

**Religious Intertextuality as Translation Challenge:  
Explicitness, Recognisability, and the Case of Naguib  
Mahfouz's 'Sugar Street'**

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**Abstract**

Intertextuality is a semiotic-dialogic concept connoting the various connections which bond a text to another/others or the perception that all texts contain echoes and reverberations of past or contemporaneous texts. As a literary device taking forms like allusions, quotations, etc., intertextuality is a significant stage in deciphering any piece of literature, as it is essential to perceive how other works have affected the writer and how different texts are implemented in the piece to convey certain meanings. The potential for failure to identify intertexts between languages and across cultures is likely to be greater than within them, and thus they throw up challenges to translators. So, this study investigates the recognisability and translatability of intertextual references of religious dimensions in Mahfouz's Sugar Street. The findings show that, to minimize the loss of the intertextual context of STs, translators resort to strategies that, in addition to achieving a certain level of semantic equivalence based on linguistic acceptability in the TL, ensure that such context is captured and relayed into the TL.

**Key words:** intertextuality, semiotics, literary translation, Mahfouz's Sugar Street.

**0. Introduction**

The theory of intertextuality signifies the textual space where texts cite, assimilate, overlap, or rather clone each other in a variety of ways, forming new (hyper)texts. Terminologically

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speaking, intertextuality was first coined by the poststructuralist critic Kristeva in the 1960s and has been influential in the field of literary and cultural studies ever since. Kristeva's concept may be taken as an attempt on her part to synthesize her readings of Saussure's semiotics (1916) with Bakhtin's dialogism (1929). This combination has helped Kristeva to formulate her idea that all texts, literary or not, establish a network of relationships either explicitly or implicitly. Being a literary discourse strategy, intertextuality is not employed randomly in a piece of literature but is almost motivated; it is used by text producers to provide the necessary background to assist readers in understanding different components and dimensions of language, culture, history, and religion. If such recognition can possibly be missed intralingually, the possibility is doubled when the reading is interlingual, as in translation activities. So, this study explores the way this important aspect of textuality is dealt with in translating literary works in general and Mahfouz's *Sugar Street* in particular.

The presence of intertextual networks in Mahfouz's *Sugar Street* can either open it to a host of interpretations or direct text receivers towards a one in particular. Intertextuality is, thus, a source of semantic density and can be problematic, raising not only the question of the suitable choice of a specific lexical unit but also the issue of cultural competence. In general, failure to comprehend the implications associated with intertexts may result in incomplete retrieval of the subtleties of the intended meaning. As a rule, deciphering the linguistic item in question depends on the assumption that there is a vast body of knowledge shared by the writer and readers, and that therefore readers can comprehend the writer's referent. To minimize the loss of the intertextual contexts of STs, translators resort to certain strategies to ensure that such contexts are not lost or obscured but are re-established in the TT. In so doing, the translated version should preserve all aesthetic properties that contribute to create as much as possible the same effect on TL readership that equals the one created by the original text on SL readers.

## 1. Review of the Literature

### 1.1. Translation from a semiotic perspective

One of the most significant developments in the domain of translation studies may be the acknowledgement that “the first step towards an examination of the processes of translation must be to accept that although translation has a central core of linguistic activity, it belongs most properly to semiotics” (Bassnett, 1980, p. 13). Translation is, thus, a process of not merely linguistic but, more than that, semiotic transmission whereby information provided in one semiotic system (SL) is transferred into another (TL). Even within the field of semiotics, there are corresponding set of perspectives that consider translation to be a semiotic exercise. Such a position is adopted by Petrilli (2001), when she confirms that translating and translatability “are prerogatives of semiosis and of the sign. Translation, therefore, is a phenomenon of sign reality and as such it is the object of study of semiotics” (pp. 278:279). The view of translation as an inherently and thoroughly semiotic act can be best comprehended, if translation, according to House (2009), is defined as “the process of replacing an original text, known as the source text, with a substitute one, known as the target text” (p. 4). House’s definition is not entirely different from other traditional definitions of translation, yet the word ‘text’ is utilized here in a specifically semiotic sense to signify not only messages in a natural language, but also any carrier of textual meaning, including ceremonies, works of art, as well as genres such as prayer, law, novel, etc. Moreover, the inclusion of the concept ‘substitution’ refers to the idea of translatability, interreplaceability, and/or interchangeability of every semiotic system with one another. The semiotic approach to translation, as Guidère (2008) indicates, “has the advantage of manipulating different ‘worlds’ with the appropriate conceptual tools ... as it allows the translator to integrate signs that come from different systems” (as cited in Kourdis, 2015, p. 306). Hence, the semiotic paradigm should be included in the central concepts of translation theory that have emerged from general reflections on language. Not only would this “embrace an enhancement from the viewpoint of translation studies”, it would also be “a welcome proposal from the sign-

theoretical vantage point, or the field of semiotics as well” (Hartama-Heinonen, 2008, pp. 32-33). In a nutshell, both the fields of semiotics and translation belong together, or somehow call for one another, and should be examined at a deeper level.

### **1.2. Translation and/as intertextuality**

Venuti (2009) suggests that intertextuality “is central to the production and reception of translations ... Intertextuality enables and complicates translation, preventing it from being an untroubled communication and opening the translated text to interpretive possibilities that vary with cultural constituencies in the receiving situation” (p. 157). In light of intertextuality, the translation process is considered an intertextual activity, since texts, be it SL texts or TL texts, rewrite, elaborate, absorb, or rather clone each other in one way or another in varying degrees. As Denisova (2001) states, “now translation is being understood not only as the interlinguistic phenomenon, but as the intertextual phenomenon” (p. 207). The idea that translation is an intertextual exercise has been widely expressed by numerous scholars. Neubert and Shreve (1992), for instance, describe the translation process and its results as “mediated intertextuality” (p. 118), when they discuss translation in terms of being “text-induced text production” (p. 119). Farahzad (2009) regards translation to be an “intertextual practice” (p. 125), when she examines the nature of the relationship between prototext (ST) and the metatext (TT). In her point of view, both types of texts stand in an intertextual connection to one another; this is because the metatext clones the prototext in terms of form and meaning. In speaking of intertextuality, Schaffner (2012) says that texts, as communicative occurrences, are characterized by their complicated dependency on other texts, either of the same or of another language/culture. In this regard, intertextuality can be related to texts that originated in the same culture or to texts that originated in another culture. Moreover, Hatim (1997) regards the notion of intertextuality as an “all pervasive textual phenomenon which, especially when opaque, can be an important source of ambiguity in texts and thus a particularly problematic area in translation” (p. 29), and a “precondition for the intelligibility of texts” (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 131). Accordingly, in order to convey the intended

meaning of STs, translators should be able to identify and understand the intertextual networks found in STs, and that in case of failure to grasp the implications associated with the linguistic item in question, it may give rise to insufficient understanding of the intended meaning of the ST.

### **1.3. Intertextuality as an intractable culture-bound translation issue**

Due to the fact that “in a language everything is culturally produced, beginning with language itself” (Aixelà, 1996, p. 57), intertextuality should be thought of as a cultural entity. Succinctly speaking, intertextuality is strongly influenced by society and culture; within this context, intertextual signs are mostly culture-specific. Both cultural and intertextual materials, according to Trosborg (2002), are “exophoric references, i.e. references outside the text. The interpretation of both requires presupposed knowledge” (p. 35). In a nutshell, their meaning is not inscribed in the text but goes beyond the mere transfer of words. Failure to comprehend the implications associated with such items may result in insufficient understanding or incomplete retrieval of the subtleties of the intended meaning. Bhabha (1994) stresses that intertexts and cultural signs visualize “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space - that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (p. 38, emphasis in original). The translation of such entities underlines the transformation of cultures through their intertextual recontextualisation. It is generally accepted that, in order to be able to properly transmit cultural phenomena, intertextuality being one of them, to the target audience, it is essential for translators to “maximize their linguistic knowledge, i.e. grammatical rules, lexical items, and syntactic structures, as well as the cultural backgrounds of the SL and TL in order to become aware of the cultural references of both the ST and TT equally” (Taghian, 2013, p. 98). To put it simply, if the translator is bilingual and bicultural, it might be easy for him to achieve the highest degree of fidelity during the act of rendering.

Being a culture-bound component that “does not exist of itself, but as the result of a conflict arising from any linguistically

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represented reference in a source text” (Aixelà, 1996, p. 57), intertextuality may represent a potential pitfall for translators. Such a pitfall is substantially associated with an awareness that translation is not a simple process of linguistic transmission but an encounter between two dissimilar cultures; each of which has its own way of viewing reality, or, more specifically, its own reality. In other words, because of their cultural embeddedness, instances of intertextuality add to the difficulty of the translator’s task and probably are the most troublesome elements of a translation. Aixelà (1996) confirms that conveying functions and connotations of such references is a “translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text” (p. 58). This statement indicates that difficulties in rendering cultural signs spring from two different situations: an objective one (the “non-existence of the referred item”) and a relative one (the “different intertextual status” or the different value assigned to the given item in the TL). The second case is relative since the intertextual status keeps shifting and varying because connections between different cultures might change in a very short period of time. Due to their dynamic nature, “no two elements retain the same relationship over a sufficient period of time” (p. 57). Therefore, the translation strategies employed at some point in time may not be suitable at other time. In short, the translation of socio-cultural references that appear to be exclusively rooted in their SC is regarded as a complex decision-making process, since the conveyance of the ST’s influence depends on its appropriate interpretation in the TL. The successful transference of such chunks is achieved through the usage of translation mechanisms such as substitution, paraphrase, and addition.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Intertextuality: origins and development of the concept**

In order to arrive at a general understanding of intertextuality, it is perhaps most appropriate to start by examining Bakhtin's statement (1986) "I live in a world of others' words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others' words ..., beginning with my assimilation of them ... and ending with assimilation of the wealth of human culture" (p. 143). Practically speaking, to be able to write means not only to acquire different symbolic methods for expressing one's thoughts, experiences, and knowledge, but also to adopt, adapt, and to come to own the very meanings one can have. To begin with, the relationship established between one text and another/others has been investigated comprehensively by numerous theorists and researchers of intertextuality. Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician, is one of the most important early contributors who puts forward the concept of intertextuality under his dialogical approach to literature, art, and human existence. Bakhtin adopts the term 'dialogism' to depict a word that contains and captures "the human-centred and socially specific aspect of language lacking in formalism and Saussurean linguistics" (Allen, 2011, p. 16). Naturally, all utterances are never static or stand alone; they are in state of a continuing and inevitable change, since they are always being influenced by the social context within which they are uttered, which is also in a continuing transformation.

Although Bakhtin is known as the originator of the idea, the coinage of the term of 'intertextuality' is assigned to Kristeva in her essay entitled "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", published in 1966. In point of fact, Kristeva not only introduces and develops the term but primarily asserts the tremendous significance of the potential dynamics that lay within the text. According to Kristeva (1969), intertextuality is a universal phenomenon that elucidates "the existence of prior discourses as a precondition for the act of signifying, almost regardless of the semantic content of a given text" (as cited in Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 121). This notion variously connotes the intertwined connections between one text and other text(s), or the perception that all texts are composed of

other earlier texts with which they share some relations. Quoting Bakhtin, Kristeva (1986) states that “each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read” (p. 37). As it is clear, Kristeva adds the word ‘text’ in Bakhtin’s former statement and alters his ideas in a manner that makes it possible for the notion of intertextuality to be established. As Allen (2011) believes, “Bakhtinian notion of the dialogic has been rephrased within Kristeva’s semiotic attention to text, textuality and their relation to ideological structures” (p. 35). Thus, some critics consider the two theories, i.e. Kristeva’s intertextuality and Bakhtin’s dialogism, to be synonymous. Unfortunately, Bakhtin’s dialogism focuses on how human beings employ language in specific social situations, and Kristeva’s intertextuality focuses on the more abstract terms like text and textuality. Both Bakhtin and Kristeva arrive at a point that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality from which they are constructed. In general, intertextuality requires an understanding of texts “not as a self-contained structure but as differential and historical. Texts are shaped not by an immanent time but by the play of divergent temporalities” (Frow, 1990, p. 45). Every word in a text already exists in prior texts and those prior texts give birth to a new text; Kristeva (1969) calls this a ‘translinguistic doubleness’ or ‘ambivalence’ that “situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them” (p. 65). Writers are, first of all, readers of cultural texts, and therefore they are certainly subject to some influences. Within this context, writing is a process of re-writing in the ceaseless construction of history and society’s overlapping textual surfaces. In summary, every text is connected to previous texts to which it is a response, other texts about the same subject which surround it, and future texts which it anticipates as a response to itself.

### **2.2. Classifications of intertextuality**

Intertextuality is a very broad theory that appears in “any level of text organization” (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 18). Therefore, intertextual markers can include any sign that help readers identify meanings from the surface features of a given text

by reference to another/others in some way. It is characteristic for intertextuality that it “is not as concerned with identifying the sources of a document as it is with understanding the impact and function of both earlier and contemporary texts in a given text” (Aune, 2006, p. 43). In order to reach an understanding about the major motivations behind the inclusion of intertexts within a given text, it is necessary to discuss and describe the various types of intertextuality. As a consequence, the following section concentrates on one of the first attempts to specify the different classifications of intertextual relations, namely Fiske (1987).

### **2.2.1. Fiske’s horizontal vs. vertical intertextual dimensions (1987)**

Fiske indicates that any “text is necessarily read in relationship to others and that a range of textual knowledges is brought to bear upon it” (p. 108). Thus, any reading of a text always occurs vis-à-vis other texts that language receivers have knowledge of and that they have to consult in order to discover the unexpected dimensions of new and wide meanings of the text in question. Fiske goes on to distinguish between two types of intertextual dimensions: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal intertextuality refers to those relations which operate “between primary texts that are more or less explicitly linked, usually along the axes of genre, character, or content” (p. 108). In these connections that exist between a given text and other texts which precede and follow it, “reference is made to a specific text requiring the text receiver’s knowledge of that specific original text” (Haddad, 1995, p. 109). This type of intertextuality encompasses quotations, allusions, irony, and plagiarism. Vertical intertextuality, in comparison, focuses attention on the relationships “between a primary text, such as a television program or series, and other texts of a different type that refer explicitly to it” (Fiske, 1987, p. 108). These relations can be discussed with reference to “studio publicity, journalistic features, or criticism, or tertiary texts produced by the viewers themselves in the form of letters to the press or, more importantly, of gossip and conversation” (p. 108). Here, references are so general that they bring the sense of a whole structure, genre, style, register, discourse, or text type.

### 2.2.2. Fairclough's manifest intertextuality-interdiscursivity division (1992)

Fairclough (1992) proposes a taxonomy of intertextuality in which he writes that the general features of discourse (that construct social identities, social relations, ideologies, and systems of knowledge and belief) are identified by 'interdiscourse'. In his view, interdiscourse signifies a web of discourses and involves "the complex interdependent configuration of discursive formations" (p. 68), including the combination of genres and discourse types, or mixed genres. Interdiscourse, in turn, comprises a process of incessant reconfiguration in which a discursive formation, that serve as "the structural entity (underlying) discursive events" (p. 68), is led to include the reconstructed signs produced outside of itself. To Fairclough, the theme of interdiscourse is manifest in two types of intertextuality: manifest and constitutive. Manifest intertextuality can be achieved when "other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis: they are 'manifestly' marked or cued by features on the surface of the text, such as quotation marks" (p. 104). In other words, it encompasses overt relationships to other texts; this is the case for instance when authors quote, paraphrase, or cite the work of others. In nutshell, this type of intertextuality is discussed with reference to parody, irony, metadiscourse, negation, discourse representation, and discourse presupposition, etc. As far as constitutive intertextuality is concerned, it characterizes the implementation of previous texts in new texts which may adapt, contradict, or ironically echo them. This type is sometimes called "interdiscursivity"; though, broadly speaking, interdiscursivity designates relationships between larger formations of texts. Constitutive intertextuality is evidenced by the way in which a text "incorporate [s] another text without the latter being explicitly cued: one can respond to another text in the way one words one's own text" (p. 104). It, therefore, refers to "the configuration of discourse conventions [from other discourses] that go into its production [i.e. the text]" (p. 104). That's to say, intertextual connections can also be covert and implicit, and thus they are more difficult to recognize; this is the case for instance when a text is shaped by adopting generic or rhetorical conventions from other genres and discourse.

These interdiscursive relationships can be discussed with reference to structure, form, genre, style, register, and discourse.

### **2.3. Hatim and Mason's semiotic approach to translating intertextuality**

The actual transference of intertextual aspects of STs is but one of a series of challenges in handling the issue of intertextuality. More precisely, it is the last stage alongside identification and interpretation. To go into detail, Hatim and Mason (1990) report that “translators encounter first of all what we here term intertextual signals. These are elements of text which trigger the process of intertextual search, setting in motion the act of semiotic processing” (p. 113). Since translators are first of all readers of the original text, they are engaged in the processes of comprehension to grasp the ST at hand and recognize the intertextual references within it. After that, translators “embark on the more crucial exercise of charting the various routes through which a given signal links up with its pre-text” (p. 134). In this so-called interpretation stage, translators have to look for the pretexts of intertextual occurrences in the SL from which these occurrences originate; from these pretexts, they can identify what key meaning connections or associations these occurrences might recall for SL readers from their previous experience. In the final stage, translators have to investigate the different aspects of intertextual references and then decide which aspects of the reference are to be retained and which aspects may be ignored during the process of rendering. To reach this decision, according to different types of pre-texts, some significant questions are raised. These questions are related to the “informational status of a given reference in the communicative translation (features of field, mode, tenor, time, place, etc.), the intentional status, and the semiotic status (the interaction of the intertextual sign with other signs)” (p. 134). Indeed, text users assess all intertextual references in what they call the intertextual space, in terms of informational content (communicative aspect), intentionality (pragmatic aspect), and the semiotic status (socio-cultural signification). To sum up, translators can render intertextual aspects of STs, and in doing so, three steps should be followed:

translators have firstly to identify the specific signs that act as instances to intertextual relationships, then trace the means by which such instances relate back to other prior texts, and finally start the translation process.

### **2.4. Translation strategies: an intertextual approach**

Since there is no evidence that specific rules or procedures are introduced with respect to the translation of intertextual instances, the same strategies used for rendering cultural references can be employed to render intertextuality. How to deal with cultural implications is a matter of individual judgment and preference for the translator, and there are so many satisfactory possibilities available. It should be borne in mind, however, that translators “should decide what the appropriate strategy should be and that the decision arrived at should be governed by the more far-reaching considerations of text-function within situation within culture” (Kusmaul, 1995, p. 72). On this basis, translators can, then, select the translation methods and strategies relevant to the intended purpose of the translation project they are working on. In a nutshell, numerous taxonomies of translation methods to handle cultural references have been discussed by scholars, whether directly or indirectly, within more general studies on translation. Prioritizing one over the other rely upon the way they see translation and the purpose of translation activities, in addition to the significance of the intertextual links in STs, that should be preserved in TTs. The following section focuses on one of the most important and influential approaches to translation theory and research, namely Newmark’s model for translating cultural elements.

### **2.5. Newmark’s micro-level strategies for translating cultural signs**

Newmark (1988) proposes some procedures to be used by translators so as to find appropriate equivalents for the expressions which are unfamiliar to the recipient language during the act of translation. To begin with, transference is defined by Newmark as “the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure. It is the same as Catford’s transference, and includes transliteration, which relates to the conversion of different alphabets” (p. 81). It implies a direct borrowing of specific SL

cultural elements without any sort of adaptation to TL linguistic and cultural standards and norms, regardless of whether such elements are misunderstood by TRs or not. For instance, the Arabic words *hijab*, *imam*, *jihad*, and *intifada* are used as transferred words in English for their exotic flavor. Naturalization “adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology (word-forms) of the TL” (p. 82). This procedure, thus, involves the process in which the form of unfamiliar expressions is integrated by undergoing certain modifications during the process of transfer. The process of naturalization involves vast changes in the structure of foreign elements, including assimilation, dissimilation, metathesis, elision, doubling, adding, deleting or replacing one or more segments of the original element, and modification of stree-patterns. To elaborate, most suffixes of English words do not fit the declension system of Arabic, and hence they are substituted for a native one, e.g. democracy becomes ديمقراطية in Arabic.

Cultural equivalent is “an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word” (p. 83). By employing this strategy, translators replace the SL expression with a TL one which describes a similar concept in the TC and thus is likely to have the same effect on TL readership. In order to judge the effectiveness of the procedure of cultural equivalent in achieving an “equivalent effect”, consider the translation of the following phrase: قيس و ليلى are two famous characters in the Arab world. These characters can be compared to, and rendered as, *Romeo and Juliet*. Transliterating their names in the TT means nothing to the Western culture. Accordingly, employing such a procedure assists TRs to recognize terms easily and to comprehend concepts without any difficulty. According to Hervey and Higgins (1992), compensation as “the technique of making up for the translation loss of important ST features by approximating their effects in the TT through means other than those used in the ST” (p. 48). To illustrate, the procedure of compensation was used in translating the title of an article on “*Les pavilions*” into “*Moths and butterflies*” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 25). The strategy of paraphrase “involves rephrasing the source culture-specific item, either through reduction to sense, or by completely removing all trace of the

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cultural term and instead using a paraphrase that fits the context” (Pederson, 2005, p. 6). In a nutshell, being one of the strategies which translators might employ during translation process, paraphrase requires translators to use explanation and amplification of the meaning of the ST via conveying the content without the form.

Additions, notes, and glosses are some techniques utilized by translators to give information about socio-cultural concepts that are related to a certain domain. They occupy different places within the text. Firstly, additions can be implemented inside the text, and here they ought to be enclosed by round or square brackets, except in case these brackets are utilized as parts of the original text. In this context, Delabastita (1993) points out that addition is a tool by means of which “the T.T. turns out to contain linguistics, cultural, or textual component signs that have no apparent antecedent in the S.T.” (p. 36). This tool signifies expanding or inserting certain words, phrases, clauses or even sentences, during the process of translation, either to add certain ideas in translated texts or distort original ideas of the original writer. Secondly, notes are employed when there is a need to provide “additional information in a translation” (Newmark, 1988, p. 91). Inevitably, notes can be considered paratextual items always placed at the bottom of a page in a given text or at the end of the chapter. In translated literary works, translators utilize notes to help TRs by giving information which may be of use to them while they are reading a translation. Such further information might be “tied to those terms identifying items that best account for the cultural burden of a community, such as meals and food, clothes and accessories, beliefs and customs” (Herrero, 2005, p. 230). Thirdly, additional information can be written as glosses at the end of the book, with the help of number references. Nevertheless, this technique is less favored by translators since it might be exhausting for TRs to move to the end of the translated book every time they find a cultural or technical element.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data Collection

For the aims of the present study, the Arabic ST of Mahfouz's Sugar Street 'Al-Sukkariyya' and its English translation are utilized. The reason behind selecting such a novel is that it is rich in intertextual and cultural signs that are obviously specific to Arabic and Islamic culture. These references might seem very natural to Egyptians in particular and to Arabs in general since their meanings are known to them and easy to understand. But the difficulty arises when translators try to render these socio-cultural items into English. The examples below illustrate translation challenges arising from transferring these items into English. Each ST is followed by its English translation so that readers could have better access to the corresponding analysis.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

To give a concrete sense of how religion-related intertextuality works in the context of Mahfouz's Sugar Street, consider the following examples:

##### *Example 1*

قال الحمزاوي بحزن:  
- آن لي أن أعتزل، الله لا يكلف نفساً إلا وسعها..  
وانقبض قلب السيد، فاعتزال الحمزاوي للعمل ليس إلا نذيراً له بالاعتزال، كيف ينهض بأعباء العمل في دكانه وهو على ما هو عليه من مرض وكبر؟ (السكرية: ص ١٩)

##### *English translation*

Al-Hamzawi answered sadly, "the time has come for me to retire. God never asks a soul to bear more than it can". Al-Sayyid Ahmed felt depressed. Al-Hamzawi's retirement was a harbinger of his own. How could he look after the store by himself? (Sugar Street, p. 13)

##### *Analysis & Discussion*

The underlined construction الله لا يكلف نفساً إلا وسعها emerges to deliver a rich manifest or horizontal Qur'an-related intertextuality that might present an uphill translation task. Such religious intertextual signs are primarily concerned with "invoking a thematic (conceptual) relatedness (chaining, dovetailing) between two Qur'anic notions where one of them harks back to the other, thus

reminding the reader of the text producer's performative intent" (Abdul-Raof, 2019, p. 53). For the sake of understanding the importance of the intertextual association between this Qur'anic reference and the novel and then render it accurately to the TL, it is essential to consider the context where this reference originates. Citationally speaking, the following is the original Qur'anic context where *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها* appears:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ (...). (البقرة: آية ٢٨٦)

"Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope. He gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned...".

(Al-Hilali & Khan, 1998, p. 67)

This Qur'anic segment is used in Arabic quite a lot both formally and informally as to indicate that Allah "charges no soul save to its capacity, that is, what it is capable of bearing; for it is what it has merited, of good and its reward, and against it is what it has earned, of evil and its burden" (Al-Mahalli & Al-Suyuti, 2007, p. 53). Concerning the translation of *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها*, the translators apply a meaning-oriented approach, thus avoiding distortions of the ST's meaning and errors in the TL. Indeed, they render the expression *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها* as *God never asks a soul to bear more than it can*. However, this translation only conveys the semantic meaning of the phrase. That is, it does not have any reference to its source. Succinctly speaking, although the semantic aspect of such an apparently simple verse, i.e. *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها* is preserved, the intertextual relation is lost. As an attempt to avoid this situation at the time of translating, it is essential to keep the original features of *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها* to give TRs the opportunity to have tantalizing glimpses of the Qur'anic verse. Therefore, another translational procedure is required so as to maintain the intertextual level, namely to draw the reader's attention to the intertextual link between *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها* and the novel. To sum up, in order to give TRs an idea about these associations, the following footnote should be used: the phrase *الله لا يكلف نفسا إلا وسعها* is used in the holy Qur'an to signify the fact that *no soul shall be burdened beyond its capacity*.

*Example 2*

- وقد صلح علي عبد الرحيم واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا، وانتشرت في صفحات الوجوه التجاعيد، وبدا علي عبد الرحيم وإبراهيم الفار أشد إذعانا للكبر... (السكرية: ص ٤٧)

*English translation*

Ali Abd al-Rahim had gone bald, and the others' hair was streaked with white. Wrinkle spread across their faces. Ali Abd al-Rahim and Ibrahim al-Far appeared to have aged more than the other two... (Sugar Street, p. 34)

*Analysis & Discussion*

The underlined Qur'anic chunk واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا in the example above is a case of vertical or constitutive Qur'an-based intertextuality that might present translation hurdles. Since this study is attaching a special significance to the context from which such elements are extracted, it is crucially important to grasp the intertextual associations formulated here. The broader context of the reference under discussion is detailed in the following Qur'anic verse:

(قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا). (مريم: آية ٤).

Saying: "My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, and grey hair has spread on my head, And I have never been unblest in my invocation to You, O my Lord!" (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1998, p. 402) Generally, the phrase واشتعل الرأس شيباً entertains a high degree of frequency of use in modern standard Arabic and simply means that "hoariness has spread throughout his hairs just as a spark of fire spreads through firewood" (Al-Mahalli & Al-Suyuti, 2007, p. 327). As a starting point, واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا is a metaphor that is typically rich with aesthetic and expressive values and is associated with indirectness; therefore, it is hard to translate. As Park (2009) claims, a metaphorical statement "can create difficulties and conflict in the translation process because of its vagueness and implication" (p. 157). The effectiveness of واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا emanates from the strong connection it establishes between readers and Mahfouz's novel. Imagery, in this example, stimulates readers' imagination as the intended meaning is implicitly expressed. Instead

of giving direct access to meaning, the metaphor واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا provides avenues that readers' minds should take to uncover meanings inherent in the text. Translationally speaking, the translators convert this metaphor into sense; they render the metaphor واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا as *the others' hair was streaked with white*. Although this translation might retain the semantic meaning of the Arabic text, it fails to keep its emotive aspects. This might be related to the fact that "Qur'an-specific cultural and linguistic features are translation-resistant and therefore constitute interesting translation problems idiosyncratic to the Qur'an" (Abdul-Raof, 2005, pp. 165:166). As an attempt to successfully and accurately translate the metaphor in واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا, the TT should make sense, carry the spirit and manner of the original, have a natural and easy form of expression, and produce the same effect. Accordingly, this metaphor requires employing another translation strategy that, in addition to achieving semantic equivalence, ensures that the metaphor inherent in واشتعلت رءوس الآخرين شيبا is captured and relayed into the TT. To conclude, the translators could have used the phrase *their head flares with hoariness* or *their hair is shining with hoariness like flames* as an English equivalent. That is, the gray hair has become more than the black.

### Example 3

- ... لكنه تمنى في تلك اللحظة لو تقع معجزة من السماء فيلقاها ولو لبضع دقائق فتعترف له بأنها بادلته عاطفه يومًا أو بعض يوم وأن فارق السن أو غيره هو الذي فرق بينهما! (السكرية: ص ٢٩٤)

### English translation

All the same, he wished at that moment for a heavenly dispensation allowing him to meet her, if only for a few minutes, so she could confess that she had reciprocated his affection for **a day or even part of one** and that what had kept them apart had been the difference in their ages or something similar. (Sugar Street, p. 224)

### Analysis & Discussion

The underlined chunk يومًا أو بعض يوم in the example above is associated with a vertical Qur'an-related intertextuality that is extricably bound up to offer a conceptual density. Inevitably, this Arabic chunk is culled out of its original context and recontextualized in the novel. Notice that يومًا أو بعض يوم entertains a

high degree of frequency of use in modern standard Arabic, i.e. it entertains a high degree of iterability. It literally means *a day or part of a day*. The iterability of this reference cannot be grasped without looking into its citationality. In fact, *يوماً أو بعض يوم* appeals intertextually to three independent Qur'anic contexts, each of which presents a didactic story. It is taken for granted that there is no need to spell out such presumably well-known contexts; and thus, the analysis jumps directly to explore the above example. However, a mere mention of the verses where this particular sequence (i.e. *يوماً أو بعض يوم*) emerges in the Qur'an is considered necessary here. The first context is provided in surah 2 The Cow/ verse 259:

(أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّىٰ يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۗ فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةً عَامًا ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ ۖ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِنتَ ۖ قَالَ لَبِنتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالَ يَلُ لَبِنتَ مِائَةً عَامًا فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ ۖ لَمْ يَسْتَهٗ وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ ۖ وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا ۖ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ). (البقرة: آية ٢٥٩)

The second context is provided in surah 18 The Cave/ verse 19:

(وَكَذَٰلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِنتُمْ ۖ قَالُوا لَبِنتْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِنتُمْ ۖ فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَىٰ طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا). (الكهف: آية ١٩)

The third context is provided in surah 23 The Believers/ verse 113:

(قَالُوا لَبِنتْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسَلِّ الْعَادِينَ). (المؤمنون: آية ١١٣)

Translationally speaking, the reference *يوماً أو بعض يوم* is translated into English as *a day or even part of one*. It is conspicuous that the translator's rendering does a good job at producing the semantic equivalence of such an apparently simple phrase. Nevertheless, achieving a semantic equivalence of *يوماً أو بعض يوم* only risks the loss of the relation between these contexts. To put it differently, while the semantic aspect is preserved in the TT, the intertextual relation is lost. Accordingly, another translational intervention is required to draw the reader's attention to this relation. In this case, the translators should have opted for a literal translation of *يوماً أو بعض يوم*, in addition to a footnote citing the original verses and explaining the intertextual contexts, thereby giving TL readership the option of following the thread, should they be interested, and simultaneously establishing a reasonable intertextual network between these contexts. To conclude, in order to better translate *يوماً*

أو بعض يوم، the translators should not only master both the Arabic language and the TL but also become aware of the Islamic aspects, comprehend the contexts in which *بعض يوم* is revealed, and use authorized exegeses of the holy Qur'an during the process of rendering.

### *Example 4*

أدرك كمال أن أباه لم يعد يستطيع النطق وأنه دعا الأم للتشهد نيابة عنه، وأن كنه هذه الساعة الأخيرة سيبقي سرا إلى الأبد، وأن وصفه بالألم أو الفزع أو الغيبوبة رجم بالغيب. (السكرية: ص ٢٧٠)

### *English translation*

Kamal understood that his father, no longer able to speak, had asked Amina to recite the Muslim credo on his behalf and the inner meaning of this final hour would never be revealed. To describe it as pain, terror, or a swoon would have been **a pointless conjecture**. (Sugar Street, p. 205)

### *Analysis & Discussion*

The underlined chunk *رجم بالغيب* offers a manifest Qur'an-related intertextuality that is likely to present translation hurdles. Essentially, this Qur'anic chunk entertains a high degree of frequency of use in Arabic, namely it entertains a high degree of iterability. It means *unforeseeable*, *utterly unknown*, or in a more religious sense, *prescience* which is only and always attributable to Allah. The reference *رجم بالغيب* figures only in one rich religious context, i.e. in surah Al-Kahf/verse 22 that must be highlighted as to conceive the intertextual connection engendered by such a reference. Simply speaking, the speaker utilizes the reference at hand in order to be intertextualized with the following Qur'anic verse:

(سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ ...). (الكهف: آية ٢٢).

“(Some) say they were three, the dog being the fourth among them; (others) say they were five, the dog being the sixth, guessing at the unseen ...”.

(Al-Hilali & Khan, 1998, p. 388)

This Qur'anic verse falls within a broader context of an intriguing Qur'anic narrative of what is called the story of the Companions of

the Cave (Ashab-al-Kahf, in Arabic), which is told in in surah Al-Kahf 18, verses 9-26. The Qur'an indicates the fact that people, shortly after the incident occurred, started to make *futile guesses* as to how many people were in the cave. However, the precise number of the sleepers is not stated. At this juncture, the Qur'an uses رجم بالغيب to mean that people were *guessing at random for something that is completely hidden or unknown*. Accordingly, the pragmatic function of رجم بالغيب is to put an end to the continuing process of the *idle guessing* the people were engaged in, as this is God's knowledge. This might account for the reason why numerous Arabic writers employ this religious segment so heavily whenever there is a situation that is fraught with complete ambiguity. As far as the translation of رجم بالغيب is concerned, it can be rendered without any kind of difficulty into English as *guessing at random or a pointless conjecture*. Actually, the translator's rendition, i.e. *a pointless conjecture*, seems to be a suitable lexicographical equivalent that might maintain the textual essence, but not the intertextual one. In a nutshell, *a pointless conjecture* cannot establish an analogous receiving intertext, as this translational choice does not touch on the socio-cultural importance and value of the story of *the Companions of the Cave*, encapsulated in the surface of رجم بالغيب. Obviously, this semantically-loaded Qur'anic reference calls for pondering the suggested synthetic methods, i.e. the *paratextual method* or the *exegetical method*, which can be employed in tandem, unless the purpose of translation is identified. To repeat, translation is regarded as a deliberate communicative activity, and a significant comprehension of its skopos (i.e. purpose, aim, function, and target audience) might assist the translators in selecting which *synthetic method* to adopt, or even which other suitable techniques to follow. In point of fact, the skopos of translation may transform the translators into writers in the recipient language, who are released from any kind of restrictions imposed on them by a miscomprehension of the concept of fidelity to the original text, and who can free themselves from the requirements of equivalence.

### Example 5

وقال المحامي:  
- ومهما يكن من أمر، فإن حانات الشوارع الإفريقية لن تمس بسوء، فما عليك  
ياخالو إذا وقع المحذور، إلا أن تسهم في تافرنا أو غيرها.. الخمارة للخمارة  
كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضًا. (السكرية: ص ٣٤٦)

### English translation

The attorney said, “No matter what, bars on streets visited by foreigners won’t be touched. So, Khalo, if the worst happens, just buy into some saloon or other. Like buildings that stand cheek by jowl, dramshop owners support each other”. (Sugar Street, p. 268)

### Analysis & Discussion

The underlined structure, i.e. كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضًا is associated with a vivid vertical or constitutive intertextual relationship between the novel and the religious text, or the natural habitat from which this reference is originally culled out. This is an example of textual appropriation, absorption, and recontextualization, which, if identified by the reader, can link Mahouz’s novel to the following prophetic Hadith: (المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضًا). In this religious context, the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructs his followers on the significance of unity and solidarity between a believer and another. He compares their relationship to a building that can be strengthened by the coherence of its various parts. Since a building cannot be completed, and thus nobody can make good use of it unless its parts enhance each other; otherwise, the entire building will fall down. In short, the prophet (PBUH) teaches Muslims to help one another, love one another, and advise one another. Translationally speaking, the translators are successful in perceiving the semantic meaning of the text at hand, i.e. الخمارة للخمارة كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضًا, and they translate it as *dramshop owners support each other*. However, achieving a semantic equivalence only risks the loss of the intertextual connection between the two contexts. To illustrate, the sentence الخمارة للخمارة كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضًا is translated for a group of readers who don’t share the same cultural background, and thus the non-Arab readers of *dramshop owners support each other* cannot discern the connotative nuances of the original intertext. In this sense, the translators should have

elaborated the text by adding a supplementary phrase to clarify the intertextual meaning of كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضاً, or a footnote could have been included to give clues to recipients from other cultures. In brief, the translation at hand has no religious shades. To give TRs an idea about the intertextual relationship between كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضاً and the novel, the following footnote should be added: the phrase كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضاً is used by the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to indicate the fact that *believers are like the bricks of a building; each one should help and cooperate with each other.*

### Conclusion

One of the greatest pitfalls for translators is the rendering of intertextuality, namely the implicit or explicit links a text may establish with prior and sometimes contemporary works. Traditionally, being a significant issue related to the translation of culture, intertextuality has been considered a potential source of untranslatability. Accordingly, this study acknowledges cultural untranslatability in general and intertextuality in Arabic fiction in particular as a challenge almost for any attempt of translation. The selection of the literary text as the basis for this study is based on the idea that literary writers usually use previously experienced texts to make their writing forceful and striking. Mahfouz's *Sugar Street* is used as a case in point. A significant aspect of Mahfouz's style is its ample use of concepts taken from the holy Qur'an, expressions related to Islamic history, and significant events in Prophet Muhammad's life. Essentially, religious intertexts are implemented in different contexts that convey people's concerns and values. The use of such intertexts adds authenticity, evidence, or even religious sanctity to his writings as an observing Muslim to establish some common grounds with his a wide, mostly Muslim, readership. It is

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found that these intertexts, especially in a work of literature, are not easy to be translated, as they lose their influence and emotive values in translation. In dealing with this type of translation, translators need to have accurate and fluent decoding and awareness of the basic function of such items; otherwise, misunderstanding, loss of emphasis, and a cultural gap between the two languages might take place. Moreover, since Islam represents a significant part of the Arab culture, translating signs that have religious connotations requires full comprehension of Arabic culture as well as teachings of Islam. It is also noticed that religious intertexts are among such cultural materials that prove that semantic rendering alone results in contextual losses. Therefore, the best strategy employed here is literal translation to capture the meaning of the ST, in addition to a footnote to give clues to recipients from other cultures.

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