al-Farrān (the baker). The little child loved only his mother and did not understand why he was supposed to call ʿAbd Rabbih a "father". The latter benefited from Jalāl's inherited wealth, because Zahīrah's husband (ʿAzīz) had been a respected wealthy man.[2]

Qamar's death is a turning point in the tale of King Jalāl for it witnesses the birth of the new Jalāl, the *Übermensch*, who will later refuse to admit the reality, the inevitability of death, and strive to become eternal. Jalāl felt that some monster had taken over his body. He convinced himself that he was not sad because of the death of his lover, Qamar. He could not grieve over a creature so quickly destroyed. He was no longer in love, for he cannot be in love with somebody in the grave who is no more than "an empty bag of skin exhaling foul gases, floating in poisonous liquids where the worms dance".[3]

According to Jalāl's own vision of life and death, we live and die by our strength of will, and therefore he hates weak people, imbeciles, cowards and all kinds of victims who invite defeat. He declared himself to be immortal, as did ʿĀshūr al-Nājī (in the first tale) who is still alive but only disappeared, as do the

[1] See al-ʿAṭṭār, *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, 124.

[2] Yāsīn also moved to live with his father Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Jawād, a respected man.

[3] Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 288.

dervishes of the monastery (*takiyyah*)[1] who only keep their doors closed because they are immortal.[2] The author does not provide any reason for the mysterious disappearance of ʿĀshūr al-Nājī, unless he wants to compare him to al-Mahdī in Shiite ideology, or to usher in the sixteen subsequent generations of al-Nājī family. This is done in the light of the contrast between a just leadership and a corrupt one.

After a short quarrel, Jalāl quickly defeated the clan chief (*al-futuwwah*), beating him with his great strength. The chief Samakah al-ʿallāj sunk to the ground like a slaughtered bull. Thus Jalāl, the son of ʿAbd Rabbih and Zahīrah, succeeded in restoring the title of *futuwwah* to al-Nājī family, and ended by becoming the chief of chiefs, all powerful. His acts were inspired by his strength and visions of immortality.[3]

At first the *ḥarāfīsh* rejoiced for they had hoped for Jalāl's benevolence and generosity, and were now waiting for justice to be done.[4] Yet, Jalāl was

[1] *Takiyyah* literally means a pillow, a place of repose, and it refers to a Sufi lodge. See Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 241. El-Enany interprets the *takiyyah* as a recurrent motif in this novel, as the symbol of man's highest ideals. See El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz,* 158.

[2] See Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 288.

[3] See Ibid., 289-290.

[4] The term *ḥarāfīsh* (plural of *ḥarfūsh*) is found in a variety of literary sources, mostly from Egypt and Syria, dating from the late Ayyūbid through the Mamlūk period. William M. Brinner studies the significance and uses of the term through different historical references and concludes that the usage of the term varies in the works of writers of different periods. Nevertheless, one of these usages equates the *ḥarāfīsh* with the *ʿāmmah* (the common people) who were among those executed in Cairo in 1341 during troubles which arose between one of the powerful emirs and the royal mamlūks. The term *ḥarāfīsh* refers to a specific group; they lived from begging, and were to be

uninterested in the state of the *ḥarāfīsh* and despised their problems and, therefore, he did not concern himself with bringing justice to those poor people of the alley, for he felt that they did not deserve to live in dignity. To justify his opinion, he said scathingly to his father that the *ḥarāfīsh* were "dying like flies all the time, and they don't complain".[1]

The narrator explains Jalāl's behavior toward the *ḥarāfīsh* as a way to convince himself that he is supreme and distinct, one who deserves to be immortal, denying both the belief in God's will as supreme, and the inevitability of death. He claimed that all those ideas are for the stupid. In fact, Jalāl was not happy but suffered from anxiety and fear of getting old and dying. His real demand was to fortify himself against death.

Jalāl's name fits his outward appearance and external behavior, and alludes to his internal desire to become above everyone. He hoped to achieve the impossible dream of immortality when the *jinnī* comes and forms a bond with him.[2] "He would be the vanguard of a new form of existence, the one to discover life without death, the first to reject eternal repose. […] Only the weak are afraid to live".[3]

found in the streets and around mosques in considerable numbers. According to Brinner, there is a link between the *ḥarāfīsh* and Sufism in the person of ʿUbayd al-Ḥarfūsh. See William M. Brinner, "The Significance of Ḥarāfīsh and their "Sultan"", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 6, no. 2 (Jul., 1963): 195, 201, 210-211.

[1] Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 291.

[2] The word for *jinnī* in the English translation is "devil". See Ibid., 306; and Maḥfūẓ, *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*, 430.

[3] Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 307.

However, ironically, a prostitute called Zaynāt poisoned him and put an end to his life. His death is meant to say that God's will cannot be challenged, and the association with *jinn* will not help to keep man immortal, even after he has carried out all the *jinn's* requirements.

Jalāl's will to be above other human beings and his desire to achieve immortality by the aid of a *jinnī*, is a mistaken understanding of Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch* that led to attempts to pressgang his works into the service of Nazism.[1] Julian Young explains that the Superman (*Übermensch*) of Nietzsche appears as

> one who possesses a passionate heart but a cool, self-disciplining head. The will to power seems to be the will to a kind of power over *oneself* rather than over others, the power to channel the energy of one's raw impulses into productive, cultural achievements.[2]

This interpretation of the *Übermensch* fits, to a certain degree, the description of the main character in the tenth tale of *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*, and more or less holds a significance similar to that of *futuwwah*.

The word *Übermensch* (translated variously as overman or superman or overhuman) is misleading. It can be understood, wrongly, as becoming all powerful or a semi-God, especially when related to another term in Nietzsche's thought: nihilism. Yet nihilism has two aspects: *active* nihilism and *passive* nihilism.[3]

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[1] See Diane Morgan, "Nietzsche and National Identity", in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 455.

[2] Julian Young, *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 2nd edition, Kindle edition, location 3171.

[3] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 17.

These two forms of nihilism lead to different ways of behavior. The first type, active nihilism, is exemplified, to some extent, by the character Jalāl, who sees self as all-powerful and worthy of achieving immortality. Therefore, the traditional values and convictions, including those of religion and society, turn out to be meaningless to him from his own perspective. On the other hand, these values and convictions suit the "lower species ("the herd", "the masses", "society")".[1]

Passive nihilism is a sign of weakness that leads to despair and an absence of the will to face challenges. Its most famous form, according to Nietzsche, is Buddhism.[2] After declaring the absurdity and meaninglessness of human life deprived of God, ʿUmar al-Ḥamzāwī of *al-Shaḥḥādh* is shown as an antihero characterized by passive nihilism.

The real threat to the ability of human beings to find meaning in life stems not from the death of God, but from the tendency of many to persist in demanding an otherworldly ground for meaning.[3] This leads to the trap of *passive* nihilism.

The *Übermensch* means not negating life upon earth, nor expecting the fulfillment of otherworldly hopes. This explains Maḥfūẓ's rejection of al-Ḥamzāwī's withdrawal from all kinds of social contacts and relationships.

Jalāl's failure stems from a mistaken understanding of the *Übermensch*, because this concept is not concerned with the individual but rather with the whole community. Therefore, ʿĀshūr, in the tenth tale of *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*, succeeds for he actualizes the true meaning of the *Übermensch* or, rather, the *futuwwah*. "The goal of the overman is a communal goal. It emblemizes a vision

[1] Ibid., 19.

[2] See Ibid., 18.

[3] See Kathleen Marie Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 78.

of greatness that has not yet appeared on earth but should nevertheless be brought into being".[1]

ʿĀshūr was the son of Rabīʿ al-Nājī and Ḥalīmah al-Barakah. He is introduced in the last tale of *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* to close the circle that began first with his great grandfather, ʿĀshūr al-Nājī (i.e., ʿĀshūr the survivor). His appearance is also reminiscent of the first ʿĀshūr: "He was a powerful young man, his polite, gentle manner belying his strength. [...] His giant frame and his heavy, attractive features were reminiscent of the first ʿĀshūr".[2]

In this story we also notice a resemblance between the mother, Ḥalīmah al-Barakah, whose family was from the *ḥarāfīsh*, and one of her three children: ʿĀshūr. The mother's first name is Ḥalīmah (from *ḥilm*) which means patient, tolerant and long-suffering. Her name really suits her traits, her behavior and her life. Her family name, al-Barakah, means blessing, prosperity and good fortune. The name, Ḥalīmah al-Barakah, thus symbolizes her life swaying between poverty and prosperity, which also characterizes the life of the whole family, in different periods, after the death of her husband Rabīʿ al-Nājī.

Ḥalīmah always worried that the strength of her young child, ʿĀshūr, would arouse the fears of Ḥassūna al-Sabʿ (the *futuwwah*), but ʿĀshūr was clever enough to use his strength only to endure and be patient, because he waited for the right moment to rebel.

ʿĀshūr and his mother knew that a successful revolt would succeed with the aid of the *ḥarāfīsh.* Yet a virtuous leader must also think of a clever plan and find

[1] Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, 82.

[2] Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 373-374. According to Elmarsafy, the first ʿĀshūr operates in this novel as a Sufi saint and a pole around which the plot revolves, whereas the mechanism at the heart of *The Harafish* is the synthesis of Sufism and the quest for social justice. See Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*, 36.

the right moment to take action. After meeting the *ḥarāfīsh* ʿĀshūr felt energetic and vital as if "he was bound by destiny to gamble and take risks, to pursue the impossible. He was harboring an amazing secret, *discarding security and safety, loving passionately (yʿshaq) death and what beyond it*".[1]

ʿĀshūr succeeded in reviving the true Sufi meaning of *futuwwah*, as suggested by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 1021). True chivalry (*futuwwah*) is not the quality of the man who imposes himself on the community by force and threat, living from the taxes that he takes from the merchant class.[2] On the contrary, *futuwwah* (from the word, *fatā*, i.e., a handsome and brave youth) means to behave as an ideal, noble and perfect man. He follows the divinely guided life of the prophets, saints and sages. The *futuwwah*'s "hospitality and generosity would extend until he had nothing left for himself; a man who would give all, including his life, for the sake of his friends".[3]

The second ʿĀshūr succeeded also, as part of his comprehensive plan, in motivating all the *ḥarāfīsh* to work for their own living. Then, one day he told the *ḥarāfīsh* seriously that he had a strange dream. He saw them armed with clubs (*nabābīt*). The *ḥarāfīsh* broke into gales of unrestrained laugher. One of them said that ʿĀshūr is definitely crazy (*majnūn*).[4]

Describing ʿĀshūr as crazy indicates the impossibility of actualizing his fantasy, his vision, though it expresses the latent desire of the *ḥarāfīsh*. By telling

[1] Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 396. The sentence written above in italics does not appear in the English translation. See Maḥfūẓ, *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*, 552.

[2] See Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*, 38.

[3] Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *The Book of Sufi Chivalry (Kitāb al-futuwwah)*, trans. Sheikh Tosun bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (London: East West Publications, 1983), 6.

[4] See Mahfouz, *The Harafish*, 397.

his private dream to the *ḥarāfīsh*, ʿĀshūr transformed it into a collective or public dream. Consequently, the true *Übermensch* or *futuwwah* is the one who is capable of overcoming his egoistic or individual interest for the benefit of a much wider social class. He channels and guides people into productive achievements and makes them believe in themselves to ensure social victory over the tyrant class.

ʿĀshūr succeeds in bringing the *ḥarāfīsh* into freedom and independence, first of all by making them understand that self-actualization can be achieved only through the efforts of their own labor. Second, he brings them into a new state of self-consciousness. They are no longer afraid of the unfair and cruel *futuwwah*, and likewise they are not frightened by death. The desire for power (in its positive meaning) combined by an intelligent plan of work brought ʿĀshūr, together with the *ḥarāfīsh*, to victory. In this manner, the dream of ʿĀshūr becomes real. The *ḥarāfīsh,* the overwhelming majority of the populace, joined together in a big revolt using long sticks (*nabābīt*), and brought back the leadership of the clan to the Nājī family. Contrary to expectation, chaos did not follow, because ʿĀshūr inspired them to create rather than to destroy.[1] The right and wise revolution succeeds in changing the socio-political regime for the benefit of the majority.

The desire to make society better, and bring back the true meaning of *futuwwah* for the benefit of the group, cannot be realized without a leading individual with a motivating vision, one who may at first be considered crazy. Erich Neumann emphasizes the importance of the individual by saying that:

> external collective developments are decades behind the development of the individual, which is like that of the *avant-garde* of the collective and is concerned at a far earlier stage with the

[1] See Ibid., 402-403.

> problems which subsequently catch the attention of the collective as a whole. […] The sensitive, psychically disturbed and creative people are always the forerunners.[1]

Maḥfūẓ also lays stress on the importance of individual efforts in driving the society toward progress, the goal of all human achievements. This explains the failure of all the "mad characters" discussed earlier in the previous works before introducing the character of ʿĀshūr. However, "the hope for victory would not be fulfilled on the individual level but only on the social or collective level".[2]

Thus, we see that both concepts (*Übermensch* and *futuwwah*) are burdened with contradictory meanings that may cause confusion. Their true relevant meaning depends on how they are used publicly to guide the overall cognitive and behavioral system of the individual, which can affect not only him but also the society as a whole.

To some extent, it seems that Maḥfūẓ had in mind the real historical development of *ḥarāfīsh* when he wrote *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*. The role played by ʿĀshūr resembles that of the grand sheikh of the *ḥarāfīsh* (*shaykh mashayikh al-ḥarāfīsh*) in the latter part of the sixteenth century, who was associated with the Sufi chapel (*zāwiyah*).

[1] Erich Neumann, *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic*, trans. Eugene Rolfe (Boston, London: Shambhala, 1990), 29-30.

[2] Srouji-Shajrawi, "The Shadow of Hegel in *The Cairo Trilogy*", 3. On Maḥfūẓ's view of the relationship between man and history see also El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, 71-76.

Conclusion

Maḥfūẓ's interest in elaborating the theme of madness is not primarily psychological, but rather cultural and ethical. The philosophical implications of his use of madness can be discovered if Maḥfūẓ's works are studied as a network. This discloses an optimistic view that the "mad" individual may act as a catalyst for social and political change when his chaotic powers and unbridled passions are employed to "enliven" his inert "rational" society. Hence, if the vision of the "crazy individual" becomes a collective goal, 'unreason' can create a new more 'reasonable' and just society and, thus, contribute to the progressive history of the nation.

The association of madness with the socio-political conditions in Egypt, makes it a mode of resistance and a quest for social justice. The 1952 revolution in Egypt failed to bring about any significant change for the better. This could explain the recurrent presentation of the mad, the alienated, the frustrated and the psychotic characters especially in Maḥfūẓ's works of the 1960s. This period was known as "the era of fear" because many members of the Communist Party were arrested in 1959, followed by the arrest of the Muslim brothers in 1960.[1]

Portraying madness as a struggle against an oppressive reality does not by necessity lead to a collapse of society. The synthesis of the two opposing forces (the "mad" vs. his/her "rational" society) may produce social progress ahead of its time as depicted in the tenth tale of *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh*. This entails that the leader should behave in accordance with the true meaning of the Sufi practice *futuwwah*, i.e., not by intimidating people (*baltaja*) but by guiding them into progress.

[1] See in this context Hodda Elsadda's analysis of the Egyptian writer Sonʿāllah Ibrāhīm's literary works, in *Gender, Nation, and The Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 119-141.

Traditional Arabic-Islamic texts explained the nature of madness and its variable forms: the ‘romantic fool’, the ‘wise fool’ and the ‘holy fool’. But in modern Arabic literature we are confronted with the psychotic fool. Therefore, psychological concepts may help in the diagnosis of the literary characters, without neglecting the socio-political context.

To behave madly means to resist and challenge the ‘normal’ human behavior or the ethics posited by the regime, claims Foucault. This resistance is portrayed differently in the works discussed here. In *Hams al-junūn* (1938), madness reveals the conflict between social norms and individual freedom, and between reason and human instincts. The character’s unbridled behavior leads him to be excluded from society in a lunatic asylum. He is allowed to rejoin community only after he is ‘normalized’. The unrestrained passion for revenge by a paranoid character (Saʿīd Mahrān in *al-Liṣṣ wa-l-kilāb*) ends by shooting him to death by the policemen. We notice that the media, the police and the asylum are employed as means of repression, to bridle and control the ‘unreasonable’ behavior. Madness as a mental illness and an existential feeling of alienation is the outcome of desperate effort to regain faith in God, to find a spiritual savior, or to find the ultimate meaning of life, as in *Zaʿbalāwī* (1962) and *al-Shaḥḥādh* (1965).

Maḥfūẓ is not interested in Sufi exaggerations (*shaṭaḥāt*) or other religious utopias, or the use of violence as means of bringing change to society. Instead, he aims for a peaceful ‘revolution’ in Egypt.

A complex theme in Najīb Maḥfūẓ’s oeuvre, such as madness, raises up several issues that merit further consideration and that have been touched on only lightly here. They include parent-child relationship, socio-political critique, the idea of the virtuous city, and various masked forms of rebellion such as sexual deviance.

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همس الجنون في أعمال نجيب محفوظ الأدبيّة

كلارا سروجي شجراوي

الملخَّص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن أشكال الجنون التي تظهر في عَيِّنات مُمَثِّلة لأعمال نجيب محفوظ الأدبيّة. سأبيّن أنّ الجنون يرتبط باللامعقول والسّلوك غير المقبول اجتماعيّا، إضافة إلى ارتباطه برؤيا الأشخاص المُخلِّصين وسلوكهم، وذلك من خلال التشكُّلات المختلفة للجنون: كمَرض نفسيّ، كتعبير عن أزمة الإنسان الوجوديّة، كحالة شَغَف مَرَضي بالخلود، وكأسلوب آمِن في توجيه النقد السّياسي-اجتماعي لمصر. إنّ فشل ثورة 1952 في تغيير الظروف الاجتماعيّة والسّياسيّة إلى الأفضل قد دفع بمحفوظ، في ستّينيّات القرن الماضي على الأخصّ، إلى كتابة روايات وقصص (مثل "الشحّاذ" و"اللصّ والكلاب" وقصّة "زعبلاوي") قد تناولت شخصيّات ذُهانيّة وصوّرت حالات الشعور بالاغتراب والخَيبة. لكنّ اهتمامه بالجنون يعود إلى عام 1938 عندما عبّر في قصّته القصيرة "همس الجنون" عن الصّراع ما بين الأعراف الاجتماعيّة والحريّة الفرديّة، والنّزاع ما بين العقل والغرائز المنفلِتَة. يتحوّل "المجنون" (بالمفهوم الإيجابي) في أعماله التي تعود إلى ثمانينيّات القرن الماضي (مثل "ليالي ألف ليلة" وَ"ملحمة الحرافيش") إلى مُشاهِد وناقد للأوضاع الاجتماعيّة ومُقاوِم لأشكال الظّلم. بينما يتمّ تصوير "المجنون" (بالمفهوم السّلبي") كشخص لا يريد سوى السّيطرة والمصلحة الشخصيّة، إلى جانب رغبته بالخلود وتعاهُده مع الجنّ لتحقيق ذلك، مُتنكِّرًا لواجباته الاجتماعيّة وسائر الأعراف. لكنّ محفوظ يفاجئنا بصورة "مجنون" من نوع آخر في نهاية "ملحمة الحرافيش" هو أقرب إلى مفهوم "المخلِّص" الذي ينجح في تحقيق الثورة على "الفُتُوّة" الظالِم البَلطَجي بمعاونة الحرافيش، لِيُحقِّقَ بالتّالي مفهوم الصّوفيّة الأصلي عن "الفُتُوَّة" التي تحمل معاني الفضيلة والفروسيّة والرّحمة والإرشاد وإيثار مصلحة الجماعة على المصلحة الفرديّة الأنانيّة. تدّعي هذه الدراسة أنّ هذا المفهوم الصّوفي للفتوّة هو المقابل لمفهوم "الإنسان الأعلى" لدى الفيلسوف الألماني نيتشه بعد إزالة اللبس عنه والخطأ في فهمه.