From Renaissance to Revolution: Early Modern English Literature in Arabic

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the translation and adaptation of early modern English literature in the contemporary Arabic-speaking world. The works of Thomas More, William Shakespeare, John Milton, and John Donne have been mobilized in the modernist discourse over Arabic poetics and the revolutionary wave referred to as the "Arab Spring". The dissertation analyzes Bahaa Jahin's translation of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's novel *Yutūbyā*, Hanna Aboud's translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Abdel-Rahim Kamal's screen adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In their appropriation of early modern literary works, translators, fiction writers, and scriptwriters performed various acts of rewriting that aim to expand and destabilize the poetic inventory, experiment with generic conventions, envision sociopolitical change, reflect on freedom and imperialism, and address regional marginalization. These different agendas highlight the agency of rewriters and the transformative role of translation and adaptation. Moreover, the intertextual discussion of early modern English writings from a contemporary Arabophone perspective provides new critical insights into these writings and discloses new meanings and interpretations.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

All translations and back-translations from Arabic into English are my own unless otherwise is stated within the text.

The transliteration of the Arabic alphabet into the Latin alphabet follows the style used in the 1952 Hans Wehr Arabic-German dictionary, of which an English edition was first made in 1961. The following table and the subsequent notes show the Latin transliteration of Arabic letters and their variations, as per the Wehr dictionary. For recurrent proper nouns and Arabic terms, I transliterate the name or the term into the closest possible representation in the English script without using diacritics or macrons.

Letter	Name	Transliteration
ء	*hamza*	’
ا	*alif*	Ā
ب	*bā’*	B
ت	*tā’*	T
ث	*ṯā’*	ṯ
ج	*ğīm*	ğ
ح	*ḥā’*	ḥ
خ	*ẖā’*	ẖ
د	*dāl*	D

Letter	**Name**	**Transliteration**
ذ	*ḏāl*	ḏ
ر	*rā'*	R
ز	*zāy*	Z
س	*sīn*	S
ش	*šīn*	Š
ص	*ṣād*	ṣ
ض	*ḍād*	ḍ
ط	*ṭā'*	ṭ
ظ	*ẓā'*	ẓ
ع	*ʿain*	ʿ
غ	*ġain*	ġ
ف	*fā'*	F
ق	*qāf*	Q
ك	*kāf*	K
ل	*lām*	L
م	*mīm*	M
ن	*nūn*	N

Letter	**Name**	**Transliteration**
ه	*hā'*	H
و	*wāw*	w, u, or ū
ي	*yā'*	y, i, or ī

- The *tā' marbūṭa* (ة) is represented as *a* in words ending in it, as *t* when it is the ending of the first noun of an *iḍāfa*, and as *h* when it appears after a long *ā*.
- Arabic short vowels: *fatḥa* is represented as *a*, *kasra* as *i* and *ḍamma* as *u*.
- Arabic long vowels: *ā ī ū*
- Long vowels in borrowed words: *ē ō*
- *Alif maqṣūra* (ى): *ā*
- Madda (آ): *ā* at the beginning of a word and *'ā* in the middle or at the end
- Capitalization: The transliteration uses no capitals
- Definite article: The Arabic definite article (الـ) is represented as *al-* except where assimilation occurs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt underlines the formative impact of material and non-material transactions on early modern English literature. Greenblatt is less concerned with the linguistic traces of the modes of circulation and exchange than with the broad intercultural and intracultural dynamics that shape and inform literary texts. In fact, Renaissance humanism and the Protestant Reformation, two of the forces that molded early modern England, were highly reliant on circulation and exchange, particularly translation and appropriation; the prominent English literary figure of that period, William Shakespeare, was evidently a dedicated consumer of translations. Besides, the much-contested term *Renaissance*, as a label for the historical period that witnessed the revival of classical ideas and accomplishments, is often associated with a movement that trended from Florence, Italy to other parts of Europe. Notwithstanding the terminological debates and the problematics of historiographical periodization, it goes without saying that circulation, exchange, and transmission were at the heart of the Renaissance as a *movement*. So, if the Renaissance travelled to England from other parts of Europe, what happens when the English Renaissance travels to other parts of the world? This question is the mainspring of the present study which delves into the migration of early modern English literature to the Arabic-speaking world.

Of course, the journey of English Renaissance texts, particularly Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic corpus, to European and non-European territories is not a new scholarly interest. The translation and appropriation of Shakespeare in Russia, Eastern

Europe, South America, East and South Asia, and different parts of Africa have been the subject matter of a huge body of studies informed by a variety of theoretical frameworks. Similarly, the translation and appropriation of Shakespeare in the Arabic-speaking world has been examined in a wide range of scholarly works. The sky-high interest in the reception of Shakespeare is not surprising since Anglophone and non-Anglophone cultures have become “so saturated with Shakespeare” (Neill 184) that the man has become, in Harold Bloom’s hyperbolic words, “the world canon.” (xv) Shakespeare is “the most performed playwright in the world” (Loomba and Orkin 7), and his name has become “a body of work that is refashioned by each subsequent age in the image of itself.” (Bate 3) The Bard’s global iconicity often comes at the expense of other early modern writers, and this is why this study broadens the scope of reception by exploring the migration of English Renaissance ideas rather than the migration of Shakespeare’s corpus only.

Alongside Shakespeare, this study addresses multiple early modern English writers: Sir Thomas More, John Donne, and John Milton. The goal is to demonstrate how the Renaissance, as a defining moment in the history of English literature and identity, was deployed in some parts of the Arabophone world for contemporary aesthetic and sociopolitical agendas, particularly the modernist innovations in Arabic poetics and the revolutionary wave dubbed by the media as the “Arab Spring.” By focusing on translation and adaptation as two modes of reception, the project places sixteenth- and-seventeenth-century English writers in the literary and political contexts of contemporary Egypt and Syria—as case studies rather than a synecdoche for the Arabic-speaking

world. The analytical frames offered by translation and adaptation studies are useful for this project, but they will be embedded within a larger paradigm that accounts for the broader idea of reception and the practice of rewriting.

Rewriting and the "global kaleidoscope"

Margaret Litvin identifies gaps in the models used to study the reception of Shakespeare and other European writers in non-European contexts. Litvin critiques the framework of literary influence, arguing that it operates or flows in a single direction from one side of a rigid binary (the sender) to the other (the recipient) and, hence, assumes the passivity of the latter (52). According to Litvin, this paradigm "overprivileges the influencer and limits the agency of the influencee. . . [and] thus neglects to ask why different writers take different things from Shakespeare and bring different things to him." (19) The framework of postcolonial rewriting compensates for this imbalance by accentuating the agency of the postcolonial rewriter who seeks to challenge the colonial value system or subvert the colonial text. This is achieved by treating European authors, especially Shakespeare, as "a politically charged site around which the counter-discursive work of independence needs to be conducted" (Cartelli 106) or by offering new interpretations and appropriations that make them their "comrade[s] in anti-colonial arms." (Loomba and Orkin 2) However, the postcolonial paradigm, though far from being homogeneous, is, according to Litvin, not very useful in cases where translation or adaptation does not seek to "write back" to the former colonizer (19).

As an alternative to the paradigms of literary influence and postcolonial rewriting, Litvin proposes a model of reception named "the global kaleidoscope" in which rewriting

is in a dialogic relationship, not only with the received foreign text, but also with the multitude of texts, discourses, and other materials available to the rewriter (19). Litvin applies her approach to the reception of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the Arabic-speaking world, postulating that *Hamlet*'s life in the region did not only coincide with Britain's colonial presence in Egypt and that the encounter with the Prince of Denmark was mediated by other literary traditions from different parts of the globe (17). The model is particularly used to investigate the twentieth-century issues of self-determination, authenticity, and identity. The theoretical contours of this framework can be applied as well to the reception of early modern English literature in the twenty-first century where these issues have taken new shapes.

In Litvin's model, reception is not "a simple one-on-one relationship between an 'original' text and its (obedient or subversive) rewriter," but is conditioned by contextual factors relevant to the current social and literary circumstances and by indirect contacts with the foreign work (20). These contextual factors and indirect experiences may supersede the direct encounter with the source and inform the underlying orientation of rewriting:

> After forming a coherent idea of the received text, the appropriator must decide whether and how to redeploy it for an artistic and/or polemical purpose: poetic meditation, literal reproduction, political allegory, parody, quotation or allusion, or sloganization. This is another moment of free decision within a limited sphere of options. The new interpretation cannot be wholly arbitrary but is conditioned partly by the surrounding conversations about art, culture, politics, and, of course,

> Shakespeare. So while open to imaginative play, the choice is also circumscribed by audience considerations: what would make sense lexically, resonate culturally, and pay off politically. Each generation's reception and reinterpretation then [become] part of the kaleidoscope for the generation that follows. (Litvin 20)

The main advantage of this approach is that it breaks off the binary relationship between the source text and their translations or adaptations. Of course, the analysis of the direct relationship between the source and the target is not completely irrelevant and is still a tool used in this study. The analysis of the Arabic target as opposed to the English source is necessary in perusing the linguistic tactics negotiated in translation and the generic transformations involved in adaptation. But Litvin's model leaves space for incorporating into the analysis what lies beyond the direct contact between the source and the target.

A perfect example of the rewriter's indirect experience with the source and their utilization of rewriting in aesthetic and ideological causes is the 1912 translation of *Othello* by the Lebanese poet Khalil Mutran (1872–1949). The translation was based on a French version of Shakespeare's tragedy by Georges Duval (Badawi 189) and was critical of the commercial translations that were made wholly or partly in vernaculars at the turn of the twentieth century (Hanna 40). Mutran's use of standard Arabic and his omission of Shakespeare's references to religions and ethnicities was part of his pan-Arabist vision (Hanna 44). In the introduction, Mutran devotes ample space to the discussion and justification of the language variety he used in translation—which he, interestingly, called "Arabization." Mutran explains that his abandonment of the vernacular is motivated by his view that it divides the speakers of Arabic (8). Standard

Arabic, despite its unwieldy archaisms, was for him a homogenizing political tool bonding all speakers of Arabic regardless of their religious or ethnic identities. To push this pan-Arabist agenda even further, Mutran argued in the introduction that there is something undoubtedly Arabic about Shakespeare's metaphors, hyperboles, and intense language (7-8). Some of the later translations of *Othello* responded to Mutran's approach by reinstating, on political grounds too, the vernacular as a language variety for translation. For example, in the introduction to his 1998 Egyptian colloquial translation of *Othello*, Mustafa Safwan (1921–2020) asserted that his choice of the Egyptian vernacular marks the distinctness of Egypt's identity, while the use of classical or standard Arabic would reinforce political repression and intellectual gatekeeping (5). Hence, the conversations that precede and surround a particular act of rewriting are crucial to the act itself, the direction such act might take, and the purposes of taking it.

Likewise, the translation and adaptation of the early modern texts under discussion are not conditioned by a desire to write back to the imperial metropole, nor are they meant to offer a "contrapuntal reading" to give voice to what has been silenced or reveal what has been ideologically repressed in the imperial canonical texts (Said 66). The modernist aesthetic changes, for example, strove to endow Arabic poetry with fresh modes and structures that express modern open-ended possibilities. The fact that modern poetic innovations instigated debates over their validity and scope in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt reveals the transnational nature of these changes and the shared awareness of the need to respond to global modernity.

As a leading figure of modernism in Arabic poetry, the Syrian poet Ali Esber (Adonis) offers a valid example of this globalist attitude. In his rejection of strict nationalist values, his embracement of the prose poem, and his emphasis on general philosophical concerns, Adonis has often been described as a "metaphysical" poet (Saad 19). Terri DeYoung builds on this description, establishing an indirect link between Adonis's poetry and the seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry of John Donne and Andrew Marvell—a link that passes through the node of T. S. Eliot's modernist poetry. In Adonis's poem "mašrūʿ litaġyīr al-ʾašyāʾ" ("A Plan for Changing Things"), the mouse is treated in a way that resembles the treatment of the flea in Donne's "The Flea". DeYoung points out that the mouse and the flea are used in a manner that demonstrates an aspect of Eliot's "undissociated sensibility"; Adonis and Donne combine the lowest (the mouse and the flea) with the highest (human thought and love), "refusing the easy division into poetic and non-poetic topoi" (6). Given Eliot's fascination with metaphysical poets and the well-documented influence of Eliot's poetry on Adonis's, assuming an indirect encounter between Adonis and Donne is justified. Adonis's rejection of the strict divisions of classical poetry between the poetic and the non-poetic is echoed in Bahaa Jahin's translation of John Donne's poems in 2002. But Jahin is a colloquial Egyptian poet who, unlike Adonis, defended Arabic free verse. His employment of free verse in the translation, while also rejecting the classical divisions between the poetic and the non-poetic or between the sacred and the profane, showcases the flow of such modern revolutionary spirit across borders regardless of the poets' positions on certain poetic forms.

While Jahin's translation is not politically charged, the translation, like Adonis's poetry, mirrors an evolving aesthetic that challenges the authority of established aesthetics and political structures. The glorification of the flea and the mouse is an iconoclastic challenge to the chasm between the massive and the tiny. In *The Political Aesthetics of Global Protest*, Pnina Werbner and others illustrate the importance of challenging the division between formidable structures and small ones. In the Arab Spring protests, the tent, "light, movable, make-shift," served as the perfect "counter-image of [the] formidable structures" of authoritarian states (Werbner et al. 3). It is this canonization of the tiny, the unpolished, and the unconventional that connects modernist poetic innovations to the uprisings.

The Arab Spring uprisings were a culmination of the imaginative celebration of open-ended possibilities in modern Arabic poetry. According to Hamid Dabashi, the uprisings signified a revival of an open-ended "cosmopolitan worldliness," in which alternative notions and practices of civil liberties and economic justice can and ought to be produced." (10) For Dabashi, this worldliness is "post-ideological," for the uprisings challenged and transcended the absolutist ideologies that were constructed against colonialism and imperialism—"from Third World Socialism to anticolonial nationalism to militant Islamism" (10). The global impact of the Arab Spring uprisings on other movements worldwide—like the Anti-austerity movement in Spain and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the USA—breaks the dichotomy between the West and the East, the colonial and the postcolonial. This, again, justifies the importance of Litvin's global kaleidoscope to this study as opposed to the model of writing back.

The global kaleidoscope in contemporary reception

The focus of this project on Egyptian and Syrian texts underlines the cultural and strategic importance of Egypt and Syria in the region. Cairo, Damascus, and Aleppo—alongside Beirut—have been principal cultural centers since the *Nahda* (Awakening or Renaissance) in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The Nahda intellectuals and literary figures in Egypt and Syria were embedded within and influenced by complex political and economic networks that were shaped by expanding capitalist and bureaucratic relations (Hill 27). The impact of these cities on the modern and contemporary Arabic cultural system is still recognizable. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the relations between Egypt and Syria were not only shaped by the transmission of ideas and cultural forms (evinced, for example, in the rise of Romanticism in Egyptian and Syrian poetry); they were also governed by the pan-Arabist, socialist project led by the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel-Nasser (1918–1970). The union between Egypt and Syria under the "United Arab Republic" helped Nasser export his economic reform program to Syria, which was implemented by means of unprecedented nationalizations. Sami Marawan Mubayyid argues that the socialist reforms had damaging repercussions for Syria's economy, but what matters here is that the cultural connections were cemented by economic and political relations. The 1958 union between Nasser's Egypt and Al-Baath's Syria collapsed with the 1961 coup d'état in Syria, and the whole Nasserist/pan-Arabist project fell apart after the defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War. Nevertheless, Al-Baath Party continued to rule over Syria, and when Hafez Al-Assad took office in 1971, he continued to use elements of Nasser's anti-

imperialist rhetoric to solidify his rule. While Egypt in the post-Nasserist era aligned with the United States, Baathist Syria remained a pillar of the anti-Western axis of resistance. The 2010s' changes that took place in Egypt jeopardized the US alliances in the region, while the events in Syria threatened the geopolitical influence of Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah.

Despite the different political alliances of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes and the divergent trajectory each uprising has taken, the people in Egypt and Syria were united by the retrieved cosmopolitan worldliness that transcended the opposition between the colonial/imperial and the postcolonial/anti-imperial. The shared aspirations, the tactics of protests, the slogans, and the use of technology in mobilizing the crowds and documenting atrocities were tokens of such connectedness. The Syrian uprising was sparked off with a simple incident where a group of schoolboys in Daraa were arrested in March 2011 after they had drawn words on the school walls, imitating the slogans of the Egyptian uprising they saw on TV. The anti-imperialist rhetoric used by the Syrian regime was not a safeguard against the transnational impact of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings. The revolutionary wave revealed "another world . . . which the postcolonial world had promised but failed to deliver" (Dabashi 37). The unifying effect of these uprisings was another sign of the ultimate failure of the unifying political projects that were driven by pan-Arabism as a postcolonial ideology.

The translation of *Paradise Lost* by the Syrian critic Hanna Aboud manifests the global kaleidoscopic stance that breaks the dichotomy between the imperial and the anti-imperial. The translation and the prefatory material do not transparently show the

translator's political position on the changes that were taking place in the region at the time the translation was published. Moreover, the Arabic text does not make a clear-cut distinction between the imperial leader and the freedom fighter, for Satan incorporates both. The question the translation raises is: how can we draw a line between the imperial and the anti-imperial or oppression and freedom if the precursor of evil embodies both? Satan's mixed values as represented in Aboud's translation mirror a similar interpretation of the figure of Satan in the 1955 treatise *Iblis* (*Satan*) by the Egyptian writer and critic Abbas El-Aqqad (1889–1964) who devoted a part of his book to the analysis of the contradictions of Milton's Satan. Given Aboud's profile as a literary critic, he probably read Al-Aqqad's treatise, especially when considering the size of cultural exchange between Egypt and Syria during the Nasserist period in which Al-Aqqad's book was produced.

As a mythologist who produced a major book on global mythology in 2009, Aboud manifested in the translation a profound understanding of the Greek sources that informed Milton's epic. Hence, the translator's encounter with global myths facilitated the encounter between Milton's text and the Arabic translation. More interestingly, Aboud's Introduction ends with a brief note that relates the religious, political, and literary situations that defined Milton's epic to the contemporary literary treatment of religious matters. He states that writers have now become more experienced in dealing with religious sensitivities by resorting to euphemisms in order not to provoke the mob (44). Aboud's signature at the end of the Introduction is dated May 15, 2011, which suggests that the statements made in it are not completely isolated from the regional and

global concerns over the events that took place in Egypt and other Arabic-speaking territories. The translation is not a straightforward response to these events, but the anxieties over religious demagoguery and freedom, including literary freedom, are felt, especially under a regime that relies on the rhetoric of secularism and anti-sectarianism to promote itself as the protector of Syria's minorities from Islamists. In fact, such anxieties were also felt in Egypt because of the power Islamic groups gained after Mubarak had stepped down. For instance, the literary scene was outraged by the statements of a Salafi leader who accused Egypt's prominent novelist Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006) of propagating adultery and atheism (Yassine and Dabash).

The 2008 Egyptian dystopian novel *Yutūbyā* by Ahmed Khaled Tawfik presents a self-isolated community of capitalists living in Egypt's North Coast. The isolation of the utopian community derives from More's *Utopia*, but it should be remembered that the Egyptian Utopia symbolizes power and capital, and the walls that separate it from the Others symbolize the unnatural division of one people into two antithetical groups or classes. The final scene where the Others march towards the gates of Utopia draws on images from global revolutionary events. If we view the self-isolated community as a symbol of power, the storming of Utopia would be a throwback to the 1789 Storming of the Bastille, which was the climax of the French Revolution. If we view the fences of Utopia as a physical representation of the segregation of Egyptians into Utopians and Others, the rebellious gathering outside the gates of Utopia would echo the gathering of East Germans at the Berlin Wall during the 1989 Peaceful Revolution, which led to the fall of the Wall. Of course, revolts around the world and throughout history are full of

storming incidents, but some revolutionary moments—like the Bastille moment and the fall of the Berlin Wall—are always reproduced in art and are ingrained in a collective world memory—something like W. B. Yeats's *Spiritus Mundi*. The invocation of these scenes at the end of Tawfik's novel, thus, demonstrates the way reception is shaped by a kaleidoscope of global images and intertexts that co-exist with the hypotext—Thomas More's *Utopia*.

As asserted by Litvin, reception is also conditioned by "audience considerations" (20). In the Arabic works chosen for this study, the rewriter negotiates early modern English texts to advance an agenda that accommodates the target audience. Aboud's translation of *Paradise Lost* was published in 2011 by the Syrian General Organization of Books, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, and was added to Al-Assad National Library in Damascus. In a UNESCO report on the library, A. E. Jeffreys states that national libraries serve "as a reference library for scholars and research workers [and] as a reference library for the general public." (4) According to Jeffreys, Al-Assad Library concentrates on "the cultural heritage of Syria" with a selective collection of materials from other countries (5). These details point to the target audience of Aboud's translation, consisting mainly of researchers, scholars, and, more broadly, elites and the metropolitan middle class. The apparent distance between the translation of Milton's politically charged text and the political landscape of the Arabic-speaking world is not only justified by the Syrian government's patronage, but also by the target audience. Although Damascus and other major Syrian cities witnessed demonstrations in 2011, the security forces were able to contain these protests through violence or widespread arrests.

The anti-government protests in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo were not as intense as the protests in the southern city of Daraa or the outskirts and rural peripheries of Damascus and Aleppo. Bashar Al-Assad maintained control over these metropolitan cities since the outbreak of the uprising/civil war. Of course, these dynamics distinguish Syria from Egypt where protesters managed to occupy public spaces in metropolitan centers; the difference is ascribed to security, social, economic, and even geographical reasons. Given the fact that significant portions of the elite and the metropolitan middle classes supported Al-Assad or were reluctant to protest his regime, Aboud's translation is not expected to connect its intended audience to the idea of revolution; it rather seeks to help them ponder its outcomes. Thus, the open-endedness of the translation is indicative of the audience's attitudes.

Bahaa Jahin's translation of John Donne's poetry was part of the national translation project, sponsored by Egypt's Supreme Council of Culture. Because Donne is not one of the familiar names in Egypt's cultural system, the audience is expected to be limited. As Fatma Moussa points out in the Foreword, Donne is not widely mentioned among those interested in Anglophone poetry (7), so the target audience is primarily made up of scholars and students of English literature who mainly belong to the sophisticated elite or the cosmopolitan middle class. Since the translation is concerned with Donne as a precursor of modernist aesthetics, it does not provide a critique of the sociopolitical conditions. However, the translation's limited audience can still relate to the idea of aesthetic revolution which is emphasized through various moves within the translation and the prefatory materials. The value of Jahin's translation is not to be

observed in isolation; the translation should be placed in a kaleidoscope of other poetic works that revolutionize poetic diction, imagery, themes, and form and express the aspirations and frustrations of the educated middle class as in Amal Dunqul's poems, or those of the working class as in Ahmed Fuad Negm's colloquial poems. The relationship between Jahin's translation and the 2011 Egyptian uprising is, hence, indirect, for the translation is an embodiment of a multifaceted poetic spirit in which protesters found a voice. This poetic wave establishes another link between Egypt and Syria, for the famous words of the modernist Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani (1923–1998) "Al-ṯawra ʾunthā" ("revolution is feminine") resonated with women protesters and activists in Tahrir Square and elsewhere.

Yutūbyā is more radical than the other works in terms of its approach to the idea of revolution because of the nature of Tawfik's audience. Tawfik's novels were published by independent publishers. His fiction sequences *mā warāʾ al-ṭabīʿa* (*Paranormal*) and *fantāzya* (*Fantasy*) were published as parts of the series *riwāyāt miṣriyah lil-geib* (*Egyptian Pocket Fiction*), and his translations of George Orwell's *1984* and H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* were included in the series *riwāyāt ʿālamiya lil-geib* (*World Pocket Fiction*). The Egyptian and the global pocket fiction series have been very popular among middle-class young adults and adults since the 1980s thanks to their fair pricing and their interesting genres which include thriller, horror, and fantasy. Tawfik's novels (and the novels he translated) departed from the realism which dominated Egyptian fiction for decades. *Yutūbyā* engages in a conversation with Thomas More's *Utopia* and the cosmopolitan ideals of Erasmian humanism that inform More's work but is also

connected to Tawfik's career as a fiction writer and translator of world dystopian and fantasy novels. The revolutionary scene depicted in the novel arises from Tawfik's awareness of who his audience is. The middle-class youth who read Tawfik's novels and translations constituted an important force in the 2011 Egyptian uprising, as evidenced in their involvement in non-violent protests and the public revolutionary and post-revolutionary discourse, and their activist efforts on social media.

The Egyptian TV series *Dahša* is quite different in terms of its audience, mainly because it is an audiovisual work that was broadcast in Ramadan 2014. The audiovisual entertainment industry typically flourishes in Ramadan every year across the entire Arabic-speaking world regardless of the audience's religion, ethnicity, or class. The fact that *Dahsha* was aired by the Egyptian satellite channel *El-Nahar* and was later broadcast by other outlets, including *Abu-Dhabi*, a UAE channel widely watched in many Arabic-speaking countries, demonstrates that the show gained wide exposure among Egyptians and other Arabic speakers. The Upper Egyptian setting and dialect typically attract the attention of Upper Egyptians who are interested in audiovisual works that represent their concerns. The spread of satellite dishes in Egyptian households in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas and the availability of satellite channels to all social classes also facilitated the wide exposure. The echoes of the Egyptian uprising and the discourse that surrounded it were captured by the audience who could easily pinpoint the parallels between the plot incidents and the revolutionary and post-revolutionary events as well as the similarities between some characters and real-life political figures. Although the scriptwriter claimed that the show was more of a commentary on Upper Egyptian

realities and universal themes than on the uprising, *Dahša* was a review of the revolutionary scene that made the audience look back on the causes and outcomes of the uprising.

Rewriting as leading

Investigating the exchange between the early modern English literary system and the contemporary Arabic literary system adds to Renaissance studies as much as it adds to Arabic studies. This is because instances of rewriting are also opportunities for commentary on the source, bringing new meanings to it, and disclosing repressed ones while shining light on the sociopolitical and aesthetic codes that shape the target. In fact, the intersections between commentary, interpretation, and interlingual rewriting are well-documented in Renaissance studies, because the early modern conceptions of these activities were intimately related. The roles of the translator and the scholarly commentator were interlocked in the Renaissance humanist theories of rhetorical translation and in early modern pedagogical practices (White 71). Another thing that tied Renaissance translation and commentary is the images employed by humanists to describe them. Following the examples of Cicero and Saint Jerome, Renaissance humanists borrowed from the language of finance and trade to describe the role of commentary and translation. Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) celebrated "the notion of the humanist translator as a merchant trading in commodities," (White 79), and Jodocus Badius (1462–1535) represented his "generation of commentary from the text . . . as the generation of interest on a capital sum." (White 81) The commentative and interpretive functions of translation and the metaphors used to describe it are essential for this study's

interest in the rewriter's transformative role and the scope of their agency within the global kaleidoscope.

The interconnectedness of translation and commentary in Renaissance humanism implies an acknowledgment of the translator's agency in a way that transcends the limits of interlingual transfer. However, the metaphors drawn from the language of finance and trade to describe these activities are both provocative and problematic. Paul White points out that the Renaissance comparisons of the translator to a merchant or importer "were frequently designed to minimize the translator's role (or to contrast the poverty of the target language's 'treasury' of words with the richness of the source)" (79). The merchant/importer metaphor is situated in a spatial language which depicts the translator as an agent transporting goods from one point before selling them at another point. This spatial thinking about translation during the Renaissance correlates, according to Katharina N. Piechocki, with the rise of cartography as a discipline in the late Middle Ages. Piechocki claims that the spatial image inherent in the term *translatio* typified the Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni's views about translation and philology, since Bruni was one of the earliest readers "of the newly discovered *Geography* by Claudius Ptolemy—a treatise that proved to be foundational for European geographic thinking and cartographic production from the fifteenth century on" (43).

After the emergence of translation studies as a distinct discipline in the twentieth century, many theoretical debates about the translator's agency and status have taken place. A major contribution to these debates was made by Lawrence Venuti in his groundbreaking book *The Translator's Invisibility* which focuses on the problems of

fluency, copyrights, and the low percentage of into-English translations compared to from-English translations. Other contributions applied to the translation field Pierre Bourdieu's sociological concepts, especially that of *habitus*—" a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class." (86) For example, Daniel Simeoni employs Bourdieu's *habitus* as a sociological corrective to the lack of attention to the translator as a human agent. Jean-Marc Gouanvic uses the same notion to illustrate how translators "[import] the foreign text into the target culture, thus orienting this culture towards a new social future." (147) However, Venuti, in *Translation Changes Everything*, points out that this approach, despite its usefulness in some respects, "has occluded the role played by the translator's specific verbal choices in favor of treating networks of agents in institutions as most important in the circulation of translations." (7) Alternatively, Venuti suggests a hermeneutic approach that treats translation as an act of interpretation (8). The questions of agency and visibility are already accounted for in Litvin's kaleidoscopic model. Although the translator/rewriter is restricted by a configuration of relations and a set of source and target codes, the rewriter has a margin of freedom to lead the text into the target cultural system (*traduction*) instead of just carrying it across (translation), while paying attention to audience considerations.

Etymologically, both *translation* and *traduction* are of Latin origin. The term *translation* originates from the Latin term *translātiō*, which is the perfect passive participle of the Latin verb *transferō* or *transfere*. The primary sense of the Latin verb *transferō* is to carry from one place to another. The sense of carrying across places and

times is also denoted in the basic definition of the term *translātiō* which literally means the act of carrying (*lātiō*) across (*trans*). The term *traduction*, however, originates from the Latin word *trāductio* which is a synthesis of the prefix *trans* (across) and the verb *ducere* (to lead). Hence, *trāducotio* is basically the act of leading across. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* shows that *translātiō* and *trāductio* share in usage the sense of transferring ideas and languages. Yet, it is not clear whether these shared senses have been acquired over time as the meanings of both terms have evolved through actual usage. Nevertheless, the evolution *translātiō* and *trāductio* into different forms, and their usage in English and Romance languages, respectively, to refer to the act of transferring a message from one language/culture to another, draw attention to the implications of each term.

Piechocki notes that the twentieth-century French translator Antoine Berman has distinguished between *traductio* and *translatio* by positing that the former implies an active process rather than a simple movement and is, thus, a productive act that refers both to the process and its outcome (48). In other words, the term *translation* may connote that the rewriter is simply carrying the text across to another language with little agency to the carrier, whereas the term *traduction* gives the rewriter the agency of leading, directing, expanding, and shaping the text in the target cultural system without completely denying the textual and contextual constraints. In the same vein, Andrew Chesterman critiques the metaphor of movement, embedded in the spatial thinking associated with the "source-target supermeme." (3) He points out that this metaphor has been reproduced in different ways since the classical ages, but it remains problematic

because it assumes that when an object is moved or carried from point A to point B, it ceases to exist at point A. According to Chesterman,

> a translation of a novel, an advertisement, a contract, or whatever, has merely extended the readership of (the memes carried by) these texts, it has spread their memes. But the memes themselves do not move: they are not absent from the source culture when they appear in the target culture. They do not move, they spread, they replicate. In place of the metaphor of movement, therefore, I would suggest one of propagation, diffusion, extension, even evolution: a genetic metaphor. Evolution thus suggests some notion of progress: translation adds value to a source text, by adding readers of its ideas, adding further interpretations, and so on. (4)

Understanding the rewriter as a leader with some sort of agency captures the sense of movement critiqued by Chesterman as well as the sense of evolution and progress suggested by him. It also implies that the rewriter does not necessarily carry the text from the locus of its generation to the locus of its reception; the rewriter may meet the text halfway through other mediations, as noted by Litvin. After leading the source text to the recipient cultural system, the rewritten text may work in a rather independent way and may be subjected to a series of subsequent rewritings.

Chesterman's metaphor of propagation and evolution and my conception of translation as "leading across" constitute a useful paradigm that replaces the prevalent metaphor of spatial movement. This paradigm foregrounds the capacity of translators and rewriters in the transformation and progress of literary systems. The capacity of all forms

of rewriting to effect change is recognizable in André Lefevere's theory of rewriting and manipulation. Lefevere argues that rewriters are "the motor force behind literary evolution" and are the ones responsible for the survival of old works of literature among "non-professional readers"—those who do not specialize in or study literature (2). In his discussion of poetics as a control factor in a literary system, Lefevere takes Arabic poetics as an example of two interrelated phenomena: (1) the power exerted on writers and rewriters by the dominant poetological conventions and functions, and (2) the transformations that occur due to or in the process of writing or rewriting in line with this dominant poetics. Arabic poetics, which spread outside the Arabian Peninsula with the dissemination of Islam, was embraced by Persian, Turkish, and Urdu even though these languages do not share the Semitic origin of Arabic; rewriters brought about changes to their languages and contributed to the emergence of new genres by working under the constraint of the dominant Arabic poetics (31). Yet, the rewriter's impact is not confined to the poetological but extends to the sociopolitical environment.

From Renaissance to revolution

Early modern Europe offers an array of examples of the transformative impact of translation and rewriting on literature and society. As mentioned earlier, the widespread transmission and production of humanist knowledge in the Renaissance period were heavily reliant on the translation of and the commentary on Greek and Latin sources. Moreover, Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew was "the first true work of art in the history of German prose" (Chadwick 33) and represented a revolutionary act of rewriting that transformed the future of Christianity, undercut the

medieval institution of power embodied in the Roman Catholic Church, and partly established the vernacular as the language of religion and literature. The translation, Douglas Robinson argues, was an exercise of power rather than a submission to power. The dialogic tone of Luther's translation creates a sense of equality between the translator and the audience that hides Luther's power move on his readers (Robinson 75). The micro-structural choices hence inform Luther's macrostructural project whose impact transcends the literary into the social.

In early modern England, rewriting was instrumental in the evolution of the concepts of identity, nationhood, and empire in relation to early modern English poetry. According to Richard Helgerson, English poetry in the sixteenth century was a site of contentious debates tied to the development of a national cultural identity (24). A significant part of the debate was centered around the place of metrics in the formulation of England's national poetry, with some voices favoring the quantitative versification of Greek and Latin poetry over the accentual stress of English poetic traditions. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey rendered into English two books of Virgil's *Aeneid* and invented by means of this translation the English blank verse, which was a synthesis of English and Italian poetic traditions as well as elements of the unrhymed dactylic hexameter of the classical epic (Hardison 237). Surrey's innovation was a viable medium for early modern English drama, which was crucial to the making of England's national culture. On the other hand, Edmund Spenser wrote in the early stages of his career a letter to his friend Gabriel Harvey where he suggested a vision of English nationhood implanted in quantitative verse: "why a God's name may not we, as else the Greeks, have the kingdom

of our own language and measure our accents by the sound, reserving the quantity of the verse?" (16) Yet, the Spenser's poetry followed a different path afterwards, as evidenced in the accentual verse of his 1590 masterpiece *The Faerie Queene*, which also, in Andrew Escobedo's words, "reflects the Elizabethan attempt to formulate a national history out of the Arthurian narratives . . . to the degree that Spenser imagines such a history emerging from the material remains of ancient Britain." (46). The triumph of accentual verse is hence tied to a serious poetic quest for a national cultural identity and an imperial and exclusively Protestant conception of the English nation.

In the contemporary Arabic-speaking world, literary change is also connected to complex debates on the relations between the literary and the sociopolitical. The blossoming of colloquial Egyptian poetry in the 1950s was anchored to nationalist and labor movements. Since poetry is associated with high literature, the rise of colloquial poetry was a significant phenomenon that needed some poetological legitimation. The attempts to bring the vernacular to high literature and employ it in new creative experiments that speak to the rising nationalist and labor consciousness were met with varying degrees of resistance from the guardians of high literature and the representatives of the dominant classical Arabic poetics. As Marilyn Booth indicates, the publication of colloquial poetry in official Egyptian newspapers could "signal that literary discourse . . . was now the province of all," but it also draws the attention to the alterity of vernacular poetry as a genre, and it was actually perceived "as a separate genre." (419) Salah Jahin's introduction to his 1977 collected works was an endeavor to legitimize his colloquial poetry by locating a place for it in the dominant poetics: he stated that colloquial poets

were expressing *fusha* (standard or classical) thoughts but in a colloquial language (6). The rise of colloquial poetry in Egypt was, according to Noha Radwan, part of "a quest for a modernist Arabic poetry." (242) The quest for modernism is also manifested in the rise of free verse and prose poetry which mostly use standard Arabic but substantially revise or challenge the formal and thematic traditions of classical Arabic poetry.

The advent of free verse and prose poetry in the 1950s and 1960s has occasioned prolonged debates about the sociocultural functions and aesthetic conventions of poetry. Free verse did not totally do away with meter and rhyme but also did not comply with the strict meters, monophonic rhyme schemes, and distich-based composition of the classical qasida (Awad 159). Prose poetry, much like prose poetry in European languages, liberated itself from the rigidities of meter and rhyme completely and revolutionized the thematic concerns of Arabic poetry. The evolution of these two poetic forces created a fierce rivalry between them; the free verse proponents, many of whom practiced translation, accused writers of prose poetry, who also started their innovative mission as translators, of trespassing the limits of poetry and "looking abroad for poetic models." (Creswell 121) The indirect weaponization of translation here is striking because it demonstrates an incongruity between the practical recognition of the value of translation and the discursive anxiety over translation as a possible threat to the cultural identity expressed through literary traditions.

To push their agenda, the free verse movement claimed that it is a modern continuation of the well-established Arabic poetic traditions. On the other hand, the prose poetry group legitimized their new form by appealing to the ideological and aesthetic

authority of modernity and world literature (Creswell 122). The former argument is a manifestation of poetics as a complex "historical variable" positing itself as "the necessary outcome of a process of growth" (Lefevere 35). The latter, more striking argument has two main implications: it, again, highlights the cruciality of translation in literary transformation and evolution, and offers an opportunity for a theoretical revision of Lefevere's systems thinking. It sanctions itself by a global perspective that challenges the strict ideological demarcation of borders between literary systems and seeks to incorporate this perspective into the very notion of "literary system". These literary shifts (and the debates around them) will inform the investigation of modernist Arabic aesthetics in the translation of John Donne's metaphysical poetry into Arabic. As mentioned above, the translation mirrors the spirit of these iconoclastic poetic waves, which were embraced by the revolutionary discourse of the Arab Spring.

Since the revolutionary discourse of modernist poetics and the Arab Spring are vital to this study, it is important to give a background of the Arab Spring as a term and as a movement and relate it to the literary landscape in Egypt and Syria. The chain of uprisings, protests, and armed conflicts that spread across many Arabic-speaking countries in the second decade of the twenty-first century was tagged by the media as "The Arab Spring" in a terminological invocation of the 1968 Prague Spring. The impact of these revolutionary waves was momentous in Tunisia (where the movement began towards the end of 2010), Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. The 2019 protests and political changes in Algeria and Sudan are sometimes linked to the Arab Spring too. The

causes of the movement varied depending on the context, but most of these uprisings protested the effects of neoliberal policies and the lack of political freedoms.

The term *Arab Spring* was embraced by many in the Arabic-speaking world but was also criticized and dismissed by others. These disagreements echo, to some extent, the debates among historians over the validity of the term *Renaissance*, with some of them doubting the assumption encoded in the term that it was a positive change. Interestingly, the language of seasonal change was also used in labelling the Renaissance period by the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga in his famous book *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* in which he contended that the Renaissance was a period of decline. The autumn image appears also in the public and scholarly discourse on the Arab Spring; the Tunisian researcher Aymen Boughanmi published in 2015 a book titled *Al-ẖarīf al-ʿarabi: fil-tanāqudi bayna al-ṯawrah wal-dīmuqrāṭiyyah* (*The Arab Autumn: On the Contradiction between Revolution and Democracy*). The book acknowledges the importance of the revolutionary moment but addresses the counterproductive outcomes of the uprisings, arguing that revolution does not necessarily lead to or guarantee democracy. Joseph Massad has also criticized the term *Arab Spring* on the grounds that it was coined by the US media and that it serves to control the aims of the popular uprisings by turning them into a neoliberal "American Spring."

Apart from the terminological debates around the Arab Spring and its positive or negative outcomes, the event constitutes a revolutionary moment that did not merely aspire for reshuffles or ousters but for new beginnings and for the exercise of the idea of freedom—the two elements that need to coincide in Hannah Arendt's conceptualization

of modern revolution (29). According to Dabashi, the cosmopolitan worldliness of the Arab Spring was a rejection of all the absolutist ideologies that emerged from the colonial/imperial/postcolonial world order: "[w]hen Egyptians in Cairo or Syrians in Hama chant *al-Sha'b Yurid Isqat al-Nizam*, 'People Demand the Overthrow of the Regime,' the word Nizam means not just the ruling regime but also the *régime du savoir*, the regime of knowledge production" (26). While the outcomes of these uprisings deviated in many ways from the Arendtian sense of revolution, the beginnings of these uprisings and the free public spaces created inside and outside the sites of protest represented a revolutionary spirit that sought to create a new knowledge system and a new lasting body politic. Such a spirit goes beyond the understanding of freedom as resistance to the ruling regime and as liberation from it. The Egyptian uprising worked towards these aims "by institutionalizing its own forms of action, first through Popular Committees and later by debating potential institutional arrangements for the future Egypt." (Hyvönen 206) In Syria, "coordination committees or *tanseeqiyat"* were set up in neighborhoods and villages and operated in a form of "underground parliament" where leadership changed monthly (Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami 57-58). However, because of the complexity of the Syrian situation, multiple foreign actors, like Iran, Saudi, Turkey, Russia, and the US, have taken Syria as a strategic battleground for regional and global hegemony (Hashemi and Postel 6-7). In that context, resistance in Syria did not achieve its liberation ends, which prolonged the resistance phase and turned the uprising into a civil war.

The new political beginnings represented in these uprisings utilized the modernist poetic beginnings described above. Modernist poetic innovations were used in the narratives, slogans, and agendas that support or subvert the uprisings. Due to the connections of colloquial poetry to Egypt's nationalist and workers' movements, it came "to be regarded as the most legitimate means of contesting the ruling regime and envisioning a new social order." (Casini 240) The protesters chanted, sang, shared on social media, and graffitied the colloquial verses of Salah Jahin, Ahmed Fuad Negm, Naguib Surur, Abdel-Rahman El-Abnudi, Tamim El-Barghouthi, Hisham El-Gakh, among others. Many of the verses were parts of old poems that do not relate to the Egyptian uprising but speak to the protesters' cause or carry strong patriotic themes. The obscene, "forbidden," colloquial poetry of Surur was reproduced and updated with references to the revolutionary and post-revolutionary situation (Botros 59). Free verse also made its way to the Tahrir square, most notably through Amal Dunqul's timeless piece "lā tuṣāliḥ" ("Do not make peace"). The employment of free and colloquial verse for revolutionary functions at such decisive historical moment indirectly challenges the standards of legitimacy and canonicity sanctioned by the literary system. Thus, the Egyptian uprising did not just resist the political system of governance but also resisted the old poetological tradition as a constituent of the dominant system of knowledge.

Contemporary literature also envisaged a revolutionary scenario before the January uprising. Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's 2008 novel *Yutūbyā* (*Utopia*), which will be discussed in detail in this study, draws a satirical futuristic portrait of Egypt in the 2020s and foreshadows an uprising against the ruling neoliberal class. Moreover, a few days

before the outbreak of the Egyptian uprising in 2011, Osama Salah El-Abnubi published his first poetry collection *Al-baradʿī wal-himār* (*The Saddle-maker and the Donkey*) which was a sharp satire directed at the Egyptian political scene under President Hosni Mubarak. The collection is centered around an imaginary village whose inhabitants are suffering from swollen buttocks due to their riding donkeys without using saddles. After several complications, they seek change by allowing the saddle-maker into their village, and the latter promises to give everyone a free saddle to help the villagers solve their buttock problems ("*Al-baradʿī wal-himār"*). The character of the saddle-maker alludes to Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei, the former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who was one of the opposition leaders during the last years of Mubarak's reign and one of the major advocates of and participants in the Tahrir protests. Dr. El-Baradei's last name literally means in colloquial Egyptian "the saddle-maker." Such complex interactions between literature and the public space illustrate how writing and rewriting drove change in the years before the uprisings as much as they documented the events and were influenced by them in the post-2011 years.

In Egypt's post-Nasserist era, especially under Mubarak, the margin of free speech was relatively larger than the one in Syria. Under Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad, the literature and cultural products of Baathist Syria did not cross certain boundaries; literary works and TV series expressed the failings of pan-Arabism, ridiculed orchestrated patriotism, and pointed to corruption without "pointing a finger to the top." (Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami 166) Meanwhile, some writers, like Nizar Qabbani and Adonis, had to produce their works outside the country. Although Syria enjoyed a period of free

political and social expression in the year 2000 in what is tagged as the *Damascus Spring*, this period did not last long, as the authorities closed literary salons and imprisoned many intellectuals and writers in 2001. In this context, underground prison literature did flourish, and “[b]anned books were smuggled into the country from Beirut or Cairo, or read online, and discussed in private gatherings.” (Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami 167) One of the main works that criticized Bashar’s rule and his propaganda machine was Nihad Sirees’s novel *al-ṣamt wal-ṣaẖab* (*Silence and Roar*) which was published in Beirut in 2004 and was banned in Syria. Due to heightened threats by Al-Assad’s regime after the outbreak of the Syrian uprising, Sirees had to leave Syria in 2012 for self-imposed exile in Egypt before he relocated to Germany. Despite the suffocating grip of the Syrian regime on literary expression, “artist-activists,” as termed by Miriam Cooke, managed through their maneuvers around the regime’s surveillance to crack “the wall of fear,” which still left an imprint on the revolutionary movement (42).

Chapter organization and overview

The dissertation is made up of four case studies; each of them closely looks into the contemporary reception of an early modern work of literature in Arabic. The four chapters are arranged according to the chronological order of reception. What connects the translations and adaptations selected for the analysis is that they engage in the large-scale dynamics of literary and/or sociopolitical transformation in Arabic-speaking counties and directly or indirectly employ early modern texts for that agenda. These translations and adaptations are in a conversation with the English texts as well as other texts, concepts, and movements that relate to the ideological and poetological systems in

the recipient community. The Egyptian context is given an immense weight in this study because the instances of contemporary reception of early modern English literature have mainly been carried out by Egyptian rewriters who actively reflected on the theme of change through their rewritings. The Syrian context is discussed in Chapter Three because the Syrian contribution to contemporary reception came in the early stages of the ongoing Syrian crisis; it thus offers a different perspective to the political upheaval and brings into the conversation the issue of imperialism.

Chapter One introduces Bahaa Jahin's 2002 translation of a selection of John Donne's *Songs and Sonets*. Jahin is a renowned colloquial poet and the son of the master of Egyptian colloquial poetry, Salah Jahin. His encounter with Donne's metaphysical poetry was initially through his education as a student of English. Although he did not translate Donne's poems into the Egyptian vernacular, the translation bears traces of the modern spirit of Arabic poetics associated with colloquial poetry, free verse, and prose poetry. Jahin deploys Donne's revolutionary poetry to express the spirit of those innovative aesthetic movements by utilizing unconventional diction and imagery and diluting the boundaries between the sacred and the profane. In the process of doing so, he relies on a wide range of cultural resources, including the Sufi poetic corpus. The translation is less concerned with responding to Donne's poetics than with upholding a modern aesthetic identity.

Chapter Two examines Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's 2008 novel *Yutūbyā* (*Utopia*) in relation to Sir Thomas More's 1516 satire *Utopia*. In this chapter, I look at Tawfik's novel as an adaptation of More's work although the adaptive nature of the Egyptian novel

is not widely recognized. Tawfik uses some of More's humanistic ideas in a subtly subversive way to create a satirical and dystopian scenario in an Egyptian context governed by neoliberalism. The relationship between Tawfik and More is mediated by an array of other texts and resources, including the twentieth-century dystopian works of H. G. Wells and George Orwell, and is informed by Tawfik's career as a translator and writer. From a literary perspective, the novel marks a new beginning for utopian/dystopian fiction in the Arabic literary system; it leads utopianism from the realm of intellectuals and educated literati to the public sphere. The literary impact is closely linked to the sociopolitical one because the novel portrays a dark, dystopian image where a revolution is the culmination of the order of things. The popularity of Tawfik's novel among a young generation of readership positions it as a driving force behind the growing dissent of the Egyptian youth in the years leading up to the 2011 uprising.

In Chapter Three, I scrutinize the translation of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* by the Syrian translator and critic Hanna Aboud. The translation, published in 2011 after the uprisings of Tunisia and Egypt and amidst growing unrest in Syria, does not directly reflect the translator's political stance. Yet, a close reading of the translation in light of the prefatory material and Aboud's critical work on European literature shows that the work is particularly interested in the epic's political message which centers around the characters of the Father and Satan. The translation poses open-ended questions about the outcomes of the bourgeois hero's deviation from freedom as a cause and the way the imperial pursuits of the Father and Satan are depicted and justified. Through the portrayal of the Satanic camp, I explain how the translation presents liberty and imperialism as

possibly interconnected, rather than contrasting, goals. This reading speaks to the anxieties of many people in Syria and other countries over the US-sponsored liberalization and democratization which hide imperialist intents.

Chapter Four returns to Egypt, but this time with the purpose of analyzing Abdel-Rahim Kamal's audiovisual adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear* in the Upper Egyptian drama *Dahša.* This adaptation was released three years after the 2011 uprising. It reflected on the boundaries between the ruler's private self and public self as well as the concepts of traditional rule and legal rule in relation to the marginalization of the Egyptian South. Here the periphery speaks to the center, but the latter is rather the contemporary Cairene center than the colonial British one. Although the story is set in a pre-1952 context, the scenes inspired by the political situation between 2011 and 2014 point to the rewriter's concern with the policy of marginalization that has persisted under the postcolonial state and aroused anti-government sentiments among the people of the South. Although the South was not as active as the North in the revolutionary events, which is possibly a quiet protest of the uneven development between the two regions, these sentiments were translated into forms of resistance that are specific to the South. *King Lear* is weaponized by Kamal to reflect on the deep-seated problems of the Egyptian South rather than to comment on the Egyptian uprising, but still the adaptation is largely shaped by the prospects of change promised by the latter.

CHAPTER II

REVOLUTIONARY POETICS: JOHN DONNE IN CONTEMPORARY ARABIC POETRY

John Donne's journey to the Arabic-speaking realms did not take place until the year 2002 when the National Translation Project, sponsored by Egypt's Supreme Council of Culture, published Bahaa Jahin's Arabic translation of a selection of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*. This should not be very surprising, for the seventeenth-century English poet was not duly acknowledged in the Anglophone realms until the early twentieth century when the modernist poet T.S. Eliot rediscovered his poetry. However, the delayed reception of Donne's poetry can also be ascribed to the difficulty one may encounter in labelling Donne's poetry. This is to say, the formal Anglophone labels of medieval, Renaissance, neoclassical, romantic, and modernist are often easy to notice and are, hence, legitimizing codes that facilitate the act of reception. Apart from the problematics of Anglophone labeling, the term *metaphysical poets*—which was used by Samuel Johnson to refer to John Donne, Abraham Cowley, and John Cleveland, among others—was not very flattering and did not suggest a coherent literary school. Johnson was dismissive of metaphysical poets, describing them as "men of learning" whose main concern was to show their learning "in rhyme, instead of writing poetry" (13). The authority of Dr. Johnson's disqualifying comments has long placed Donne and his contemporaries in a vague space that does not fit into the molds of European literary history. Hence, introducing Donne to a global audience needed the extra work of digging in the time between William Shakespeare and John Dryden to uncover the poets who are neither Elizabethan nor neoclassical.

The vague place of John Donne's poetry is echoed in Jahin's Arabic translation. In the Foreword, Fatma Moussa, a prominent literary critic and academic who taught Jahin English literature at Cairo University, states she was surprised when Jahin told her about his translation project. Donne, according to Moussa, is not frequently mentioned among English poetry experts, and his poetry has never grabbed the attention of Arabic translators before Jahin's translation. The title of Jahin's Introduction—"John Donne: šaʾir ʾasril intiqāl" (John Donne: the poet of the transitional period)—underlines the unconventional nature of Donne's poetry and prompts a variety of questions regarding the position of Donne in the history of English poetry. The seventeenth century, according to Jahin, was transitional in the sense that people's perception of the universe was evolving from a medieval image of absolute transcendental harmony to a modern image of religious and philosophical perplexity and scientific skepticism. Parallel to this transition was a revolutionary breakaway from Elizabethan poetry brought about by Donne and his fellow metaphysical poets. Jahin's statements about Donne's poetry as a revolutionary response to Elizabethan poetry imply a critical standpoint that assumes that Donne undermined the conventions of courtly love which characterized Petrarchan poetry and had a significant influence on such Elizabethan sonneteers as Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser.

Donne's anti-Elizabethanism stems, according to Jahin, from his rejection of the conventions of *courtly love*—a term translated in Jahin's Introduction as "al-ḥubb al-ʿuḏrī" (hereinafter udhri love, meaning unsexual love). Udhri love has a very special place in classical Arabic poetry, and, like courtly love, it involves the veneration and

idealization of a cruel, distant, or chaste mistress. The correlation between Arabic udhri love poetry and European courtly love poetry is not a new area of debate. However, Jahin's accentuation of the unconventionality of Donne's poetry and of the association between courtly love and udhri love represents his "metonymic" stance as a translator; that is, his tendency to "prioritize and privilege some parameters and not others" (Tymoczko 55). Jahin's argument also highlights the value of translators as participants in critical conversations, which is something often overlooked in translation studies. Most importantly, labelling Donne as anti-Petrarchan and anti-Elizabethan cannot be read in isolation from Jahin's own career as a contemporary poet, writing in colloquial Egyptian or in modern standard Arabic and succeeding a generation of modern poets who revolutionized Arabic poetry in the twentieth century. Framing Donne's verse as revolutionary creates a link between the poet and the translator—a link that justifies and personalizes the act of translation.

Jahin's emphasis on Donne's anti-Elizabethan stance is followed by an emphasis on Donne's mystical approach to love. He states that his translation of Donne's mystical sections uses Sufi (mystical) diction, since the Arabic mystical traditions are much richer than the English (38). This is something that cannot be ignored, for Sufi love involves a great deal of idealization, because the object of love in Sufi poems is God, and because the Sufis extensively used the language and imagery of classical udhri love verse to express divine love. However, as the analysis will reveal, Sufi love poetry is also unconventional, for it unsettles the boundaries between the sacred and the unsacred. In addition, the incorporation of Sufi poetics in the translation of Donne's amorous poetry is

in itself an unsettling move, as it brings Islamic mystical thought from the realm of divine-human love to the realm of human-human love. Hence, my analysis of three of Donne's poems ("The Good-Morrow," "The Flea," and "The Indifferent") as well as their Arabic translations aims to highlight the way Donne's complex poetics serve Jahin's modernist poetic agenda. The analysis does not juxtapose Donne to Jahin to test the latter's faithfulness to the source; it rather engages them in a conversation over aesthetics and poetological change in the context of love, its varieties, possibilities, and fantasies.

The life of union

In Donne's "The Good-Morrow," we are introduced to a love hierarchy where one love is higher than another. Spiritual, intellectual love is higher than "country pleasures" ("The Good-Morrow" 3) The spiritual love is not only an introspective feeling that grows in seclusion; it is, according to J. B. Broadbent, a relational form of love. Constance Furey supports Broadbent's reading, arguing that "Donne imagines that the power of love comes from this capacity to create another world, to turn the individual into a relational being, part of a unity that transcends particularity" (481). The poem expresses the triumph and joy of finding this relational spiritual unity—a unity, where lovers constitute an entire world of their own: "Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown, / Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one." ("The Good-Morrow" 13-14). A love microcosm is realized in this spiritual union of the lovers. Donald Guss points out that the image of the microcosm suggests a strong Platonic influence on Donne's "The Good-Morrow." The ultimate satisfaction afforded in this microcosm is presented as *real*, and all that precedes the realization of that microcosm is non-existent—nothing

but a dream or a long slumber like that of the Seven Sleepers. The contrast between the microcosm of spiritual unity and the preceding life of earthly pleasures points to the Platonic contrast between Being and non-Being, hence the Platonic strand in Donne's conceit, which will be stretched further in the rest of the poem.

The last stanza of Donne's "The Good-Morrow" emphasizes a Platonic, un-Petrarchan life of unity between lovers. The Petrarchan separation between the mortal lover and the immortal beloved, which is translated into the frustration of the former and the idealization of the latter, is not correspondent to the kind of union described by Donne. While the kind of love described in the last stanza is obviously spiritual, it is rooted in proximity, reciprocity, and unity rather than separation and frustration: "Whatever dies, was not mixed equally; / If our two loves be one, or, thou and I / Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die." (19-21) The generalized, theoretical statement made in Line 19 expresses the central theme of Donne's love poetry: the anxiety over the place of love in a physical universe governed by mutability and death. In "The Good-Morrow," Donne's attempt at resolving this anxiety is manifested in Lines 20 and 21 where a first conditional describes a realistic situation. Donne's realism is another reason why the Platonism of Donne cannot be misconstrued as Petrarchan, for Donne's Platonic love is situated in the realm of the possible. The Petrarchan alternations between desire and forced abstinence are not there; the use of the first-conditional in Lines 20 and 21 stresses a realistic possibility, achievable in the microcosm of love which is materialized in "one little room [made] an everywhere." ("The Good-Morrow" 11)

Jahin’s statement that he relies on the Sufi heritage in his rendering of Donne’s poems is specifically useful in dealing with Donne’s poems which bear a Platonic imprint. In a broad sense, Platonists, like Sufis, assume that “man may move up toward God from things on earth by climbing the ladder of love.” (Andreasen 70). For many Sufis, the lovers of God pursue an “experiential union” with Him (Homerin 216). The leading proponent of the *ittihad* (experiential union) theosophy is Al-Husayn ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj (858-922) who was executed in Baghdad following his famous statement of union with God: “I am the Truth”. As a mystic, poet, and political dissident, Al-Hallaj led a life that aimed for the complete self-destruction and the immersion of one’s individual consciousness in the divine consciousness. Divine love, for Al-Hallaj, is not just realized through obedience but through suffering (Schimmel 72). More precisely, it means that “you remain standing close to your Beloved, when you would be deprived of your attributes, and that your conformance be no more (at that time) than a conformity to Himself" (Massignon 11). The state of conformity with the attributes of the Beloved parallels the life of union, which is final phase of Al-Hallaj’s willful asceticism (Massignon 41). There are multiple traces that reveal the influence of Al-Hallaj on Jahin’s translation of Donne’s lyric poems, especially “The Good-Morrow.” The Platonic state of union in Donne’s poem is transferred into a Hallajian life of union in Jahin’s text which reproduces the Sufi use of traditional wine imagery:

kullulaḏi yamūtu kaʾsun

Mizāğuha bilʿadl mākāna

Law Kāna ḥubānā huyāman wāhidā

Law fāra qalbāna

Binafsi qadril rāhi famtazağā

Fī kaʾs suqyānā

yaḥyā hawānāl ẖuldu našwānā

Whatever dies is a glass of wine

That was not mixed equally.

If our two loves be one,

If our hearts buzz,

Like wine and get mixed

In a glass,

Our love shall live for eternity.

("Ṣabāhul-ẖayr" 34-40)

The association between love and wine in Jahin's lines carries traces of classical Arabic poetics, particularly the genre of *Al-Khamriyyat* (wine poetry) which was common in classical and medieval Arabic verse. According to Th. Emil Homerin, Sufi poets allegorized wine by using "sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) and intoxication (*sukr*) as metaphors for states of mystical experience. The individual heedless of God's living presence is described as sober, whereas the mystic overpowered by a spiritual state is said to be intoxicated due to his loss of self-consciousness and reason." (152-153) Hence, Muslim mystics adapted the wine poetics to their spiritual arguments. Comparing the mixing of souls to the mixing of wine in Jahin's translation echoes Al-Hallaj's "Muzijat rūhuka" ("Your Spirit is Mingled with Mine"):

muziğat rōhuka fī rōḥī kama

tumzağu-l-ḥamratu bil māʾi-l-zulāl

faʾiḏā massaka šayʾun massanī

faʾiḏā ʾanta ʾanā fī kulli ḥāl

Your Spirit is mingling with my spirit

Just as wine is mixing with pure water.

And when something touches You, it touches me.

Now "You" are "me" in everything!

(Massignon 41)

Apart from the Hallajian traces in Jahin's conceit, the spiritual union between the two lovers, incarnated in the mixing of wine, insures an eternal love. But this spiritual union requires an immaterial essence—something that both Plato and Al-Hallaj emphasize in their works (Massignon 16-17). The latter's mystical theology is centered on this immaterial essence which makes man's immortalization possible after being freed from the bondage of the physical. As noted by Nancy Andreasen, "The Good-Morrow" does not offer such a complex approach to the immortality of love or to the affinity between lovers. In fact, Jahin's use of the Hallajian conceit of mixing spirits in the manner of mixing wine is not an indication of a complex Sufi or Platonic treatment of love either. Yet, the presence of the Hallajian voice in Jahin's translation is significant in two main ways. On the one hand, this translational choice points to the impact of what Andre Lefevere calls the "inventory component" of poetics which covers the dynamic repertoire of genres, literary devices, motifs, tropes, symbols, archetypes, as well as the

prototypical characters or situations in a given literary system (26). On the other hand, the noticeable Hallajianism in Jahin's Arabic translation transposes Donne's Platonism into a mystical, Sufi form of love. The transposition—a term that has long been used in the linguistic paradigm of translation studies to signify a change in the grammatical category of the word without changing the meaning—serves here the dual function of localizing Donne's poetry without completely losing the Platonic trace. The mystical strand in Jahin's translation echoes the theme of conversion that Donne highlights in "The Good-Morrow." The two lovers are converts who used to indulge in silly pleasures and now, having found more satisfaction in their spiritual union, are born again. The rebirth associated with the elevation from sensuous pleasure to spiritual connection resembles the resurrection of Christ, the Platonic climbing of the ladder of love, and the Sufi elevation from the transient to the transcendental.

Reaching a spiritual union with the beloved is perceived by Donne as a process of equal mixing of souls. The equal mixing of souls is, for Donne, the right formula that guarantees immortality for the lovers. Yet, the mixing of the souls is accompanied or preceded by a complementary stage represented in the formation of the love microcosm in which the lovers lose interest in the world around them. The outcome of the soul-mixing and the annihilation of consciousness is a renewed selfhood where the two lovers become one, live as one, and, thus, resist mortality: "Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone, / Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown, / Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one. ("The Good-Morrow" 12-14). These lines manifest the lovers' indifference to the world around them and call for creating and possessing a separate

world which is encapsulated in the lovers' room. Jahin's rendering of these lines adds a distinctly mystical imprint, for it casts doubts upon the existence of other worlds instead of expressing indifference to the other worlds:

> falyamḍi ğawwābu-l-buḥūri baḥṯan ʿan ʿawālima ğadīda
>
> wal-tansadil fil-ʿālamīn
>
> ẖarāʾitu-l-dunā-l-baʿīda
>
> wal-namtalik ʿālaminā-l-wāḥida-l-ʾaḥad
>
> Let sea-wanderers search for new worlds.
>
> Let the maps of distant worlds unfold.
>
> And let us posses our one and only world.
>
> ("Ṣabāhul-ẖayr" 22-25)

Jahin translates "sea-discoverers" into "ğawwābu-l-buḥūr" (sea-wanderers). The implication of this semantic replacement is that the Arabic text underlines the aimlessness of the sea-wanderers. The English text acknowledges the fact that the sea-discoverers have actually gone to new worlds. Yet, the aimlessness of the sea-wanderers is emphasized in the Arabic text by stating that they are just *searching* for new worlds, but there is no indication that they have found any.

Jahin presents an image of wanderers who desperately look for new worlds, but their attempts might be in vain. The distant worlds are represented only on maps; for Jahin, they are nothing but cartographic images, and their existence is subjected to doubt as well. Most importantly, the phrase "Let us possess one world" is rendered as "wal-

namtalik ʿālaminā-l-wāḥida-l-ʾaḥad" ("Let us possess our one and only world"). The English phrasing suggests that the lovers' microcosm is an alternative to other worlds; it is a microcosm governed by love while the other worlds are governed by other laws. The Arabic phrasing, however, denies the existence of alternatives; the lovers' microcosm is the one and only world. In other words, there is only one world, and that world belongs to the lovers and is defined by them. Interestingly, the association between the adjectives *alwāḥid* (the One or the Indivisible) and *al-aḥad* (the Only or the Unique) in Arabic carries a significant religious implication. The One and the Only are among the ninety-nine names of God in Islam; the former is the 66th name and the latter is the 67th. The fact that Jahin collocates *alwāḥid* with *alʾaḥad* underscores the religious significance. In Islamic mysticism, chiefly in the monistic theosophy of the Andalusian mystic Mohy Al-Din Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), the names of God are of central importance. Ibn Arabi states in his *Diwan* that God's multiple names, whether the ninety-nine names we know or the infinite names we do not know, are all facets of the Real, i.e., the One and Only God (102). William Chittick explains that "inasmuch as God is *aḥad*, all multiplicity is negated from Him and no positive quality is affirmed . . . However, inasmuch as He is *wāḥid* others can be envisaged in relation to Him." (168) Ibn Arabi's thoughts on God's names reflect his monistic philosophy which emphasizes that all created entities are manifestations of the Real. Jahin's stress on the lovers' one and only world and the denial of the existence of other worlds borrow the mystical emphasis on the divine as the real essence of all entities. Accordingly, the lovers' microcosm is in Jahin's text the essential, real world, whereas all other worlds are illusions or mere images.

The pre-union state is depicted in Donne's poem as a long sleep like that of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in the Christian account or the Companions of the Cave in the Islamic account. Jahin chooses to Islamize Donne's reference to the Seven Sleepers by rendering it into *ahli-l-kahf* (the people of the cave). The Islamization of the reference is not simply a domesticating strategy, for the association between the Companions of the Cave and the pre-union state alludes to the Hallajian *ghurba* (spiritual exile) "in which the individual seeks refuge from the world to preserve what little integrity remains in unjust times" (Elmarsafy 140). For Al-Hallaj, the Sleepers' retirement to the mountain cave and their subsequent sleep were a refuge from the evil that permeates the physical world. Apart from the mystical interpretation of the story of the Companions, Al-Hallaj, in his *Diwan*, directly associates the Companions with the death of lovers deprived of spiritual union:

qawmun ʾiḏā haǧarū min baʿdi mā waṣalū
mātū waʾin ʿāda waslun baʿdahu buʿiṯū
tarā-l-muḥibīna ṣarʿā fī diyārihimi
kafityati-l-kahfi lā yadrūna kam labiṯū

When abandonment comes after union,
lovers die, but when reunited, they are resurrected.
Lovers lie dead in their abodes,
like the Companions of the Cave who don't know how long they slept.

(Al-Hallaj 296-297)

But what is particularly interesting about the pre-union phase is encoded in the phrase "country pleasures." The pun on the first syllable of the word country echoes an earlier obscene pun in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

> Hamlet: [To Ophelia] Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
>
> Ophelia: No, my lord.
>
> Hamlet: I mean, my head upon your lap.
>
> Ophelia: Ay, my lord.
>
> Hamlet: Do you think I meant country matters?
>
> Ophelia: I think nothing, my lord.
>
> (III.II.102-107)

The verb *suck* reinforces the implied obscenity of Donne's phrase. Thus, the reasons that have not allowed the life of union to happen earlier are the lovers' long sleep or their immature indulgence in sensual pleasures. Jahin's translation of the pun adds another possible reason, which is the assumption that the lovers were foster siblings.

The Arabic translation attempts to maintain the pun, but this attempt adds an extra level of complexity: "turā ʾaʿišnā baʿdu mā futimnā / narḍaʿu liḏātil ṯarā ṭiflayn" ("Were we not weaned till then? And sucked the same soil, childishly?" ("Ṣabāh-ul-ẖayr" 3-4) The word *ṯarā* ثرى (soil) is orthographically close to the word *ṯady* ثدي (breast); the second letter is the main difference between the two words in terms of spelling. Hence, Jahin converts the phonetic pun into a visual, orthographic pun. Semantically, the word *ṯarā* conveys the literal sense of *country*, and orthographically, it conveys the erotic sense. But Jahin's remark that the two lovers may have sucked the same soil/breast as

children also suggests that the lovers were foster siblings before their spiritual union, and Islam, the majority religion in the Arabic-speaking world, does not permit the marriage of foster siblings. Whether this implication is intended by Jahin or not is beside the point. What matters here is that Jahin's translation adds a religious obstacle to the lovers' life of union. Thus, the spiritual union between the lovers transcends all that is worldly—sleep, death, sexual pleasures, and religious taboos.

The employment of the Sufi repertoire in the translation of "The Good-Morrow" is a very effective tactic, for Sufis have always been concerned with the transition from the physical to the spiritual. Jahin adapts this repertoire to reflect on the formation of a spiritual bond between two lovers who previously led an indulgent life. The Arabic translation records the stages of the spiritual union by utilizing Sufi terms to describe the annihilation of space and the mixing of souls, which, hence, leads to the final celebrated union of the lovers. Although Jahin does not subscribe to the conventions of equivalence and fidelity, he unsettles and challenges the dichotomy between the spiritual and the amorous by presenting an "interesting case of translation as a form of intrusion of one code upon another." (Rodríguez-García 3) Donne's mingling of the spiritual and the erotic was unsettling to the Elizabethan poetic traditions, and the translation of Donne's poetics is a groundbreaking form of intrusion that is employed to rethink Arabic amorous poetics.

The consecration of the profane

Donne's "The Flea" is not only one of his most popular poems; it is a poem where Donne's revolutionary poetics are best manifested. The speaker is not merely an Ovidian

libertine glorifying sexual licentiousness, but also a playful seducer whose argument is both original and nonsensical. The union between the lovers, through sexual intercourse, is justified and defended by analogy: premarital sex does not jeopardize the woman's honor just as the killing of the *sacred* flea does not jeopardize her life. The logical analogy concludes an outrageous argument where the flea, having sucked the bloods of the speaker and the beloved, is depicted as a pretext for the wished-for sexual union.

The poem presents us with a Donne who radically dissents from Elizabethan love poetics and whose "wit expanded within the framework of the Ovidian tradition" (Andreasen 193). Yet, Andreasen argues, as much as Donne adds to the Ovidian tradition, he subtracts from it by letting go of the mythological references and using the mundane image of the flea. Most interestingly, the internal logic of the seductive argument turns into what Saunders calls "a brilliantly self-conscious line of seductive bullshit" that is still convincing to the woman who is ready to be convinced (150). Although "The Flea" is not explicitly erotic, it aims to "convert an act that could imply . . . shame . . . into a morally and socially honorable one." (Marotti 93) The poem resists conformity to tradition by intentionally consecrating the profane and desecrating the sacred: the mundane replaces the mythological, premarital sex challenges the sacred institution of marriage, and the Christian notion of the Trinity (three selves in one) is employed in a sexual context.

"The Flea" is the third poem in Bahaa Jahin's Arabic translation after "The Good-Morrow" and "The Sun Rising". While "The Good-Morrow" does not present a very shocking argument because the lovers' spiritual union triumphs over "country pleasures"

(“The Good-Morrow” 3), “The Sun Rising” paves the way for “The Flea,” for it is a poem where the speaker reprimands the sun for being such an intrusive visitor after a night of passion between the lovers. The degradation of the sun in the Arabic translation is a direct attack at the symbolic position of the sun in Arabic poetics, for the sun was often glorified in Arabic poetry. For example, the Umayyad poet Qays Ibn Al-Mulawwah (645-688) famously compared in his *Diwan* Layla, his beloved, to the sun on multiple occasions: “fafīkī minal šams-il-muḍīʾati nūruhā / wa laysa lahā minkil tabassumu wal t̲aġru” (“you possess the Sun’s light / but [the Sun] possesses neither your smile nor your lips”). Rebuking the sun serves as a transition towards the more shocking subversiveness of “The Flea” where the insignificant insect is heroized and made sacred.

The challenge of translating “The Flea” lies in the fact that it is a poem that subverts the sacred at multiple levels—the social, the religious, the poetic, and the rhetorical. After all, the degradation of the sun is less problematic in the Arabic cultural system than the degradation of marriage rituals and the glorification of premarital sex. The flea, as Gina Filo indicates, unsettles the boundaries between bodies, genders, and species and obfuscates the distinctions between cleanliness and filth (214). The flea’s blood was subject to debate in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) in the early centuries of Islam, for it was argued that the flea’s blood might invalidate one’s prayer. Imam Malik ibn Anas (711-795), one of the premiere Muslim scholars whose views in matters of jurisprudence are still widely cherished, argued in his *Mudawwanah* that if one’s dress is significantly stained with the flea’s blood, one should take off the stained dress before praying (21). Hence, the flea is possibly unclean in Muslim traditions which are an

important ingredient in the Arabic cultural system even though these jurisprudence texts were written when fleas were omnipresent. To endow the flea with a sacred value in the manner delineated by Donne, regardless of Donne's apparent playfulness, involves an enormous challenge. But most importantly, the consecration of the flea's blood and the celebration of the flea as the lovers' marriage bed is a radical departure from the imagery of traditional Arabic poetry which did not find in the flea a romantic inspiration.

However, while Bahaa Jahin acknowledges the rules of Arabic poetry in the translator's Preface (37), it should also be noted that Jahin, according to Randa Aboubakr, belongs to a generation of contemporary Egyptian poets who inherited the experimental and the revolutionary aesthetic spirit of the 1960s' generation which included such names as Amal Dunqul (1940–1983), Naguib Surur (1932–1978), and Aḥmed Fuad Negm (1929–2013). The elder generation has brilliantly experimented with the boundaries between the sacred and the profane. Dunqul, for example, glorified revolution in his patriotic poems not by looking back to historical heroes, but by summoning up Noah's fourth son who drowned in the flood according to the Muslim narrative. Raed Al-Sobh argues that Noah's son symbolized in Dunqul's poetry the sense of loyalty to the homeland because he refused to join his father on the Ark (43). This example manifests a renewal of the aesthetic experience by employing a tool termed by Al-Sobh as *taqdis Al-mudannas* (the consecration of the profane). The tool described by Al-Sobh shapes the aesthetics of contemporary Arabic poetry and liberates it from the restraints of the sacred institution of traditional Arabic poetry. As an heir to Dunqul's generation, Jahin finds in "The Flea" an expression of his own spirit as a poet. As a

translator, Jahin sees that “The Flea,” or Donne’s poetry in general, fits well into the revolutionary project that seeks to subvert the power dynamics inherent in the traditional Arabic *qasida* (poem). The consecration of the profane is, thus, concerned with the creative dynamism and the individuality of contemporary poetry, and “The Flea” offers a perfect site for probing this phenomenon through translation.

But the consecration of the profane and the desecration of the sacred are not completely new in Arabic poetry, for these phenomena were manifest in the revolutionary poetics of the Abbasid poet Abu Nuwas (756–814) who openly rejected religious and moral didacticism and did not shy away from profanity in his verse. Besides, as manifested in the analysis of the translation of “The Good-Morrow,” medieval Sufi poets also experimented with the boundaries between the sacred and the profane by using the language and the form of amorous Arabic verse to reflect on spiritual matters. Cyrus Ali Zargar extensively discusses this phenomenon in the poetry of the Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi. As briefly stated in the analysis of Jahin’s translation of “The Good-Morrow,” Ibn Arabi was the Sufi saint with whom the notion of divine unity, later known as *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) is associated, a theosophy founded on the original sense of the term *revelation* as a removal of the veil that covers God’s nature (Dobie 19). Zargar notes that Sufi poetry demonstrates “a lack of any concrete distinction between the Creator and creation, such that everything seen is none other than the Real, and that created entities possess their own separate existence in only an illusory way” (12). Like Al-Hallaj, Ibn Arabi used the language of the Arabic love lyric and the expressions of human love as vehicles “for recognizing human-divine love,

in much the same way that human beauty is a vehicle for witnessing divine beauty" (Zargar 127). Yet, the difference between Ibn Arabi and Al-Hallaj is that the latter suggested that "the true lovers of God burn for union with Him" and, thus, maintained "a state of separation . . . , if only temporarily, between the Lord and His worshippers" (Homerin 13). But Ibn Arabi's was a believer in a monistic theosophy that explains the reality of the multitude of creation within the context of divine oneness; for him "multiplicity is almost as real as unity" (Chittick 16), because the former is a reflection of the latter.

These observations are particularly significant when looking into Jahin's translation of "The Flea," considering Jahin's statement in the translator's Preface that his translation draws on the Sufi repertoire (Jahin 38). Some questions should be raised here: does Bahaa Jahin consecrate the insignificant by assuming a unity (*wahda*) between the flea and the lovers? Or does he assume an experiential union (*ittihad*) between the lovers through the flea? Line 23 of the Arabic translation "ḏālika-l-burġūṯu qudusun qaddisīhi" ("this flea is sacred, so consecrate him") might suggest that the sacredness of the flea is a decontextualized fact; it is sacred because all creatures are sacred as per Ibn Arabi's theosophy. But it must be noted that Jahin uses the Sufi repertoire to address human-human love, and not human-divine love. The Sufi poets used the language of amorous Arabic verse to express the mystic's burning love for God, but the process of adapting love verse to the mystical experience resulted in the rise of such Sufi concepts as *imtizaj* (mixing), *wahda* (unity), *ittihad* (union), and *fanaa'* (self-annihilation). In this translation, Jahin uses these Sufi terms and concepts and readapts them to amorous poetry, and the

subject matter of the poem does not justify a monistic reading of the flea's sacredness. The lines leading to Line 23 provide an explanation for the flea's sacredness:

ḥubbi-irḥamīhi
ʾinnanā fīhi tazawwaǧnā, nakād
lā, tamāzaǧnā, wa ḏā ʾawṯaqu min
ẖātami-l-ʾazwāǧ wa ʾatammu-ittiḥād
ḏālika-l-burġūṯu qudusun qaddisīhi

Have mercy on him, my love!
We almost married in him.
No, we merged, and this is a stronger bond
than the marriage ring and is an absolute union.
This flea is sacred, so consecrate him.

("Al-burġūṯ" 19-23)

The speaker asks the beloved to have mercy on the flea because the lover and the beloved united in the flea's body after the flea sucked their blood. The union or the merger of the lovers' selves in the body of the flea is stronger than the material token of marriage. Hence, what makes the flea sacred is the fact that the lovers united in him, but the flea is not sacred in itself. This is supported by the fact that the second stanza describes the flea's abdomen as contemptible (*ḥaqīr*) ("Al-burġūṯ" 7). Donne's poem does not use an equivalent or similar adjective to describe the flea, so the addition of that description into the Arabic version suggests that the flea is still insignificant if it were not

for the fact that it sucked the speaker's blood as well as the beloved's. The sacredness of the flea is an effect caused by the event of sucking the lovers' blood; it is, therefore, a result rather than a given.

The emphasis on union is expressed in such words as *tawaḥuddinā* (our union), *ittiḥād* (union), and *tamāzağnā* (got merged or mixed). These words imply the action of uniting, and not a state of unity. They also involve a constant shift of focus from the flea to the lovers, for the poem, after all, makes a seductive argument and is not a celebration of a newfound bond (unlike "The Good-Morrow"). In other words, the flea is more of a device; it is a conceit for the symbolic bonding that has taken place and for the physical bonding desired by the speaker. Furthermore, the above-mentioned terms suggest that the union or the merger is an incident that resulted from the act of sucking the lovers' blood; the union between the lovers is *happening*, so more is expected to happen from the speaker's standpoint.

The significance of Jahin's choices is twofold: it underlines the poem's seductive argument and conveys the dramatic immediacy that characterizes Donne's poem. Assuming an act of union through the flea is more seductive and playful than assuming an elevated state of unity, for the union that takes place through the flea is real and visible and not entirely metaphysical. Related to this point is the fact that the English text starts as the flea sucks the beloved's blood—after it has already sucked the speaker's blood. The act of sucking the speaker's blood is related in the English text as a past occurrence that is not observed by the reader: "It sucked me first, and now sucks thee," ("The Flea" 3). This raises doubts about the veracity of the speaker's statement that the flea sucked

his blood, and these doubts reinforce the playfulness of the poem. Seduction is made effective when it is coupled with immediacy, dynamism, and the doubts surrounding the speaker's veracity. The opening line of Donne's poem starts with the imperative verb *Mark*, for the flea is resting on the woman's hand sucking her blood. Most of the poem is devoted to convincing the woman to avoid killing the flea because it is where the lovers are merged. The speaker's argument is interrupted by a moment at the beginning of the second stanza when the beloved was so close to killing the flea: "Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare," ("The Flea" 10). But the poem ends with the beloved's killing of the flea:

> Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
> Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
> Wherein could this flea guilty be,
> Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
> Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
> Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
>
> ("The Flea" 19-24)

Donne's poem is, thus, made up of an action that develops over the course of the poem; it consists of three stanzas that correspond to the beginning, the middle, and the end of a dramatic text.

The three-part structure is lost in the Arabic text which is made up of six sections. Yet, the dramatic immediacy is not completely lost thanks to a range of tactics, including the employment of the words *tawaḥuddinā* (our union) and *ittiḥād* (union) rather than *wahda* (unity). The other tactics include the use of the imperative Arabic verbs *unẓurī*

(mark) and *ilḥaẓī* (look) which parallel the degree of immediacy created at the beginning of Donne's poem. The fourth stanza of Jahin's poem includes a number of imperatives as well, but most importantly it starts with the word *lā* (no) which implies that the woman was about to kill the flea at some point between Stanza Three and Stanza Four. Stanza Six, which is the final stanza of Jahin's poem, opens with the word *āh* (oh), indicating the murder of the flea. The dramatic immediacy is, hence, captured through the coupling of Sufi terms—that signify the action of union—with a range of other linguistic choices.

To express the idea that the flea is a binding vehicle, Jahin also employs the wine metaphor, which is an addition to Donne's imagery. The last three lines of Donne's first stanza state that the flea "enjoys before it woo, / And pampered swells with one blood made of two, / And this, alas, is more than we would do." ("The Flea" 7-9). These lines, which delineate the union between the lovers, are rendered in Arabic as such:

ḏālika-l-burġūṯu maẖmūrun faẖūr

qad qaḍā waṭaran wa-lam yaṭlub yadan

ʿabba min daminā mizāǧan wāhidan

nāla mā lam yaktub-il-ḥaẓẓu lanā

mā tamnnaytu wa ġannaytu sudā

That flea is drunk and proud.

He satisfied a need and never asked for a hand.

He mixed our bloods into one drink

and got what we could not get,

[and] what I wished for in vain.

("Al-burġūṯ" 12-15)

The Arabic translation depicts a drunken flea, and the flea's drunkenness is caused by the mixing of the lovers' bloods into one drink. The wine imagery is often used in Sufi poetry as a "a symbol of the powerful and intoxicating mystical love passing between God and His worshipper" (Homerin 153). The spiritual state where the mystic unites with the Beloved is overpowering and intoxicating, causing the loss of the mystic's self-consciousness.

In the Arabic translation of "The Flea," even though the union is not mainly spiritual, the invocation of the wine metaphor underlines the strength of the union. But the flea is not only the object of intoxication; it is also an agent that, in turn, intoxicates the lovers. In the fourth stanza, Jahin's speaker says, "wa ʾanā ʾanti bihi.. sukran natīh" ("I am you by this [flea]... [and by this] we are drunk") ("Al-burġūṯ" 25). Thus, the mixing of the lovers' blood and the consequential union have a far-reaching effect on the flea as well as on the lovers. The striking thing about the intoxication of the flea, coupled with the intoxication of the lover and the beloved, is that it establishes a trinitarian relationship where the three of them identify with one another and the three selves unite in one. Donne's "deployment of Eucharistic ideas in [this] primarily nonsacramental [context]," which is a prevalent phenomenon across his secular poems (Whalen 23), is well captured in Jahin's deployment of the wine image. The intoxication is where the Christian Trinity meets the Sufi *ittiḥād*; the flea is drunk after sucking the lovers' blood, and the lovers are drunk after their bloods were sucked by the flea.

Jahin relates drunkenness to the lovers' symbolic union in the body of the flea in a way that reactivates the Sufi association between intoxication and spiritual union. Yet, the symbolic union is nothing but a pretext for the sexual intercourse desired by the speaker, whether in the English text or in the Arabic one. Hence, the intoxicating union is in the Arabic poem an effective strategy that serves to both seduce the addressee and profane what the Sufis had previously spiritualized. "Al-burġūṯ"—or the Arabic translation of "The Flea"—manifests Bahaa Jahin's manipulation of the politics of the sacred and the profane. While the Sufi poets adapted amorous and wine poetry to express their themes of spiritual union and divine love, Jahin adapted the Sufi poetics to produce a seductive piece featuring a sexually licentious speaker. What we are dealing with so far is a very dynamic and reciprocal relationship between Donne's poetics and Sufi poetics, where the directions of interaction do not emanate from only one of these codes.

The religion of promiscuity

The apex of Donne's radical poetics is demonstrated in such poems as "The Indifferent," "The Curse," or "Loves Diet". "The Indifferent" is especially complex and controversial because it is more of a defense of a religion—the religion of inconstancy. Arthur F. Marotti's interpretation of "The Indifferent" suggests that the poem is aimed at an Inns-of-Court male audience who found in libertine, anti-sentimental Ovidianism a "social defense of the emotionally vulnerable . . . those who are afraid either of affectionate involvement or of the possibility of rejection" (78). Most importantly, this assumed coterie audience saw in Donne's libertine poetry a radical opposition to the

conventions of polite, submissive, effeminate Petrarchan poetry which was associated with the Court, especially the Elizabethan (79).

Saunders takes issue with this analysis and critiques Marotti's projection of an all-male audience. He imagines a female audience instead, for the poem, in Saunders's point of view, does not list a series of real sexual adventures; it is "less a bragging confession of "adventurism" than an obviously exaggerated form of self-advertisement, a piece of sexual self-promotion." (129) Just as men can have their own sexual fantasies, women too are entitled to similar fantasies. In other words, desire is not exclusively masculine and the poem's imagined female audience, especially in Stanza two, reinforces this interpretation. The second stanza starts with four questions, addressed to a female audience. All the questions are yes-or-no questions; they give no chance for a counterargument. They manipulate those who may object, especially women, into considering the speaker's argument:

> Will no other vice content you?
>
> Will it not serve your turn to do as did your mothers?
>
> Or have you all old vices spent, and now would find out others?
>
> Or doth a fear that men are true torment you?
>
> ("The Indifferent" 10-13)

The third stanza brings forth a divine support for the speaker's argument by invoking the figure of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, desire, and sex. Venus describes those who promote faithfulness and chastity as heretics—"some two or three / Poor heretics in love there be" (23-24). The poem ends with a comforting note to the

speaker: “But I have told them, Since you will be true, / You shall be true to them who are false to you.” (26-27). Venus assures the speaker that she has warned the few heretic supporters of constancy that they may stay true and faithful in their love, but, unfortunately, they will be faithful to unfaithful lovers, for the majority are inconstant in their love. The faithful ones are nothing but dissenters from the community of the unfaithful.

The translation of “The Indifferent” into Arabic might be challenging given the unusual argument of Donne’s poem and the dominant conservatism of the recipient culture. However, Jahin finds in “The Indifferent” a reinforcement of the subversiveness of contemporary Arabic poetry. As shown before, the Sufi repertoire has been instrumental in expressing spiritual love in “The Good-Morrow” and physical love in “The Flea,” but it is used in conjunction with broadly religious expressions to promote the creed of inconstancy in “The Indifferent”. The employment of religious terms, especially Sufi terms, in “The Indifferent” is particularly subversive, for it does not only challenge the sacredness of fidelity, but also challenges the ideal of constancy which is the cornerstone of divine love in Sufism. As noted before, God is the ultimate object of Sufi love. By using the Sufi repertoire in translating Donne’s advocacy of infidelity, Jahin undermines the concept of divine love from within and presents the readers with a radically revolutionary approach to love in general. In this regard, it is worth noting that the incorporation of religious expressions in the translation subverts the ideal of udhri love which has long been associated with Arabic amorous verse. In the udhri love poems

of Qays ibn Al-mulawwah, for instance, all the poems were addressed to a single beloved, Laila, so constancy is typical of that genre.

The promotion of the religion of inconstancy starts forcefully with the line "ʿindī fuyūḍu-l-ḥubbi liğamīʿi-l-nisāʾ" ("I possess or exude emanations of love for all women"). The expression "fuyūḍu-l-ḥubb" ("emanations of love") is key in the first line. John Bowker's *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* defines *emanation* as an expression of a superior being's power or wisdom. The Arabic word *fuyūḍ* (the plural form of the word *fayḍ*) shares with the English word that metaphysical sense. In fact, it carries an immense weight in Islamic mystical thought. In *Al-Tāʾīyah al-Kubrā*, Omar Ibn Al-Farid (1181-1234) "views temporal existence as an emanation (*fayḍ*; v. 404) from a single divine essence" (Homerin 208). Ibn Arabi in *Fusus Al-Hikam* discusses the concept of emanation in the context of God's manifestation, differentiating between the Holiest Emanation and the Holy Emanation: the former brings forth the divine names, and the latter brings forth the permanent archetypes "which are the pre-existent realities in the divine knowledge" (Ali 15). The particularities of Ibn Arabi's thoughts on emanation might be confusing, but what is relevant here is the fact that the concept of *fayḍ* is associated with the Divine in Sufism. It generally expresses the flow of divine traits and blessings into the soul of the mystic.

The employment of a Sufi term in the first line of "Al-lāmubālī" ("The Indifferent") is made even more problematic by the elimination of the modal verb *can* from the Arabic translation. The English text starts with a statement that the speaker "can love both fair and brown," ("The Indifferent" 1), but the speaker in the Arabic text is not

merely able to love fair and brown women; he actually exudes emanations of love for all women. The potential ability is replaced by a fact. Besides, the ability of Donne's speaker to love any woman, which is stated in Lines 8 and 9 of "The Indifferent," is not the same as loving all women: "I can love her, and her, and you, and you, / I can love any, so she be not true." The ability suggests a possibility or, more precisely, a hypothesis that could be tested. The statement of Donne's speaker is an example of what F.R. Palmer calls "dynamic modality" which is conditioned by internal factors, but its realization remains in the realm of the potential. Yet, the declaration of love for all women removes this modality, its dynamism, and its potentiality. The opening line of Jahin's translation could be tested only in terms of truth or falsity. The use of the word *fuyūḍ*, with its mystical connotations and the replacement of the modality with the factual declaration serve to establish an authoritative voice at the beginning of the poem. The combination fits the polemical tone which develops later in the poem as the speaker grows more aggressive in defending and promoting his creed of inconstancy.

Like the speaker in Donne's text, the speaker in the Arabic text lists the different types of women he likes as an elaboration on the general statement made in Line 1. The last line of the first stanza puts forth one condition: he "can love any, so she be not true." ("The Indifferent" 9). That is, he can love any woman, but there is only one restricting condition; she must be as sexually promiscuous as he is. This line is translated by Jahin in two lines: "ʿindī lakunna-l-ʿišqu... mā dāma-l-ḥabību / bayna-l-ḍulūʿi yaḍummu qalban ẖāʾinan" ("I love you all as long as the beloved / possesses an unfaithful heart") ("Al-lāmubālī" 14-15). Interestingly, the translation uses the words *alʿišq* (intense love) and

alḥabīb (the beloved). Although variants of these words are common in Arabic love poems and songs, these forms, accompanied with the definite article *al* (the) are typical of Sufi poetry. Al-Hallaj says in his *Diwan*: "alʿišqu lā ḥadathun ʾiḏ kāna huwa ṣifatun / minal-ṣifāti liman qatlāhu ʾaḥyāʾu" ("love is not an accident if it is a trait / of That whose casualties are alive") (288). He also says, *"*man ʾaḥabba-l-ḥabība ṭāra ʾilayhi / ištiyāqan ʾilā liqāʾi-l-ḥabīb" ("whoever loves the Beloved should fly to Him / yearning to meet the Beloved") (Al-Hallaj 293). The term *alʿišq* (intense love) is one of the four names of divine love explained by Ibn Arabi in *Al-Futuhat* (484) and is widely used in Sufi literature to denote an overpowering passion for God. Besides, the word *alḥabīb* (the beloved), in the definite form, is often associated with God or, sometimes, with Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Jahin's diction reflects the influence of Sufi literature, and the employment of this diction fits well with the opening line which borrows the Sufi term *fayḍ*.

The second stanza of Donne's poem has a sharp polemical tone. This tone has reproduced in Jahin's second stanza too. Donne and Jahin assume a female addressee, but the gender of the addressee is only made clear in Line 13 (the fourth line of the second stanza) of Donne's poem. In Jahin's poem, the gender is exposed from the first line, mainly because of the grammatical differences between English and Arabic (second-person pronouns, in their various forms, are gendered in Arabic). Yet, it should be noted that Donne's question at the beginning of Stanza 2 appears in Arabic in the second line of the stanza. Donne's speaker wonders, "Will no other vice content you?" ("The Indifferent" 10), but Jahin's speaker starts the second stanza with an apostrophe followed

by a question: “yā man raḍaʿtunna-l-ẖiyānata fil-ḥalīb / ʾa turā saʾimtunna-l-taqalluba faǧʾatan?” (“You, who got breastfed with infidelity, / Are you suddenly bored of inconstancy?”) (“Al-lāmubālī” 16-17). Starting the stanza with an apostrophe makes the tone even more polemical than it is in Donne’s poem. Besides, the breastfeeding metaphor is extremely shocking, for it suggests that the religion of infidelity is the norm in the speaker’s world; it is passed down from one generation to the next and from mothers to daughters (and the mother figure is highly venerated in Arabic-speaking communities). The intensity of the speaker’s tone establishes him as a polemicist, someone who is aggressively defending an *old* creed and a community of believers against the threat of the *new* creed of constancy which seems to be led by women.

The speaker’s polemic in Jahin’s second stanza is followed and reinforced by a series of imperatives. These imperatives make the radical inconstancy of the speaker of the Arabic text more pronounced and more controversial. In Line 24, Jahin’s speaker says, “falbisna min ẖazzil ẖiyānati mā yuṯīr” (“Put on a garment of infidelity, whichever is arousing”). This line has no counterpart in Donne’s poem. Additions and omissions are explained by Jahin in the prefatory sections of his translation as aesthetic choices that aim to adapt Donne’s poems to Arabic poetics, particularly in terms of form, rhythm, and musicality (37-28). Yet, the addition has far-reaching implications than the mere compliance with musicality. The word *yuṯīr* (to arouse, excite, or seduce) rhymes in Arabic with the word *ḍamīr* (conscience), and the rhyming highlights a very seductive effect. On the one hand, Jahin’s speaker is preaching and is being more instructional than Donne’s, and, on the other hand, he acknowledges sexual arousal, encourages it, and

recognizes the seductive function of outward appearances as well as the deliberateness of seduction. Nothing in Donne's second stanza indicates that appearances facilitate or enable sexual freedom, and nothing suggests that the kind of love his speaker propagates can be gained by some sort of intentional seduction on the part of the woman. Donne's poem is more focused on the concept of promiscuity for all than on the subtle tactics that insinuate and enable sexual freedom. Jahin's phrase "mā yuṯīr" ("whichever is arousing") comes after the phrase "ẖazzil ẖiyānati" ("the garment of infidelity") to restrict it; the former phrase is more general than the latter. If the metonymy is translated to its literal meaning, then the result is a subtle remark that infidelity itself is not seductive; there are specific kinds of infidelity (specific garments) that would make women seductive in the universe of sexual freedom.

Donne's tone remains sharp throughout the second stanza, but it becomes less aggressive towards the end of the stanza as the focus shifts from "you" to "me": "Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go." ("The Indifferent" 16). Jahin translates this line as: "faʾanā-l-musāfiru fī buḥūriki riḥlatan / lastu-l-muqīmu tarahbunan wa tanassukā" ("I am only on a trip through your seas / I am not staying like a monk or an ascetic") ("Al-lāmubālī" 29-30). The reference to monasticism and asceticism is not present in Donne's poem, but the analogy between constancy and these devotional practices is still reflective of Donne's poetics which regularly draw upon Christian, especially Catholic, concepts in the context of amorous poems as manifested in "The Canonization" and "The Apparition". Jahin's analogy involves a rejection of the principles of monasticism, which exists in Christianity but not in Islam, and of the principles of asceticism, which is at the

core of Sufism. Asceticism, for the Sufis, involves an individual abstinence from sensual pleasures and is one of the ways leading up to the spiritual union with God. The last lines of the second stanza are, thus, a direct desecrating attack at the concept of faithful divine love which is promoted by Muslim mystics.

The third stanza introduces Venus's voice which comes as a divine intervention that supports the speaker's arguments. However, the start of the third stanza may suggest that the addressee in the polemical second stanza is imaginary, because the previous stanzas are described by the speaker as a song that is sighed and is not sung out loud. The description suggests that the thoughts laid out in the first two stanzas of the poem are private, and only a supernatural power—a goddess like Venus--would hear that sigh and be able to decode it. Venus reads the speaker's thoughts and describes those who promote faithfulness and chastity as heretics. The supernatural ability of Venus to hear the speaker's sigh is downplayed in the Arabic text. This is mainly because there is no indication in the Arabic poem that the song is sighed:

> Venus, rabbat-al-hawā wa-l-ǧamāl
> samiʿat ġināʾī ʾaqsamat bi-l-futūn
> bitabbaduli-l-maḥbūbi ʾaḥlā-l-ḫiṣāl
> wa biltimāsi-l-ḥusni ʾannā yakūn

> Venus, the goddess of love and beauty,
> heard my song and swore by seduction
> and by the variety of lovers, which is the best trait,
> and by seeking beauty wherever it is

("Al-lāmubālī" 32-35).

Jahin is more concerned with the divine endorsement of promiscuity, so more stress is laid on the divine oath than on the way the speaker's song is sung. He elaborates on Venus's oath upon variety, which is only mentioned in Line 20 of Donne's poem, by devoting three lines to Venus's oath. The oath invokes God's oaths in the Quran where God frequently swears by His creations to honor and venerate them. Venus's oath upon seduction and variety serves the same purpose; it elevates temptations to a sacred level just as God honors the Earth, the sun, and the moon in the Quran.

The oath is followed by a warning to those who advocate the heresy of virtuous constancy suggests that they will be heartbroken, because they, being the minority, will remain faithful to unfaithful lovers. The shocking conclusion is transposed into a more shocking conclusion in Arabic:

qālat wa qad ʿajibat: manil ṣābiʾah?

man ḏā ʾatā bil bidʿatil šāʾinah?!

falaʾurjiʿanna raʿiyatī hāniʾah

wala ʾurjiʿanna nisāʾahum ḥāʾinah!

She wondered, who are the apostates?

Who came up with the hideous heresy?!

I shall endow my subjects with pleasure.

And shall endow their women with infidelity!

("Al-lāmubālī" 37-40)

These lines reveal a difference between Donne's Venus and Jahin's Venus. While Donne's Venus refers to the advocates of constancy as "heretics," Jahin's Venus describes them as "ṣābiʾah" ("apostates"). Heretics are those whose opinions are different from the established dogma, but the apostates are those who have abandoned a specific religious belief. The use of the term *ṣābiʾah* in the Arabic poem insinuates that the advocates of constancy are converts; they did not believe in virtuous constancy in the first place or, at least, they were part of the establishment of inconstancy at some point. As a guardian of the establishment of inconstancy, Venus must take action against those heretics or apostates. Heresy is met with a threat in Donne's poem, and apostacy is met with a militant determination in Jahin's poem. Donne emphasizes the pronoun *you* which refers to the heretics, but Jahin stresses the pronoun *I* which refers to Venus. The pronoun *I* is accompanied in the Arabic translation by the emphatic *lām,* which is usually used in oaths, and the heavy emphatic *nūn*; the combination of these linguistic items in "wala ʾurjiʿanna" ("I shall make them return") creates a very powerful divine determination that surpasses Venus's threats in the English text. Donne's Venus *told* the heretics that if they stay true, they will be let down by their lovers' infidelity, but Jahin's Venus solemnly vows to bless her followers with sexual freedom and take revenge on the apostates by making their women unfaithful. However, it should be noted that Venus is not simply warning the heretics in Donne's poem; being a deity, Venus is implicitly determined to take action against the virtuous minority, for they *shall* be true to those who are not. The heretics are destined to go through this pain. Thus, the repression of this idea in the source text is compensated for in the target text. Jahin's explicitation of Venus's determination highlights the inevitability of punishment.

Venus's divine punishment is given an extra force in Arabic through the incorporation of Quranic expressions into the final stanza. Jahin's Venus describes the prophets of constancy as "ẖunnas" (those that diminish). The word *ẖunnas* is mentioned once in the Quran, particularly in "Surat Al-Takwīr" (the Chapter of Shrouding in Darkness), as a description of the planets that disappear or recede in an account of the Day of Judgment and man's resurrection (Asad 917): "So verily I call to witness the Planets— That recede" (*Quran* 81.15). Jahin uses that reference to indicate that those who try to spread the religion of constancy are invisible like demons or devils. This is reinforced by the fact that the word *ẖunnas* is preceded by the word *wasāwis* (temptations or whispers). The phrasing "wasāwis-il- ẖunnas" ("the temptations of invisible demons") in Line 43 is inspired by a famous Quranic verse from "Surat Al-Nās" (the Chapter of Mankind): "(I seek refuge) from the mischief of the whisperer (of evil) who withdraws (after his whisper)" (*Quran* 114.4). The demonization of the advocates of constancy enhances the religious tone and provides Jahin's poem with an important rhetorical device. In Line 46, Jahin includes another important phrase that serves the same purpose: "man dāna bil-ʾiẖlāṣi biʾsa-l-maṣīr" ("those who follow constancy deserve a woeful destiny"). The phrase "biʾsa-l-maṣīr" is associated in the Quran with hell. The image presented in the last lines of Jahin's poem presents a wrathful Venus who is able to reward and punish, and this wrathful image is more explicit in Jahin's poem than in Donne's poem.

The Arabic translation of "The Indifferent" innovatively demonstrates Donne's consummation of the religious and the sexual. Jahin's rendering is, however, more radical

and more scathing than Donne's manifesto. The mystical voice of the first stanza develops into a polemical, preaching voice in the second stanza, while the last two stanzas present the voice of a wrathful deity who vows to punish the demons of constancy and the few dissenters who followed them. The product of Jahin's tactical handling of Donne's text is a mold-breaking poem that unsettles the rigid traditions of Arabic love poetry while at the same time editing Donne's tone in a way that better demonstrates the speaker's missionary voice. This act of translingual editing, a term used by Karen Emmerich, makes the Donnean text anew and opens the scope of Arabic poetry to unconventional treatments of the subject of love.

Conclusion

John Donne's poetry has been disruptive in the context of Renaissance literature. It marks a revolutionary shift from Petrarchan and Elizabethan poetics. The biggest contribution of Donne's lyric poetry is its experimentation with the boundaries between the sacred and the profane and its exploration of the various facets of love and sexuality without subscribing to the sentimental idealization of a distant beloved. Love, for Donne, is humanized and diversified, and the use of religious diction and Christian concepts to describe the most profane situations renews the language and imagery of English love poetry. Donne's poetic identity is forged through his "achievement of a less tangible shape" (Greenblatt 2). The self in Donne's poetry is dynamic and inconstant, and the most distinct aspect of Donne's self is that it constantly defines itself against traditions and against labels.

To translate Donne's lyric poetry into Arabic is to introduce a poet who challenges the traditional split between the sacred and the profane in the Arabic cultural system. The subversion of traditional Arabic poetics in this translation is a refuge from the oppressive order of things that legitimizes itself by drawing upon religious and cultural heritage or a set of absolutist ideologies. The translation does not treat Donne's poetry as a colonial text that needs to be subverted; it is part of Jahin's self-fashioning as a contemporary poet with a globalist, modernist, and revolutionary attitude. The poetic innovation is not isolated from the innovations in fiction, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Just as Jahin and other modern poets undermined the foundations of Arabic poetics, Tawfik also undermined the realistic foundations of Arabic fiction by drawing on an amalgam of utopian, dystopian, and science fiction sources.

The translation is also a perfect manifestation of the kaleidoscopic nature of reception. The incorporation of the Sufi aesthetics of Egyptian, Persian, and Andalusian medieval poets in the translation brings Donne's texts in contact with Arabic texts that, like Donne's poetry, redraw the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, the massive and the tiny, the poetic and the unpoetic. The Sufi corpus and Donne's poetry equally serve as source texts for the Arabic translation. Litvin critiques the tendency of many studies to "assume a simple one-on-one relationship between an "original" text and its (obedient or subversive) rewriter." (20) Jahin, by treating the Sufi texts as sources, pluralizes the original, undermines and destabilizes the very notion of the "source text," and places Donne's English poems in a network of other texts belonging to a different tradition but reflecting the metaphysical underpinnings of Donne's verse. Jahin adapts the

Sufi repertoire to the subject of human love and sexuality. The integration of the human and the divine relocates the religious impulse into the personal realm, reinvents the Sufi tradition, and contributes to the transformation of the language of Arabic love poetry. The mixing of the personal with the impersonal is typical of modernist Arabic poetry, such as the poetry of the Syrian writers Nizar Qabbani and Adonis. The project benefits from Jahin's cosmopolitan education, particularly his formal training in English literature and comparative literature, and from his career as a modernist colloquial poet. Translating Donne's radical poetry is, therefore, treated by Jahin as an opportunity to expand on the contemporary poetics of which he is a representative.

CHAPTER III

THOMAS MORE IN EGYPT: TAWFIK'S *UTOPIA* AND THE PROSPECT OF REVOLUTION

The modern reception of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* in Egypt is marked by two defining moments in Egypt's modern history: the 1952 Revolution—followed by the rise of Gamal Abdel-Nasser's socialism and the subsequent failure of the Nasserist project—and the 2011 Revolution. Angele Botros Samaan's full Arabic translation of More's *Utopia* was published in 1974 at a time when President Sadat was gradually developing his *infitah* (Open Door) policy, bidding an official farewell to President's Nasser's socialism. In 2008, Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's *Yutūbyā* (hereinafter *Utopia*) was published as a futuristic novel that anticipates an uprising against Egypt's capitalist elite and satirizes the pre-2011 socio-political and economic situation by envisioning a dark image of the country in the 2020s.

In Samaan's scholarly translation, the reception of More is governed by an assumption of sameness that conceives a limited audience who is interested in More's work as a literary rendering of Plato's utopian vision. Tawfik's contribution, however, invokes both sameness and difference as operative assumptions, which serves the dual purpose of relating utopianism to the Egyptian context while acknowledging the alterity of the source text. By focusing on Tawfik's adaptive work, I will explain how his re-vision of More's *Utopia* draws on Thomas More's early modern utopian ingredients and Desiderius Erasmus's humanistic ideals to present an Egyptian dystopian portrait. The menacing representation of the Egyptian scene emphasizes a dialectical relationship between utopia and dystopia; Tawfik shows that a change potentially leading to an

improved future may emerge from a corrupt reality. If utopia is a society-busting vision, according to Karl Mannheim, then the revolution envisioned by Tawfik at the end of his novel is the culminating point where the corrupt reality of pre-2011 Egypt could be busted.

Many of the translations of More's *Utopia* use paratextual material to interpret the meaning of utopia according to the recipient culture's context and to define the utopian measures that should be implemented in the recipient society (Razavi and Gholami 19). Samaan's translation focuses on Thomas More's life, his relationships with Henry VIII and Erasmus, the various interpretations of *Utopia*, and the different critical views on the text. The application of utopian measures to the Egyptian context is not emphasized, for the translator stresses the universal ideals of *Utopia* which transcend More's time and place (Samaan 14). The message is reiterated at the end of the Introduction where Samaan states that our age, just like the Renaissance, has factors that might cause favorable or unfavorable changes (78). The translator's focus in the paratextual material on More's life, his humanist project, and the critics' views of More's *Utopia*, alongside with the 78 pages constituting the prefatory and introductory sections, make Samaan's Arabic translation a scholarly work primarily aimed at intellectuals and researchers. Samaan's reluctance to make a clear argument for the relevance of More's *Utopia* to Egypt's sociopolitical realities is another indication of the apparently neutral attitude that Samaan—a professor of English Literature at Cairo University at the time of the publication—wanted to adopt in her translation. This is also reinforced by the fact that in the 1986 Introduction to the second edition, Samaan acknowledges Mahmoud

Manzalaoui's 1975 review of the translation in *Moreana* (an academic journal run by L'Association Amici Thomae Mori). In praise of Samaan's efforts, Manzalaoui describes the translation as "a complete rendering, framed in a scholarly presentation which fulfills the complementary task of placing the work in the context of its times and of the writings of St. Thomas More" (47). Manzalaoui's statement underlines the purpose of Samaan's translation: it is a work that primarily aims to relate *Utopia* to the Renaissance context and in relation to the body of Thomas More's works. Hence, the relevance of More's ideals to the Egyptian society is not the translator's main concern.

While Samaan's translational approach is necessary, it still creates some distance between the common reader and the translated text. Yet, the academic work involved in Samaan's scholarly translation lays down the contextual foundations for what Derek Attridge labels "creative reading" which rediscovers the singularity of the literary work, involves a revision of old positions and habits, and is accompanied by a refashioning usually subdued in the seemingly neutral scholarly rendering (79). This is where the value of Ahmed Khaled Tawfik's *Utopia* lies; it is a work that reactivates the value of More's *Utopia* as a creative, literary text and revitalizes utopian thinking for the young reading public.

Tawfik's *Utopia* is an adaptive work, an event of rewriting that does justice to the singularity of an early modern hypotext (the source text of adaptation or appropriation) while acknowledging the need for an inventive re-vision. The argument that Tawfik's work is adaptive does not simply stem from the borrowing of Thomas More's title, for there is a complex process of inventive rewriting that goes beyond this simple borrowing.

Besides, the word *adaptive* does not imply fidelity to the source or—to be more accurate—to the precursor text; nor does it imply that Tawfik's novel is just a secondary derivative that must be read and appreciated in conjunction or comparison with Thomas More's 1516 *Utopia*. The point that needs to be made here is that Tawfik's novel is both singular and adaptive and that the acknowledgment of adaptation enriches our reading of the novel and provides an interpretive force that might be repressed if we treat it as an independent work exclusively responding to or satirizing the pre-2011 realities of the Egyptian society. The Egyptian novel is adaptive in the sense that it is in conversation with More's work. Tawfik's *Utopia* is charged with a satirical force directed towards both the local reality and More's precursor text.

Tawfik's conversation with More and the utopian/dystopian genre passed through multiple stages before the materialization of *Utopia*. Tawfik had a fictional encounter with Thomas More as a character in the short story "*ʾiʿdām fil-burg*" ["Execution in the Tower"] as part of the series *Fantazya* (*Fantasy*), where a device similar to a time machine is used to go back in time to the year 1535 when More was beheaded on Tower Hill. He also translated George Orwell's dystopian fiction *1984* and H.G. Wells' evolutionary pessimistic novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Tawfik's work as a translator has revitalized the translation field, brought the translation of European literature out of the academic realm, and popularized the reading of translated literature because his translations were part of the series *riwāyāt ʿālamiya lil-geib* (*World Pocket Fiction*) which is run by the Modern Arab Association, an Egyptian publisher that actively published popular Egyptian pocketbooks in the 1980s and the 1990s. His translational

approach tends to establish a personal relationship between the foreign writer, the reader, and the translator by using a narratorial, rather than a scholarly, voice in the paratextual material. While Tawfik's *Utopia* is often read as a popular Egyptian re-vision of Orwell's dystopian narrative in *1984*, it is important to assert the remarkable influence of More's *Utopia* on Tawfik's work. By establishing complex intertextual relationships with More's, Orwell's, and Wells' fictional works, Tawfik brought the conversation over utopianism into the streets and cafés of Cairo and Alexandria.

Satire as intertextual commentary on the hypotext

M. H. Abrams defines satire as "the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (275). The target of satire, according to Abrams, can be an individual, a class, an institution, a nation, or the entire humankind. In More's *Utopia* and Tawfik's novel, the target of satire is the society—the early modern English in More and the pre-2011 Egyptian society in Tawfik. Satire can also involve an intertextual dialogue with another text, whether the tool is laughter or a commentary that arouses the readers' scorn of or doubt about the hypotheses made in the satirized text. Commentary is an adaptive technique that speaks to the politics of the hypotext through addition, explication, or alteration (Sanders 21). Commentary can serve as an indirect critique of the hypotext as well. The starting point of examining the relationship between More's *Utopi*a and Tawfik's *Utopia* is to address the way Tawfik's hypertext (the target text of adaptation or appropriation) critiques and satirizes More's text.

Tawfik's 2008 *Utopia* presents a portrait of a luxurious community on Egypt's North Coast by the Mediterranean Sea. The community is isolated from the rest of Egypt but not isolated from the world. Those who inhabit other parts of Egypt are called "the Others" by the Utopians, and the land of the Others is plagued by vice, chaos, and extreme poverty. In the eyes of the Utopians, they live in an artificial paradise where all their needs are fulfilled. It is made clear throughout the novel that this utopia was established on capitalist ideals, unlike the utopia described by Raphael Hythloday in More's book. A common feature of both utopias, however, is that they both rely on a limited number of laws, but the law in the Egyptian utopia is customary and is centered around the protection of the inhabitants' private property. In a community of capitalists, the Others are used as cheap labor, while the Utopians enjoy their luxurious life. But the inhabitants of the artificial paradise are not impervious to natural emotional states, like boredom:

> What can you do in this artificial paradise? You sleep, you take drugs, you eat until food makes you sick, you vomit until you can recover the enjoyment of eating, you have sex (it's weird that you notice how boredom makes your sexual behavior aggressive and sadistic). If you knew another way for a person to live his life, I'd be happy if you could tell me about it. (Rossetti 9)

The Utopian narrator (who is also the protagonist) ponders over his boredom in a monologue that assumes an imaginary audience from Utopia. Chip Rossetti's English translation of Tawfik's text reveals the value of this monologue; the imaginary audience/interlocutor, suggested by the pronoun *you* and the interrogative, indicates that

something is shared between the speaker and the imagined hearer. The emotional or mental state is shared by all those who belong to the artificial paradise. In fact, it is boredom that complicates the plot. A static situation, even if the framework is utopian, is not always sustainable, for a natural quest for change, dynamism, or new experiences is expected to arise. An analogy with other utopias is much needed here. If the Garden of Eden was the first utopia, it was Adam's curiosity and his quest for a new experience that led him to disobey God, eat the forbidden fruit, and, hence, lose paradise.

The turning point in Tawfik's narrative is when the Utopian protagonist decides to amuse himself by practicing *Sayd Al-Aghyar* (hunting the Others). The structure of the novel rests on the image of hunting. The novel is divided into five sections: three sections are titled *Al-Sayyad* (The Hunter) and two are titled *Al-Farisa* (The Prey). The three sections titled "the Hunter" or "the Predator," in Rossetti's translation, are told from the point of view of the Utopian Hunter, and the other two are told from the point of view of Gaber, the Prey who lives in the land of the Others. Tension escalates when the Hunter leaves Utopia to look for prey and returns to his community with a souvenir—a part of the prey's flesh or one of the prey's organs. The rising action emerges from the subsequent confrontation between the Prey (Gaber) and the Utopian Hunter—whose name is undisclosed, but under pressure from the Others he says his name is Alaa although nothing testifies that this is his real name. After a life-threatening adventure in the land of the Others, the Hunter returns to Utopia with the help of the Prey (Gaber), but the former kidnaps the latter on the way back to Utopia, kills him, and takes his hand as a souvenir. As a reaction to this horrifying incident, a thug lays down a plot to cut fuel

supply to Utopia, the Others march towards Utopia, and the novel ends with a massive clash between the Utopians and the Others.

Tawfik's narrative comments on More's *Utopia* by highlighting inherent problems in the image drawn by More. The major problem has to do with Northrop Frye's description of utopia as a "final or definitive social ideal . . . a static society [with] built-in safeguards against radical alteration of the structure." (329) The analogy with Adam's Fall makes these built-in safeguards in-definitive. Even if the system is perfectly set up, human nature is not equipped to resist temptation or curiosity. A static utopia is, thus, an absurd state that could be subverted from within. The survival of the utopia of Thomas More contradicts the logic that caused Adam's Fall and the loss of paradise. While the Egyptian utopia is not painted as a universally ideal community and is in fact a self-interested utopia that works exclusively for its inhabitants, it is destined to fall despite the apparent safeguards. These safeguards are represented in the advanced security system, the recruitment of US marines, the isolation from the Others, and other drastic measures taken by the Utopians to preserve their "ideal" community.

The collapse of the utopian project is caused by some of the ingredients that make up the utopian formula: freedom, homogeneity, and luxury. These Utopians do not need the world of the Others, but they find in it the amusement they miss. The reason for entering the world of the Others is simply the Utopians' boredom. The world is not exotic enough, for they have tried everything like the Roman emperors (Tawfik 20). But the world of the Others is like the forbidden fruit that they need to experience. The basic problem with More's Utopia is that it assumes that a perfect state is appealing to

everyone or is a universal ideal that cannot be manipulated for the interests of a specific group of people. Tawfik's Utopia reveals that the ideal state is relative; capitalists can organize their own utopias as well. But most importantly, a utopia cannot be a static state that stands steadfast against human curiosity, radical changes, destructive ideas, or even alternative utopian visions. Therefore, Tawfik's Utopia is an adaptive work that does not only satirize the social conditions in Egypt before the 2011 uprising, but also satirizes the kind of utopia described by More's Hythloday.

However, it is important to consider the difference between More's *Utopia* and Tawfik's *Utopia* in terms of audience, which, in turn, accounts for the difference in vision. Tawfik's critique of More's static utopia is also a critique of More's method of social satire—a method that is tied to the early modern audience his work targets. More's satire of early modern Europe has reformational purposes that mirror the principles of Erasmian humanism which draws on Christianity and earlier humanistic thought. Reform in Erasmian humanism and in More's *Utopia* is a top-down process that starts with kings and princes. This is consistent with the humanistic focus on the education of princes, manifested, for example, in *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Education of a Christian Prince* by Desiderius Erasmus, and Juan Luis Vives's *On Concord and Discord in Humankind*—despite the remarkable differences between them. The emphasis on princes as the focal point of social and political change also follows the Christian theology of Saint Augustine, according to which it is sin that ended the state of nature and it is the prince's role to work towards restoring man to the natural state of harmony (Elena 205-206). Erasmus's "Oration on the Pursuit of Virtue" sets an example that More

follows: “wise men showed their princes a sort of image of the perfect prince, almost as though it were a painting on canvas . . . in order that the princes could examine themselves against the model offered and admit to themselves in the privacy of their thoughts how far they fell short of the standard of the prince being praised” (3). The model advocated by Erasmus needs to be as static as a “standard” or “a painting on a canvass.” It is a model that emphasizes the product more than it explores the process and serves as a benchmark for kings and princes in the manner we see in More’s *Utopia*.

Thus, More’s text does not describe the establishment of an ideal state as much as it is meant to instruct kings and princes, and this is why a significant part of Book 1 discusses the utility of counseling kings. More’s *Utopia* replaces counseling with showing in Book 2 in the manner described in Erasmus’s oration. It is a form of criticism or advice given in a flattering way. But, since the target audience of Tawfik’s fiction is the contemporary common reader, the youth, or the ruled rather than the ruler, it makes sense that his focus is not on some static ideal that can be treated as a reference or on a perfect hypothesis against which life is tested. Accordingly, Tawfik emphasizes the need for an immediate, dynamic, and radical change represented in an uprising that busts the established social structure.

Double potentiality and the flipped utopia

Evanir Pavloski’s analysis of Monteiro Lobato’s *The Racial Shock* sheds light on the irony of contiguity in the Brazilian novel: “an idealistic feature is always confronted by its own opposite” (Pavloski 80-81). There is always some sort of “double potentiality” that accompanies utopianism (Pavloski 81). Double potentiality is a feature of More’s

Utopia as well, for the book ends with a reservation on the part of More's persona—a reservation declared to the audience but not to Hythloday. More refuses to close the debate with Hythloday but postpones his further investigation of the matters raised in Hythloday's account of the island of Utopia to sometime later. The lack of closure raises questions, not only about the reliability of Hythloday's account, but also about the "utopianism" of the island of Utopia. Hanan Yoran explains that More presents the Utopian order as ideal but allows unfavorable institutions and practices to exist in this ideal social order (146). Most importantly, according to Yoran, the social order of Utopia subverts some of the tenets of humanism, particularly the identity of the autonomous universal intellectual who is a citizen of the Republic of Letters and is detached from concrete social and political reality (146). The image of the universal intellectual (the citizen of the world) internally contradicts Desiderius Erasmus's promotion of a life of learning oriented towards social and religious reform. Due to this inherent contradiction, translating the ideals of Erasmian humanism into concrete social reality has a double potentiality that leaves its imprint on More's *Utopia*. Thomas More, Yoran argues, "constructed an ideal Erasmian social order out of the Republic of Letters. But since his privileged perspective does not exist in humanist discourse, Utopia cannot sustain its explicit argumentation. Thus, what is presented as a utopia is often closer to being a dystopia" (169). The detached Morean intellectual is an inherent problematic that jeopardizes the sustainability of the ideal state and might transmute it into its opposite.

But if utopia has this double potentiality, so is dystopia. The dystopia portrayed in Tawfik's satirical novel is a pre-condition for the strife for utopia, for we are presented

with an apocalyptic scenario and left with the possibility of a change. Like More, Tawfik did not include a closure; an uprising is underway, but the outcomes are left open. In the process of creating the pre-condition, Tawfik not only adapts More's *Utopia* to the Egyptian context, but also turns More's utopia, as a state, upside down. In the year 2023, the Egyptian society is envisioned by Tawfik as sharply divided into two classes: the rich who live in their Utopia by the North Coast and the poor who live in Cairo and other parts of Egypt. The artificial community is advanced, while the original sites of Egypt's cultural heritage have fallen into chaos, poverty, and ruin. The picture of the real Egypt, its ancient cities, and its markers of modernity is akin to a picture of a wasteland. The Utopians are a group of capitalists who managed, according to the Utopian Hunter, to accumulate wealth and escaped to the North Coast to establish their well-protected Utopia. On the other hand, the non-Utopians (the Others) are those who used to work for the government and waited in queues to be paid and are now unemployed or work as laborers in Utopia (Tawfik 164).

The Hunter's reading of the historical process that led to the present situation implies a reductive play on the hearer's distorted memory. In fact, this is how fake history is circulated. Jorge Bastos Da Silva points out that

> the distortion of memory is a smoke screen that postulates a replacement historical teleology: whether or not they palpably deviate from what happened, officially sanctioned truths reveal what had to happen. Indoctrination relies on the illusion of infallible historical causation. Fake history is justified history. The provision of a self-consistent story with the appearance of preordained necessity

> identifies what supposedly happened with what was supposed to happen. By a sort of retrospective extrapolation, the present is seen as an unavoidable, and therefore an incontrovertible, outcome of the past. (321)

The Hunter's flipped, but justified, version of history suggests that the Others' conditions are irrevocable and are the Others' fault. He tells Safiya that the Others are suffering because they did not understand the rules of the game earlier, and the Utopians live in their advanced community because in the past they managed to predict the future and seized the available opportunities. Obviously, the Hunter's statement holds the Others responsible for their suffering, but it violates the Gricean maxim of quality (truth) in pragmatics, because the Hunter himself ironically acknowledges that the Utopians made their wealth out of the Others' flesh (Tawfik 21). He thus tells Safiya what he believes to be false. But what he says is not completely false or illogical, for it is true that the Utopians understood the game and seized opportunities while the Others did not.

The contrast between the Utopians and the Others is reinforced by the repetition of lines from Abdel-Rahman Al-Abnudi's poem "*Ahzan Adiya*" ("Usual Sorrows"), translated by Rossetti as follows:

> We are two peoples . . . two peoples . . . two peoples
> Look where the first is, and where's the other
> Draw the line between them, brother
> You sold the land with plough and axe—on her people's backs
> Before the eyes of the world . . . (119)

Al-Abnudi's poem captures the socioeconomic realities of Egypt before 2011 and highlights the satirical force of Tawfik's *Utopia*, but deep below the segregation described in the poem is an ironic unity exposed by the narrative. The Utopians and the Others are united by their violence, their dehumanization, as noted by Delphine Pagès-El Karoui, as well as by their indulgence in sex and drugs; Utopians consume *phlogistine* (a novum made up by Tawfik) and other luxurious drugs, whereas the Others consume weed and other cheap options. The common indulgence in drugs and sensuous pleasures is symbolic of the underlying crisis of consciousness that unites the Utopians and the Others; both sides sit in a dark chamber and see things flipped on their head in a manner similar to Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' *camera obscura*. By flipping More's ideal social order while maintaining the name, Tawfik is satirizing a situation that is nothing but a distorted reality, mastered by the Utopians and envied by the Others. To use Mannheim's outline of the relationship between ideology and utopia, the picture drawn by Tawfik is closer to an ideological scenario that attempts to maintain a dysfunctional situation. While utopia is a type of "reality-transcendence" oriented towards the realization of the unfulfilled, ideology is a type of reality-transcendence oriented towards the preservation of the outdated (Mannheim 236).

The ideology of the utopians infiltrates the entire social fabric which is already disintegrating. The Utopians maintain their power and reinforce the functioning of their ideology through the effect of the concrete elements that make their community a representation of power. Wealth, prosperity, and security contribute to the creation of what Robert Appelbaum describes as "the look of power" (35). A hegemonic effect is

unconsciously created in the mind of the Others when they look at these elements. It is through these elements, among others, that the Utopians' power is made present, visible, and apprehended. The Utopian gaze also exercises this power by the agency of naming which labels non-Utopian Egyptians as "the Others" and by the active act of looking at the Others as inferior, exotic animals that may be hunted for amusement and at their organs as potential souvenirs. The Others' bodies are objectified by the Utopian gaze, which translates into an exercise and assertion of the Utopians' power over the Others. The generation of the look of power, in its passive and active senses, is crucial for the functioning of ideology and the maintenance of order—something that is manifested in the Others' inaction and their acceptance of the status quo.

The only person who is considering change is Abdel-Zaher who wants to orchestrate the carjacking of the trucks that provide Utopia with *biroil*, a substance that, in the fictional world of the novel, was discovered by American scientists in 2010 and was used as a replacement of petroleum. The reader is allowed by Tawfik to see Abdel-Zaher from Gaber's point of view, which accordingly underscores the contrast between Gaber and Abdel-Zaher. Abdel-Zaher, according to Gaber, is "baltagi lakinahu gada'" ("a thug, but he was a good guy") (Tawfik 67). Gaber describes Abdel-Zaher's desires as nothing but mental masturbation: "huwa lam yaf'al shay'an... lan yaf'al shay'an" ("he hadn't done anything and won't do anything at all") (Tawfik 67). The sexual terms used by Gaber to describe Abdel-Zaher's intents echo Naguib Mahfouz's and Gamal Al-Ghitani's literary critiques of President Sadat's Open-Door policy which recurringly focus on the failure of desire under capitalism (Elmarsafy 80). In fact, it is Abdel-Zaher's

mental masturbation, his fantasies, his insane obsession that would qualify him as a true utopian. His ability to desire something opens up the possibility for political action. Mannheim defines the term *utopian* as “any process of thought which receives its impetus not from the direct force of social reality but from concepts, such as symbols, fantasies, dreams, ideas and the like” (201). In a similar vein, Frederic Jameson puts forth that Utopians “have always been maniacs and oddballs: a deformation readily enough explained by the fallen societies in which they had to fulfill their vocation” (10). Hence, Abdel-Zaher’s dream, undervalued by Gaber as an insane obsession, registers the dark reality of the failed intellectual as well as the collective recognition that dream is lacking.

Society is so deformed that a thug is the only maniac who is still capable of dreaming and desiring. Unlike Abdel-Zaher, Gaber is presented by Tawfik as an intellectual who is unable to dream: “lakinahu la yatahamalil hayah bila ahlam . . . faqat fi sinnil ‘shreen adraktul haqiqal qasiya, wa hiya ?nna ‘alayal ?an ?ahya bila ahlam” (“no one can live without a dream . . . But by the age of twenty, I realized I have to live without a dream”) (69). No wonder then that Gaber has lost his cornea in an old fight. The physical loss parallels the psychological loss; vision is partly lost, and so is the utopian vision. Gaber is unable to have a dream or to take action but projects his inability on Abdel-Zaher. Gaber has also become so weak, so accustomed to inaction, and so prone to non-confrontation that he ran away from a fight once he realized his side is about to lose (Tawfik 78). He laments the past, despises the present, and does not contemplate the future. Throughout the novel, we see Gaber as a prey, not only in the

literal sense but also in the ideological sense, for a dominant ideology, based on Mannheim's views, wipes out the future within which it has no place.

Gaber's dismissal of Abdel-Zaher's plans, or rather his aspirations, is an indication of the infiltration of the utopian ideology outside of Utopia. This is reinforced by Gaber's remark that Utopians are the ones who decide the meaning of corruption and who the corrupt are (Tawfik 76). Ironically, Gaber is an avid reader and is undeniably more educated and cultured than Abdel-Zaher. But Gaber, in the eyes of the Utopian Hunter is bombastic and is incapable of doing anything. Abdel-Zaher, the noble thug, ends up implementing his plan after the Utopian Hunter, for the sheer fun of it, has killed Gaber and taken his hand as a souvenir. What Gaber dismissed as mental masturbation earlier in the novel turns into a revolutionary attempt, potentially paving the way for the desired utopian transformation that targets the outdated reality. The path to utopia suggested by Tawfik is not dependent on an intellectual like Gaber, a great leader like Augustus in Horace's poetry, or a wise autocrat like Utopus in Thomas More's *Utopia*. Lyman Tower Sargent explains that utopian writers often assume that the path to utopia is revolution, whereas others assume evolution. Sargent adds that "[s]ome prescribe specific political actions, but many depend on a "great man," or in a few cases a "great woman," to bring about the desired result" (580). The oxymoronic image of the good thug who dreams of change and takes the initiative to make it happen challenges the assumptions of utopian writers. It rather invokes the *futuwwa* (the chivalrous thug) image which was employed in Naguib Mahfouz's realistic novels to ponder, as noted by Nathaniel Greenberg, over the dynamics of revolution and social change in Egypt. The Nobel

laureate's *futuwwa* is transposed by Tawfik into the good thug who emerges as a social justice warrior by action rather than by rhetorical or intellectual faculties. At a time when the "possibility of elementary survival" is threatened, some radical action is inevitable (van Ruler and Sissa 148). Three years after the publication of Tawfik's *Utopia*, thugs were an active force in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and in the so-called counter-revolution.

Abdel-Zaher's carjacking of the biroil trucks does not make him the focus of the narrative at the end of Tawfik's novel. The incident itself is not told from Abdel-Zaher's point of view. It is true that Abdel-Zaher is the one who orchestrated the carjacking, but the narrative focuses on the Others' march towards Utopia and the Utopians' reaction to the news and to the approaching masses. This narrative strategy emphasizes the collective rather than the individual and reminds the reader that the good thug is a warrior but is not necessarily a heroic leader who is independent of the historical process. With reference to utopia and wish-fulfilment, Mannheim warns that the creative power of the individual cannot be denied, but we must not

> overestimate the significance of the prominence of the individual in relation to the collectivity as we have been accustomed to do ever since the Renaissance. Since that time the contribution of the individual mind stands out relatively when set over against the role which it played in the Middle Ages or in Oriental cultures, but its significance is not absolute. (207)

Thus, Tawfik's narrative anticipates an Egyptian Revolution that is not centered around a single charismatic figure; it presents a flipped re-vision of More's narrative, where a potentially utopian mass movement emerges from a dystopian scenario.

The dilemma of the dystopian intellectual

Learning in *Utopia* as well as in Erasmian humanism is seen as crucial for the moralistic education of the people of Utopia and for the overall prosperity of the utopian society. Raphael Hythloday tells Thomas More and Peter Giles in Book 1 that

> some twelve hundred years ago a ship was driven to Utopia by a storm and shipwrecked there. Some Romans and Egyptians were cast upon the shore and never left there again. Notice how their diligence turned this single occasion to their advantage. There was no useful skill in the whole Roman empire which they did not learn from the explanations of the strangers or did not manage to discover from the hints and clues they were given. (More 49)

More's Utopians spend their leisure time on intellectual activities although very few of them end up as full-time scholars. Happiness, for the Utopians, "consists not in every sort of pleasure but in pleasure that is good and honorable, for they believe that our nature is drawn to pleasure as the highest good by virtue itself" (More 82). Erasmus reconceptualized Epicureanism, presenting it in *Paraclesis* as a philosophy that "teaches that nothing in life can be pleasing to humans, unless it is consistent with a conscience free of guilt" (qtd. in Bietenholz 135). This revisionist approach reconciles pleasure with virtue and presents intellectual pleasure as a virtuous and desired activity if it serves social reform.

The humanistic value of education, promoted by Erasmus and More and implemented by More's Utopians, is revised in Tawfik's adaptation in multiple ways. The Hunter and the Prey are both avid readers. This is manifested in their numerous references to Egypt's history, Roman history, Greek mythology, and the French Revolution. Although they both are cultured, they are unable to see beyond their respective lives which have shaped their consciousness. Their views are distorted by prejudice and there is not a chance for them to engage in a transformative dialogue. The Hunter blatantly states that education is not a religion that can bring hearts together; it is rather a means of segregation, for it allows the wretched to see what they have missed and allows the privileged to see what they might lose (Tawfik 109). In the Hunter's opinion, a thinking sheep is dangerous to themselves and to the others (Tawfik 109). Tawfik's game of flipping all that is utopian and humanistic on its head is again transparent. If Erasmian humanism suggests that learning is a unifying power as manifested in the identity of the universal intellectual, the ruptured social structure of Tawfik's Utopia makes learning a dangerous activity.

The question raised by Tawfik is: what is the humanistic value of education if the social order is malfunctioning, and the material conditions are unfair? From Raphael's Hythloday's perspective, the abolition of money and private property is the primary foundation of the Utopian commonwealth, and education is a complementary asset. If education is not at the service of the common good, it could be counterproductive, for the elimination of private property, which accordingly helps regulate human pride, is the main principle upon which the utopia he described is built. Education, Tawfik's novel

shows, is not sufficient and is not the point of departure, for want and avarice hinder the prominence of reason and virtue. Since the system is already broken, then struggle, Tawfik implies, is necessary. But struggle is "inevitably violent [and] messy" and intellectuals need to "give up their self-image as some kind of elite" (Campbell 552). Gaber, the secluded intellectual, is not able to participate in social reform, not only because he cannot influence the Others to seek learning, but because he does not have the material means. Being a good thug (that is, a chivalrous criminal) and driven by what is deemed by Gaber as mere fantasies, Abdel-Zaher is able to lay down a criminal, but noble, scheme that makes the lack of material means less of a problem.

In addition, the Hunter—who is more cultured than his fellow utopians and is thus theoretically equipped to contribute to social reform—is blinded by his narcissism, sociopathy, and deep-seated fear. In fact, the Hunter acknowledges that there is a huge social disorder, but he believes this disorder has to be preserved for fear that the Utopians will lose everything (Tawfik 16). He is averse to change although he is aware of the need for it and is not in complete harmony with reality. Such aversion emerges from pride and greed. It is pride, coupled with the possession of private property, that makes the realization of the Utopian commonwealth impossible, according to Hythloday:

> Pride measures prosperity not by her own advantages but by the disadvantages of others. She would not even wish to be a goddess unless there were some wretches left whom she could order about and lord it over, whose misery would make her happiness seem all the more extraordinary, whose poverty can be tormented and exacerbated by a display of her wealth. This infernal serpent, pervading the

> human heart, keeps men from reforming their lives, holding them back like a suckfish. (More 133)

Hythloday's statement at the end of his tale is also necessary for elaborating on another problem associated with intellectualism in Tawfik's *Utopia*. The failure of the intellectual in Tawfik's *Utopia* cannot be attributed only to greed but also to pride. In fact, learning also deviates from its ideal course when it is tarnished by pride, the ultimate vice of early modern Europe and the most corrupting sin that poisons human hearts. Pride, according to Jameson, lies in the psychic realm of the self; in More's text, it is not corrected or ruled out by egalitarianism but is governed by it in the social realm (40). Learning, driven by a prideful pursuit of knowledge in the psychic realm, needs to move to the social realm by having a social utility. The debate in Book 1 of *Utopia* between More and Hythloday over public service and the utility of philosophy echoes the conceptualization of learning as a purposeful activity in Erasmian humanism. Erasmian humanists, including More himself, saw that learning is purposeful if it is translated into social and theological reform. John C. Olin states that Erasmus bridged the gap between his academic pursuits and the reform of Christendom. In Erasmus's view, "[s]cholarship, classical, scriptural, and patristic, was not to be an end in itself but was to conduct men to a better life. Learning was to lead to virtue, scholarship to God" (Olin 7). The reconciliation of the Christian and the classical posits that pagan philosophers, like Aristotle, Plato, and Seneca, offer good moral lessons. Hence, the tenets of Erasmian humanism are the Scriptures and the intellectual heritage of Greece and Rome, and these tenets should contribute to the reformation of the society. The purposefulness of learning

is manifested in Hythloday's description of the Utopians as curious people who use whatever they learn to make life more convenient: "And so the natural talent of the Utopians, trained by study, is marvelously effective in inventing techniques which make some contribution to a comfortable life" (More 94). However, this purposefulness is undermined or almost missing in Tawfik's Utopia.

The Hunter brags about the fact that he is more enlightened than his fellow Utopians and goes as far as trading drugs for books. He is keen on reading even though he claims that nothing new or useful could be gained from books (Tawfik 16). Likewise, Gaber's intellectualism is a means for him to assert some sort of superiority over the Others and over the Hunter throughout the course of their interactions. This is partly why he dismisses Abdel-Zaher's aspirations as mental masturbation that will never crystallize into concrete action. Gaber laments that he has told the Others about the theories of Thomas Robert Malthus and Gamal Hemdan and the prophecies of George Orwell and H.G. Wells, but they never listened. Hence, he pities the Others and gloats over their misfortune at the same time (Tawfik 84). While Gaber can be seen as an intellectual let down by his ignorant community, his statement indicates a rhetorical failure stemming from a sense of superiority coupled with detached impracticality. Gaber embodies the image of the intellectual who is neither able to communicate with his fellow Others nor able to make his knowledge applicable to concrete realities. Besides, Gaber only describes the social ills and shares theories and literary prophecies with the Others but never suggests a practical corrective. At the root of Gaber's failure and the Hunter's

sociopathy lies a sense of superiority and a sense of pride that makes their knowledge fall short of fulfilling the ideal of a purposeful learning geared towards social reform.

The note made by the Hunter that *thaqafa* (culture, education, or enlightenment) is not a religion that brings hearts together implies a critique of More's utopian ideals which are founded on Erasmus's humanism. The Hunter's statement echoes Yoran's examination of the mismatch between the Utopians' active life in More's book and the ideal of the universal intellectual as a member of a community of fellow intellectuals in *respublica literaria*. As mentioned before, Yoran argues that the universal intellectual is a citizen of the humanist Republic of Letters, distanced from the concrete realities of everyday life, and more in touch with their intellectual pursuits.

It could be argued, however, that the universal intellectual's distance is not a complete withdrawal from an active life. Kaarlo Havu explains that "the Erasmian Republic has primarily been portrayed as a place of retreat from the world of *negotium* to a learned community where arts and virtue could be cultivated in the company of like-minded scholars" (790). The word *retreat* is key here, for it implies a step back, a reaction to the issues existent in an active life, and a period of quiet and seclusion; it is an introspective act of self-transformation that is understood as an initial step towards social reform and engagement in *negotium*. The idea of a retreat is embodied in More's *Utopia*, for the Utopians spend their leisure time in intellectual activities:

> The intervals between work, meals, and sleep they are allowed to spend however they like, provided that the time they have free from work is not wasted in debauchery and idleness but spent well in some other pursuit, according to their

> preference. Many devote these intervals to intellectual activities. For every day they have regular lectures in the hours before dawn; attendance is required only from those who have been specially chosen to devote themselves to learning. But a great number of men, and also women, from all orders of society flock to hear these lectures, some one sort, some another, as each is naturally inclined. (More 61-62)

Furthermore, in the Commonwealth of Utopia, a foreign intellectual is specially welcomed. Hythloday says, "Any sightseers who visit them are especially welcome if they are recommended by unusual intellectual gifts or knowledge of many lands gained by traveling widely (and for that reason they welcomed us warmly when we landed), for they are eager to learn what is happening everywhere in the world" (More 95). The Utopians' eagerness for learning makes them establish an immediate bond with any intellectual from any part of the world, and this is suggestive of the form of intellectual cosmopolitanism advocated by Erasmus's Republic of Letters.

But whether the Republic of Letters is a complete resignation from an active life or a period of temporary retreat, the very idea of a universal intellectual bond is made absurd in Tawfik's *Utopia*. *Thaqafa*, the Hunter argues, is neither a universal religion nor a locus of spiritual retreat. It does not create a bond with like-minded intellectuals or create a chance for introspection and self-transformation. In addition, Gaber compares reading to the effect of drugs; it is an intoxicating retreat from consciousness, and not a productive distance from an active life because an active life is non-existent in the first

place, neither in Utopia nor in the land of the Others. Reading is presented as a tool that numbs the mind of the bored Utopian hunter and the doomed Egyptian prey alike.

The purposefulness of learning that underpins Erasmian humanism is lost in the Egyptian neoliberal Utopia. Utopians, according to the Hunter, are like Roman emperors who tried everything, knew everything, and lost their passion for learning (Tawfik 20). The dark analogy invokes Juvenal's *Satires* which criticize many post-Augustan Roman emperors who, having reached the peak of imperial glory following Augustus' utopia/golden age, indulged in sadistic pleasures and self-aggrandizement in a nightmare that envisions a dystopian collapse (Bond 48). For the Others, the intellectual is isolated in a dystopian bubble of letters because of his cynicism and because a spiritual, self-transformative retreat is not possible. There is no escape for Gaber from the dominant Utopian ideology that attempts to preserve a rotten reality. Even in his own bubble he is hunted by the Utopians who want to capture him for their own sadistic pleasure. Intellectualism is a form of escapism that offers nothing but seclusion and estrangement. Again, Tawfik shows that humanistic ideals do not function if the vices of private property and pride are present in the social order.

The transposition of the image of the universal intellectual, represented in Erasmus, More, Hythloday, and the citizens of More's Utopian commonwealth, into the image of the secluded, cynical intellectual in the Egyptian Utopia does not imply that the gated community of Utopia is isolationistic or monocultural. Tawfik attributes some form of cosmopolitanism to the Utopians. The neoliberal Utopia is a place where identities dissolve in a multicultural whole. It is a place where everyone identifies as Utopian, even

the Americans and the Israelis who live and work in the community (Tawfik 15). There is also an area that has multiple mosques, churches, and synagogues. At face value, Utopia is an ideal state founded on tolerance and multiculturalism. But Tawfik's adaptive approach sets a utopian façade suggesting sameness or analogy to many philosophical and literary utopias, but behind the façade lie the satirical departures. It is worth mentioning here that Utopia is neither an early modern commonwealth founded on law and united by a relational obligation towards the common good, nor a typical modern nation-state bound by nationalistic ideals. It is a place where politics is dead, and money rules in a situation similar to the pre-2011 system where capital is espoused to political power. Law is unneeded, since all the inhabitants are "ʾusra wāḥida" ("one family") that settles their conflicts in customary sessions (Tawfik 23). It is a community of privileged people who reduce common good to the protection of borders and private property and identify as Utopians and not as Egyptians. The identification suggests something beyond national, ethnic, religious, or linguistic proportions. Yet, the idealistic identification is a façade for a meaningless vacuum.

On his way back from the land of the Others to Utopia, the Hunter refers to Utopia as his homeland but adds that he does not belong to a place, to a group, or to some ideal (Tawfik 170). The first part of the oxymoron arises from fear, anxiety, and yearning for the apparent certainty of Utopia; he desperately wants to return to his haven in Utopia after a life-threatening adventure in Cairo. But he does not really belong to Utopia as a place, as a nation, or as an idea. He is a citizen of nowhere but Utopian only by birth as he noted. In Utopia, there is no distinction based on gender or ethnicity, for luxury and

boredom make all the residents look the same (Tawfik 15). Israelis work in the gated community, and American marines protect it from the Others.

In More's *Utopia*, the figure of Raphael Hythloday is inspired by Erasmus' cosmopolitanism, an early modern form of cosmopolitanism conceived as "a transnational republic of letters, a virtual scholarly community extending across political, cultural and linguistic borders" (Penman 1). Although Erasmus's cosmopolitanism is not completely secular and cannot be defined as synonymous with the modern understanding of cosmopolitanism as postulated by Leigh Penman, it still offers a valid framework for analyzing the case of the Egyptian Utopia. The form of cosmopolitanism we have in Tawfik's Utopia—if we assume that the term *cosmopolitanism* is an accurate label in this case—is neither scholarly nor spiritual; it is materialistic, debased, and devoid of a bonding ideal, which befits the impending apocalypse. More's Utopians learn Greek, seen as a scholarly language highly respected by Hythloday and More, while the Hunter learns to speak to the American marine in a Southern American accent and to use a lot of profane English words. The analogy in terms of linguistic faculties involves a contrast between advancement and debasement. In addition, like the idea of utopia, which is always faced with its own opposite, cosmopolitanism is faced with estrangement or a sense of non-belonging.

If Erasmus is a citizen of the world, the Hunter is a citizen of nowhere—ironically this is the literal meaning of the word *utopia*. The community of Utopia is the place where the Utopians, regardless of their ethnic background, feel at home because, thanks to the American marines, it is seemingly immune to the dangers of the Others. The

community also offers them a luxurious, indulgent life they cannot afford to lose. Yet, it is also where they feel bored and empty, hence the sense of estrangement. The meaningfulness offered by the Erasmian form of cosmopolitanism or otherwise by patriotism is missing in the transnational community of the Egyptian capitalistic Utopia. This manifests the relationship of sameness and difference between the Egyptian adaptation and More's hypotext. Tawfik's hypertext uses the ideals of intellectualism, purposeful learning, and cosmopolitanism which form some of the ingredients of Erasmus's and More's humanism to portray the opposite, dystopian side of these "ideals."

The problems of civil religion

Sir Thomas More devotes an entire chapter of Book 2 to the description of religious diversity of the Utopians, the evolution of their religious beliefs, and the civic organization of religion in their commonwealth. Hythloday tells More that before Utopus arrived in Utopia, people were bitterly divided over religious matters, which gave him the opportunity to conquer the island. After Utopus had obtained victory, "he decreed first of all that everyone could practice the religion of his choice and could also strive to convert others to it, but only so long as he advocated it calmly and moderately with rational arguments." (More 118) Hythloday adds that Utopus, despite having let everyone to choose their own religious beliefs, "solemnly and strictly forbade that anyone should sink so far below the dignity of human nature as to think that the soul dies with the body or that the world is ruled by mere chance and not by providence." (More 119) Utopus' legislations are significant in various ways. First, they echo Erasmus's reception of the

Epicurean philosophy; while Erasmus valued the basic Epicurean notions of pleasure and free will, he did not subscribe to the Epicureans' interest in atomism, their denial of soul immortality, and, of course, their skepticism about divine providence (Bietenholz 139). Second, Utopus' restrictions on religious beliefs serve the purpose of protecting the moral underpinnings of the social order; that is, it serves a secular function.

Those who doubt the afterlife, Hythloday explains, are only driven in their social life by the fear of law, but public laws can always be evaded or violated. The hope in reward and the fear of punishment in the afterlife, in addition to the belief that the world was not created by chance, impose a moral and civil obligation on people to follow the laws more strictly. Those who believe that the soul is immortal are not punished or forced to change their beliefs in public, however; they are only looked down on and are not assigned any public office (More 119). The association of the religious with the social in More's *Utopia* hints, again, at the principles of Erasmian humanism which intertwine theological reform with social reform. However, it is important to remember that the congruence between private faith and the organizational goals of the commonwealth is an early modern ideal that is not necessarily translatable across time and place. That is to say, the assumption that the belief in divine providence will act as a social safeguard against chaos is typical of the time of Erasmus and More but not necessarily workable for our post-secular times.

But deeper below the surface, there is another important assumption: freedom always exists in an *organizing* framework. To elaborate, Robert M. Adams points out that "an organized Utopia" is characterized by "an inner uniformity" strived after by the

organizing mentality, but "[p]ower to organize is, inevitably, power to repress" (213). More's utopian system where divine providence serves a civil function anticipates Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of *civil religion* which was proposed in *The Social Contract*. Civil religion is a set of "sentiments of sociability" which function as a precondition for good citizenship where the disbelief in them is punishable by law (Rousseau 123). If freedom and tolerance are utopian ideals, some degree of restraint is necessary for the organization of the utopian civil order as we see in Utopus' legislation on those who deny divine providence.

But while religion serves the common good of the island of Utopia, it acts in Tawfik's fictional world as a counterproductive tool that magnifies the social rupture. Typical of Tawfik's adaptive strategy, he maintains a relationship of sameness with More's text, but the inner logic usually reveals a striking difference. The religious tolerance we see in More's perfect commonwealth is preserved in Tawfik's *Utopia*. On the one hand, the gated community is inhabited by people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds as mentioned before. On the other hand, the land of the Others is described by Gaber as a paradise of religious freedom and equality:

> You can't tell anyone's religion here unless he utters an oath along the lines of 'by Christ' or invokes the Prophet Mohammed's name. Even names have become everyday and neutral, not indicating anything . . . If there's one advantage to this society of ours it's that it's never heard of religious divisions. The paradise of sectarian equality has been realized, but in an astonishing way that never occurred to the most freethinking philosophers. Since poverty has made everyone equal, no

> one knows anymore whether you're Muslim or Christian . . . Had it not been for the end of the petroleum era, the situation, which was ripe for explosion at the dawn of the twenty-first century, would have ignited. (Rossetti 66)

The statement levels a satirical attack on the world's current oil politics. Since the novel is set in the 2020s, it envisions a world that has run out of oil. The implied message is that oil-rich countries used to fund religious extremism and ignite sectarian conflicts in Egypt. But apart from the satirical remark, the apparent tolerance masks the deep-seated social problems that foreshadow the impending collapse.

Religiousness in Tawfik's *Utopia* is driven by a deep sense of anxiety on the part of the Utopians and the Others. More's Utopians believe in divine providence because this belief gives them another reason to abide by law and to work for the collective good of their society. The social utility of religion is transposed by Tawfik into a vehicle that validates a dysfunctional reality. Tawfik's Utopians are religious because, in the Hunter's opinion, they are afraid that they might lose all their privileges and end up among the Others. Meanwhile, the Others are religious because, in the Hunter's opinion too, the afterlife is their only hope in some consolation (Tawfik 51). Alongside with the subtle allusion to the Marxian metaphor of religion being the opium of the masses, the religiousness of the Utopians and the Others is a form of helpless pietism. The helplessness of the Others is self-evident. But the Utopians, despite their privileges, are also helpless because they are always haunted by mystical fear stimulated by a deep feeling that they do not deserve what they have and that they might suddenly lose everything (Tawfik 21). But if More's *Utopia* and Tawfik's *Utopia* ensure tolerance and

freedom of private faith, why did religion fail to prescribe an acceptable moral code in Tawfik's *Utopia* and why did it fail in reordering the ruptured social structure? Obviously, the community of Utopia and the community of the Others are both morally corrupt and do not share a common cause despite sharing a common past. The concept of civil religion is useful in addressing the above question. In his investigation of civil religion in H. G. Wells' utopian works, Karoly Pinter explains that organized religion or private faith is distinguished from public religion in that the former

> should inculcate love and respect for the laws of the realm, obedience to the political leaders, and a willingness to serve the country's interests . . . Rousseau calls this set of dogmas a "purely civil profession of faith" . . . [T]hey are not dogmas proper but rather "sentiments of sociability" guiding the citizens' public, social, and political behavior. Nonetheless, they should be more than mere social norms because they should command loyalty and obedience. As Rousseau writes, "The dogmas of civil religion ought to be simple, few in number, precisely fixed, and without explanation or comment. The existence of a powerful, wise, and benevolent Divinity, who foresees and provides the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws . . ." (147)

To examine the problem of religion in Tawfik's *Utopia*, it should be noted that the Hunter's thoughts on religiousness in Utopia and in the land of the Others are his own social interpretations. The use of the phrase "kamā a'taqid" ("as I think") in the presentation of his point of view makes this subjectivity more pronounced (Tawfik 52).

In addition, if religiousness in Tawfik's *Utopia* is a form of pietism that stems from anxiety, mystical fear, or helplessness, then it is nothing but a manifestation of private faith. The features the Hunter specifically observes are prayer and *umrah* (a form of Muslim pilgrimage), but neither of them serves a civil function. Religious practices on both sides of the spectrum do not have an organizing or a restraining power, for the Utopians and the Others commit all sorts of *munkar* in the Muslim sense or social sin in the Catholic sense. The degradation is particularly serious in Utopia where an outward display of religiousness is associated, according to the Hunter, with a display of wealth (Tawfik 21). Religiousness in Tawfik's novel is, hence, a manifestation of private, mystical, but also hypocritical faith and not of a binding civil religion; it is rooted in personal, rather than public, anxieties.

The religious freedom we see in the novel does not operate within an organizing framework, unlike More's *Utopia*. If the early modern Utopians in More's book find in the belief in divine providence an organizing social function that matches their time and their social planning, the Utopians and the Others do not have a parallel civil framework that works for their time. A society that lacks an organizing framework or a binding belief is destined to collapse. Commenting on Wells' utopianism, Pinter explains that Wells "arrives at the conclusion that the only worthy objective for what he considers a modern religious attitude is to strive for a "conceivable better order in human affairs" than the present one" (156). The absence of civil religion from the two communities depicted in Tawfik's novel makes the dystopian clash between the two antagonistic communities inevitable. Considering how prophetic Tawfik's *Utopia* was, it is worth

noting that during and after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, the public discourse was permeated by politicized definitions of "the real Egyptian" (Bassiouney 107), by debates over the vague terms of civil state, secular state, and religious state (Lavie and Shalaby 88), as well as visions of a national project that unites all Egyptians.

Conclusion

Tawfik's main contribution as a translator and as a novelist is that he has popularized the genres of fantasy and science fiction, but most importantly he has synthesized futuristic fantasy with a realistic analysis of the status quo in *Utopia*. In the process of this synthesis, he brings utopian thinking in the Arab-speaking world from the domain of the philosophical to the domain of the public. It also ironically subverts the universality and the objectivity inherent in philosophical utopian accounts, for the utopian community in the Egyptian novel perceives decadence, indulgence, and materialism as defining attributes of utopianism. The activation of the canonical status of Thomas More's *Utopia* by adapting it to the Egyptian context reintroduces the concept of utopia to Egyptian fiction which has long embraced realism. However, Tawfik has not just transposed More's text to the Egyptian literary system; he reinterpreted and subverted it. The subversion is not driven by an anticolonial agenda, but rather by a creative agenda that aligns with the satirical function of Tawfik's novel. Hence, the early modern English text is interpreted and deployed by Tawfik due to its "resonances with local circumstances" (Litvin 21). Moreover, Tawfik's novel is in a dialogue with a wide array of texts where More's *Utopia* is not the primary source text. The novel engages in a conversation with the cosmopolitan ideals of Erasmus's humanism, the dystopian and

futuristic works of George Orwell and H. G. Wells, and the philosophical utopias. The image of the *futuwwa* in the novel also places Naguib Mahfouz's Egyptian realist fiction in this network of texts, intertexts, and ideas.

As the analysis has shown, Tawfik's text anticipates the 2011 Egyptian Revolution as a moment of recognition arising from an apocalyptic scenario. Unlike the social revolt of the poor depicted in Tawfik's novel, the Egyptian uprising was an "urban civic" revolution which relies on the mobilization of "as many people as possible in central urban spaces" and seeks to overthrow the regime "through the power of numbers" (Beissinger 7-8). The street fight at the walls of Utopia between the Utopians and the Others is engineered by a good thug, but the Egyptian uprising was engineered by the collective will of the cosmopolitan middle-class young people who were joined in Tahrir Square and elsewhere by subaltern classes. Despite these differences between Tawfik's portrayal of an old-fashioned revolt and the Egyptian uprising of 2011, the circumstances leading up to the revolutionary act in fiction and reality have many commonalities.

The isolation of the neoliberal Utopians from the poor Others is a marker of a gloomy reality where the economic gap between classes has been widening. Poverty, however, is not the sole motivator of the 2011 mass movement, and the poor are not the only force that stimulated the Egyptian Revolution. The year 2004 witnessed the ascent to power of a neoliberal group whose economic policies produced high rates of economic growth but also limited the economic role of the state through "privatization, economic reform, and externally induced structural adjustment resulting from neoliberal development. This fueled substantial economic grievances not only among the poor, but

also within the middle class." (Beissinger 292) The involvement of businessmen in policymaking and their entry into Ahmed Nazif's cabinet raised the concerns of the middle classes which were alarmed by the consequences of such economic measures on their own socio-economic stability. Hence, Tawfik's unsettling futuristic portrayal of the disintegration of the social structure into two classes where the middle class is non-existent is informed by these anxieties. The dystopian representation in Tawfik's novel envisions the catastrophic culmination of neoliberalism and the consequent social and moral decomposition.

Parallel to these economic concerns, the security apparatus was often seen as an institution protecting the interests of the rich and stifling the political atmosphere whether in Egypt or the other Arab Spring countries. The image of an isolated wealthy community ruthlessly defended by multinational security forces speaks to the mounting dissatisfaction with police practices and their role in the then-rising neoliberal project. The parallelism between the events that provoked the Others in Tawfik's *Utopia* and the events that incited the uprising is still evident in the murder of Gaber at the hands of the Hunter which calls to mind the death of Khaled Said in police custody about six months before January 2011. The fictional incident and the historical event represent the last straw that broke the camel's back.

CHAPTER IV

PARADISE LOST IN SYRIA: BETWEEN BOURGEOIS LIBERTY AND IMPERIAL THREATS

In 2002, the Egyptian translator Mohamed Anani published the first complete Arabic translation of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* to conclude a long-term project that started in 1982. Anani's translation was investigated in important scholarly works by Jeffrey Einboden, Nabil Matar, and, most notably, Islam Issa who wrote multiple articles and a groundbreaking book delving into the reception of *Paradise Lost* and Milton's other works in the Arabic-speaking world. The common argument made by these scholars regarding Anani's translation is that the translator has remarkably negotiated the theological differences between the Protestantism of Milton's English language and the Muslim ideas associated with the Arabic language. Even in the annotations, Anani was very keen on explaining his terminological choices and "distanc[ing] himself from a culturally contentious image in the poem." (Issa 208) Thus, Anani's translation of Milton's epic generally takes a domesticating approach that, in Matar's words, "transtheologized" *Paradise Lost* into an Islamic epic (6).

In 2011, another complete translation of *Paradise Lost* was issued by the state-run General Syrian Book Organization amidst popular uprisings in multiple Arabic-speaking countries, including Syria. The translation—titled *Al-firdaws Al-mafqūd*—was conducted by Hanna Aboud, a renowned Syrian critic, mythologist, and translator, and was added to Al-Assad National Library, as indicated in the edition notice. Although Aboud's translation was not widely circulated because of the Syrian civil war (Issa 48), its publication is still an important contribution to the reception of Milton in the Arabic-

speaking communities. Almost nine years before the publication of this translation, Aboud produced a study titled *Min Tarikh Al-Riwayah* (*From the History of the Novel*) in which he argues that "Satan was expelled from Heaven because he called for democracy and justice," which makes *Paradise Lost* a modern epic poem presenting "the modern bourgeois perception of the world." (14) Aboud's critical view on the politics of *Paradise Lost* seems to place him within the pro-Satan camp which emerged from the Romantic interpretation of *Paradise Lost*, particularly from William Blake's provocative note in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that Milton "was of the Devil's party without knowing it." (10) Based on Aboud's remark (on which he did not expand), one may anticipate a translation that reflects that critical stance; that is, a translation that highlights Satan's heroic strife for freedom and democracy and speaks to the historical revolutionary moment.

However, Issa claims in an article in *The New Statesman* that Bashar Al-Assad's regime attempted to use Aboud's translation of *Paradise Lost* for propagandist purposes. In *Milton in the Arab-Muslim World*, Issa cites an article published by the Syrian newspaper *Al-Thawrah* (*The Revolution*), owned by the ruling Baath Party, in which the writer Bassem Sulaiman states that Satan's rebellion was a failure, and so was Oliver Cromwell's Republican revolution which led to deep divides in Christianity (41). According to Issa, "Sulaiman seems to suggest [that] the Syrian regime will inevitably overcome any uprising as the English monarchy did eventually, and the only result [of any uprising] will be civil discord and tension." (41) Issa's claims might be valid, especially when considering Aboud's statement in the Introduction to his translation that

the British never tried to overthrow a king after Charles I, and that they were later alarmed by the execution of King Louis XVI of France during the French Revolution (Aboud 28-29). Nevertheless, these claims should also be treated with some caution for two reasons. First, Aboud's Introduction is dated May 15, 2011—two months after the eruption of the protests in Syria and four months after Bassem Sulaiman's article (published, according to Issa, on January 4, 2011). In fact, the situation in Syria did not escalate into civil war prospects until July 2011 when Seven military officers defected and formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Second, in a 2020 interview with *Nizwa*, an Omanian cultural magazine, Aboud noted that his translations are either assigned by the Syrian Ministry of Culture, which runs the General Syrian Book Organization, or are driven by personal intellectual motives. Aboud added that terror is not exclusively ascribed to political power. These details complicate our preconceptions of Aboud's translation of Milton's epic and trigger a cautious examination of the translation.

While the patronage of the Syrian Ministry of Culture may justify Issa's claims, Aboud emphasizes in the Introduction the centrality of the issue of liberty in Milton's epic and acknowledges the importance of the epic's literary situation which aligns with the value of freedom and opposes the rigidities of religion and politics (35). Accordingly, the question of freedom should not be ruled out by an emphasis on propaganda. Aboud's critical view of Satan as a bourgeois hero is useful to the examination of liberty as manifested in the character of Satan in relation to the character of God. I am concerned here with the political development of the characters of Satan and God in Aboud's translation of *Paradise Lost*. Satan starts as a bourgeois hero whose cause is justified by

God's despotism and the elimination of God's creative and spiritual powers—the powers that legitimize his absolute rule. The restoration of these divine powers after the Son's sacrifice parallels the transformation or the development of Satan into an imperialist leader. In this regard, Hannah Arendt's ideas on imperialism in her seminal work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* are relevant to this discussion, for they shed light on the links between the evolution of the bourgeoisie and the rise of imperialism or the "politics of expansion for expansion's sake" (xvii). The links between imperialism and the ideals of liberty and democracy advocated by the bourgeoisie are pertinent to the Syrian context, for the call for liberty during the Arab Spring has been framed by the Syrian state media as a Zionist-Imperial attack that aims to subdue Syria. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 has particularly activated concerns about "democratic imperialism" where the promotion of democracy enables foreign intervention and imperial domination.

Satan's bourgeois revolution

The argument that Satan represents the modern bourgeois point of view places Aboud's reading of the Miltonic text in sharp contrast with Frederic Jameson's argument that Satan's revolt is feudal because "the revolt of a peer has in fact little enough in common with the dynamics of middle-class revolution but a great deal with the convulsions of medieval feudalism" (49). While it is true that Satan was of a peerage-like high rank in Heaven, his revolutionary discourse still uses a bourgeois rationale that mirrors Milton's republican ideas on the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. As Robert Thomas Fallon puts it, Satan's protest was first directed at the designation of the Son as king "but he soon shifts his indictment subtly to condemn the entire regime"

which is built on absolutism (123). Satan also anticipates the evolution of bourgeois aspirations at an important historical moment. In the late nineteenth century, the framework of the nation-state was not able to contain the economic ambitions of the bourgeoisie which up until to the late nineteenth century "had been the first class in history to achieve economic pre-eminence without aspiring to political rule." (Arendt 123) Out of the need for further economic growth, the bourgeoisie had to turn against the state and engage in politics in a historical shift that marked what Arendt calls "the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie" (123). Thus, contrary to Jameson's interpretation of Satan's revolt, Satan and his fellow devils strongly echo bourgeois ideals in the first two books of the Arabic *Paradise Lost*. Instead of serving in Heaven, Satan seeks political emancipation in Hell:

Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.

(*PL*.I.258-263)

In the unstable political atmosphere of 2011, the statement captures the Arabophone debates on the validity of stability if it is associated with oppression and the value of freedom if it comes with chaos. The Arab Spring enthusiasts considered security under oppressive regimes as synonymous with servitude (*istiʿbād*). Interestingly, Aboud

transposes in the translation the verb *serve* (*yaḫdim*) into the noun *ʿabd* (slave): "faḥākimun fil-ǧaḥīmi ẖayrun min ʿabdin fil-samāʾ" ("a ruler in Hell is better than a slave in Heaven.") (*FM*.I.263) The word *ʿabd* (slave) shares the same root with the word *istiʿbād* (servitude) and echoes the debates regarding the priority of liberty over stability in the discourse of the Arab Spring.

The political aspirations of the fallen angels are not entirely dissociated from economic factors. The money-oriented character of Mammon makes an important contribution to the initially bourgeois project of Satan. Mammon's looks and thoughts are "downward bent, admiring more / The riches of Heav'ns pavement, trod'n Gold," (*PL*.I. 681-682). He is the leader of the group that digs out for precious metals for the construction of Pandemonium, the enormous city which symbolizes the bourgeois urbanization (Marx and Engels 78). In the infernal council, Mammon advocates a pacifist policy that sees any attempt to dethrone God as futile and sees freedom in primarily economic terms. In Mammon's opinion, the failure of the rebellion in Heaven can be turned into success if the fallen angels focus on bettering the domestic economic situation of Hell. For Mammon, the lazy excess of Heaven is an "the easie yoke / Of servile Pomp." (*PL*.II.256-257), and liberty is an economic virtue, hard-obtained "Through labour and indurance." (II.262) As an embodiment of middle-class materialism, his mode of self-reliance is defined in terms of "the enjoyment of material well-being in apolitical liberty." (Quint 48) Mammon's work ethic and his belief in merit are indeed in line with Milton's republican values, but, more importantly, they are relatable to the middle-class

reader, whether in England or the Arabophone world, who is promised by the Capitalist system with a paradise of wealth through hard work and dedication.

Mammon's thinking is an early manifestation of what Terry Eagleton calls the "crassly philistine Utilitarianism" of the bourgeoisie (17). His philistinism is translated into a disinterest in all that is "divine or holy" (*PL*.I.683). The Arabic translation underscores Mammon's philistinism by translating the almost synonymous words *divine* and *holy* in the phrase "aught divine or holy else enjoy'd" into the adjectives *muqaddasan* (holy or sacred) and *muḥtaraman* (respected or revered). Unlike *muqaddasan*, the adjective *muḥtaraman* does not have a primarily religious sense in Arabic, so it applies to various contexts. The use of this adjective adds another level to Mammon's characterization, as it shows that he is indifferent to all that is worthy of respect, and not only to the things that have some sacred value. Mammon embodies the bourgeois tendency to profane "all that is holy" and "to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind." (Marx and Engels 77) He does not enjoy divine things, not simply because he is against God; but rather because of his philistine attitude to things that do not have an apparent material value in the real conditions and relations of life.

The language used by Mammon in the infernal council exposes a utilitarian mentality that materializes what is essentially immaterial. He monetizes eternity and relegates worship to mere transaction: "how wearisome / Eternity so spent in worship paid / To whom we hate." (*PL*.II.247-249) The oxymoronic relationship between "eternity" and "spent" implies a contradiction, but this contradiction is, in fact, the best

way to reveal Mammon's materialistic worldview. The translator pays a special attention to the materialistic terms of Mammon's speech by creating some balance between the collocational relations between the words while also using adjectives and verbs that have a range of senses, including monetary ones: "kam hiya ṯaqīlatun / al-ʾabadiyah ḥattā tuhdaru fī ʿibādatin turfaʿu ʾilā / man nakrahuh" ("how heavy eternity is if wasted in worship raised to whom we hate") (*FM*.II. 247-249). The adjective *ṯaqīlah* (heavy) and the verb *turfaʿu* (raised) have multiple senses in Arabic, including material and monetary ones, and the verb *tuhdaru* (wasted) is obviously common in economic contexts. Mammon's materialism, as shown in Milton's and Aboud's texts, is not only an indication of the Utilitarian ideology of the English bourgeoisie as described by Eagleton but is also an indication of the problem inherent in the rebellious angels' discourse; the order of things, according to them, is primarily, if not exclusively, materialistic. That is, their relationship with Heaven is either politicized or economized.

In Mammon's materialistic view, submission to God in Heaven is neither an act of spiritual obedience nor an acceptance of a political hierarchy; it is mainly a state of medieval "vassalage," (*PL*.II.252). Aboud translates the word *vassalage* into *ʾiqṭāʿiyyah* (feudalism). The term *vassalage* describes a relationship of subjugation where a vassal fights for a royal figure or a feudal landowner in exchange for land to live on, while the Arabic word *ʾiqṭāʿiyyah* is more general since it refers to the state of feudalism as a political and economic system. In other words, the English term denotes a specific relationship between the vassal and the feudal lord, whereas the Arabic term focuses on the overarching system under which vassalage is arranged. The generalization is mainly

due to the lack of a direct semantic equivalent of the word *vassalage* in Arabic, but the Arabic term *ʾiqṭāʿiyyah* also has strong political and economic implications.

The post-WWII socialist-inclined Nasserism in Egypt and Baathism in Syria and Iraq propagated and adopted anti-feudal agendas that resulted in revolutionary "asset-distributional reforms" (Kadri 55). These reforms, Ali Kadri notes, contributed to the rise of a new middle class that enjoyed a margin of economic growth under the political sponsorship of national institutions led by the military. Evidently, the Arabic translation highlights Mammon's underlying economic perspective on the idea of liberty. But Mammon's pursuit of wealth and his equation of liberty with materialistic prosperity and the emancipation from divine feudalism are unsatisfactory, almost outdated, parameters, because Satan has outgrown this strictly economic thinking and is concerned with the political sense of liberty as the guarantor of all forms of liberty. The contrast between Mammon and Satan captures two different stages in the development of the bourgeois thinking just as it captures two historical moments in the history of the bourgeoisie in Arabic-speaking countries. The first has to do with economic emancipation through socialist, anti-feudal reforms after the Second World War, and the second has to do with the 2011 pursuit of sociopolitical change through bourgeois democracy.

Nevertheless, the bourgeois mentality of the rebellious angels is flawed by some contradictions that raise a lot of doubts about their ideals. In the Satanic council, Beelzebub suggests a course of action that consists in seducing the new race of humankind into Satan's party. Beelzebub's suggestion is based on a rumor in Heaven that God is about to create a new race:

There is a place

(If ancient and prophetic fame in Heav'n

Err not) another World, the happy seat

Of some new Race call'd Man, about this time

To be created like to us, though less

In power and excellence, but favour'd more

Of him who rules above; so was his will

Pronounc'd among the Gods, and by an Oath,

That shook Heav'ns whol circumference, confirm'd.

(*PL*.II.345-353)

To the modern reader, the use of the word *race* to describe the creation of Man, coupled with the perceived superiority of the angels, raises questions about the validity of the bourgeois values of the rebellious angels. Obviously, Beelzebub suggests that Man is of a different lineage and class than the angels, and his emphasis on the superiority of the angels over humankind in terms of power and excellence stands in contrast with the value of liberty, realized by political emancipation in Satan's view and by labor in Mammon's view.

While the hierarchy of Heaven is challenged by Satan and the feudalism of Heaven is rejected by Mammon, Beelzebub brings to the surface the contradictions in the Satanic camp's values through his claims of superiority over the new race. In the Arabic translation, all the instances of the word *race* are translated by Aboud into the Arabic word *ʿirq* (race, lineage, or ethnicity):

hunāka ʿālaman ʾāẖar, maqarran saʿīdan

liʿirqin ǧadīdin yuqālu lahu-l-ʾinsān, wa-qad ʾawšaka fī hāḏa-l-zamani

ʾan yuẖlaqa miṯlanā, maʿ ʾannahu

ʾaqalla quwattan wa-mtiyāzan, wa-lākinnahu mufaḍalun ʿalaynā

ʿindah, ʿinda man yaḥkumu fil-ʾaʿlā, hākaḏā kānat ʾirādatah

There is another world, a happy seat

For a new race called Man, about this time

To be created like us, who though

Lesser in power and excellence, but is favored over us

To him who rules above, and so was his will

(*FM*.II.347-351)

As shown in the back-translation, Beelzebub's statement that "some new Race call'd Man . . . To be created like to us," (*PL*.II.348-349) is rendered into an Arabic statement that includes a claim of superiority emanating from the modern pragmatic meaning of the problematic notion of *ʿirq* which indicates a division based on physical features and a distinction based on lineage.

Nonetheless, Beelzebub also mentions that the new race is "To be created like to us" (II.349). How can the new race be like the fallen angels but at the same time be lesser? *The Oxford English Dictionary* states that the use of the adverb *like* followed by a complement introduced by *to* has become less common since the seventeenth century and that this form suggested a similarity in shape, size, character, qualities, etc. Beelzebub's remark might hence imply a contradiction, for it indicates that the angels and the new

human race are created alike in terms of non-physical qualities while also suggesting that Man is lesser in excellence. The contradiction might also arise from the assumption that Man is to be created by God just as the angels were created by him. This contradicts Satan's argument against Abdiel in Book V where the former denies God's power as the creator of the angels: "We know no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd" (V.859-860)—even though Satan acknowledges in his Soliloquy in Book IV that it is God who "created what [he] was" (IV.43). Accordingly, Beelzebub's statement may be meant to expose the hypocrisy or the flawed logic of the rebellious angels. It may also indicate a similarity in physical traits between the angels and humankind. This assumption leads to theological debates about the nature of angels. But what needs to be highlighted here is that Aboud keeps all the options open by rendering the phrase "To be created like to us" into the phrase "ʾan yuẖlaqa miṯlanā" (created like us) (*FM*.II.349). The Arabic phrase does not totally rule out the possibility that the new race is like the angels in physical traits although the word *miṯl* (like) is more indicative of equality or similarity in non-physical qualities than similarity in appearance—a meaning that could be conveyed by the word *šibh* or (like or resembling) The stronger assumption is that Man is equal to angels but does not necessarily resemble them, and that equality emerges from the subjection of humans and angels to God or from the creation of humans and angels by God. Apart from the interpretations of the Arabic phrase, the translation, again, exposes the inconsistencies or, rather, the feudal, pre-Fall remnants that percolate into the mentality of the rebellious angels.

The unspiritual God

While Satan's revolutionary cause may eventually betray itself, the political structure of God's Heaven is tyrannical and suppressive in a way that justifies Satan's rebellion. Aboud prepares the reader for this justification by stressing in the Introduction that Milton's literary position attacks God's acts as much as he attacks Satan's (39). At many points in the Introduction, Aboud suggests that the conflict between good and evil is neither driven by the moral implications of good and evil nor by what the reader typically associates with God and Satan. The conflict between God and Satan is dialectical and is devoid of certainties. As Michael Bryson points out, the conflict with God is, in Satan's point of view, "not an allegory of good and evil, but a real and present struggle against a tyrant." (81) Milton, Peter C. Herman argues, does not convey the "absolute confidence" in the absolute distinction between good and evil (8). In terms of the political structure of the evil Hell as opposed to the good Heaven, Herman points out that Milton "displays a model of consensual decision-making" in the fallen angels' infernal council (93), while in Heaven God remains the sole decision-maker until the Son takes part. The perceived tyranny of God could be debunked if his spiritual status is foregrounded. Yet, the fallen angels do not see God from a spiritual lens, as they equate God with a governmental body ruling over individuals.

Milton carefully constructs a politicized image of a combative God that reinforces the rebels' perspective. Although Milton's portrayal of God is mostly Biblical, the parallels between God and Satan are what "makes it harder to swallow" (Forsyth 11). If Satan is angry and vengeful, we encounter in Book III an angry, vengeful God too who is

willing to unforgivingly punish those who disobey him: “This my long sufferance and my day of grace / They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste; / But hard be hard'nd, blind be blinded more,” (*PL*.III.198-200). Satan’s competition with God is hence justified by the delineation of God as a despotic ruler who reacts to opposition with vengeful violence.

Yet, competing with God himself over the reign of Heaven or over the way its hierarchical system works is a risky endeavor because God’s power is absolute, and Satan acknowledges that “force hath made [God] supreme” (*PL*.I.248). Thus, Satan and the rebels should seek power in a place where they are ridded of this unfair competition, and that place is Hell because it was not built by God “for his envy” (I.260). Aboud translates the clause “th' Almighty hath not built / Here for his envy” (I.259-260) into a quite confusing statement, “falǧabbāru lam yabni hunā maqāman / limunāfisihi” (“the Almighty has not built here a seat for his competitor”) (*FM*.I. 259-260). The English clause suggests that nothing in Hell provokes God’s envy, mainly because God did not create anything in Hell that would provoke envy from anyone. The Arabic clause makes a similar suggestion but adds to it another suggestion of God’s despotism and his calculated, pre-engineered regulation of competition; God created Hell and made it a wasteland where no competitor can dwell. That is, if competing with God in Heaven is destined to fail because of God’s omnipotence, Hell does not offer the resources that would facilitate the competition. It should be noted here that one of the common arguments in the revolutionary discourse during and after the Arab Spring is that the leaders of the Arab Spring countries would either continue to rule or leave their countries

in unmanageable ruins. The analogy with the rulers of the Arab Spring countries makes us think of a God who proactively and tyrannically controls the possibilities of competition with a scorched-earth-like policy. Ironically, Satan is confident he can transform this wasteland into a Heaven and he, regardless of anything, believes that freedom in Hell is worth it.

The tyranny of the Father is, however, contrasted with the spiritual heroism of the Son. The Son is the "one greater Man" (*PL*.I.4) who will lead humanity out of the crisis caused by Man's first sin as he possesses the singular virtue "by which [the] fallen community would be reconciled to God." (Hackenbracht 143-144) Through the Son's spiritual sacrifice, *Paradise Lost* reclaims "a Miltonic, internal definition of glory, heroism, and true government." (Bryson 115) But the Son's demonstration of spiritual heroism is delayed until Book III when he volunteers to sacrifice himself for Man's sins:

> Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life
> I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;
> Account mee man; I for his sake will leave
> Thy bosom, and this glorie next to thee
> Freely put off, and for him lastly dye
>
> (*PL*.III.236-240)

In the first two books, God's bounty and his superior wisdom and knowledge are not immediately shown although it is mainly in these qualities that the legitimacy of his claim to the throne is established (Walker 285). The first two books of *Paradise Lost* accentuate God the Father's absolute power which is ascribed to his strength as a political and

military figure as well as to his ability to create physical things. God's spiritual power as a possessor of bountiful knowledge and infinite wisdom is mainly presented in the Son's sacrifice and self-denial, as shown in Book III and the subsequent books, and through the Holy Spirit which is invoked at the beginning of the epic to inspire the epic narrator. In Book III, the Arabic translation eloquently emphasizes the Son's spiritual sacrifice, presenting him as a spiritual hero whose freedom and glory are neither political nor military:

> fanẓur ʾilayya wa-ǧʿalnī lahu ḥayātan biḥayātin
> ʾuqaddimuhā, walyaḥilla ġaḍabuka ʿalay;
> iḥsabniya-l-ʾinsān, famin ʾağlihi sawfa ʾatruku
> ḥuḍnaka, wa ʾadaʿ hāḏā-l-mağd allaḏī yalī mağdak
> bikulli ḥurriyah wa min ʾağlihi ʾaẖīran sawfa ʾamūt
>
> Behold me and make me for him, life for life
> I offer, and let your anger fall on me;
> Count me man, and for him I will leave
> Your bosom and this glory next to yours
> Freely for him, and will lastly die
>
> (*FM*.III.236-240)

The Son's willingness to sacrifice his life and his heavenly status in order to save humanity is directly contrasted with the Father's rage, militancy, and political intrigue. In fact, it is this spirituality that would eventually restore humans to their "blissful Seat" (*PL*.I.5) in Paradise, and not the Father's efforts to quell the Satanic rebellion.

However, the Arabic text fails to deliver the emphasis made in the epic opening on God's metaphysical, spiritual power as reflected in the inspirational role of the Holy Spirit. In the opening lines of the poem, Milton's speaker invokes the "Heav'nly Muse" (*PL*.I.6) and asks her to sing "Of man's first disobedience" (I.1). The Heavenly Muse is supposed to inspire the narrator as he embarks on telling the story in verse. In other words, the Muse is expected to sing of something. That thing is the general outline of the story which constitutes the subject of the epic—the general scope of the action which is often given in the principium (Condee 502). The Muse possesses knowledge and serves a narratorial function or, to be more accurate, is supposed to legitimize and support the narrator's narrative. The translation of *Paradise Lost* acknowledges Milton's utilization of the Muse convention. Aboud contends in the Introduction that the "Heav'nly Muse" invoked at the start of *Paradise Lost* is the Holy Spirit (Aboud 35-36). The invocation of the Holy Spirit as a Muse points to God's infinite wisdom; that is, his spiritual power which also legitimizes his rule in Heaven.

As mentioned above, Milton's speaker starts the narrative by appealing to the Heavenly Muse to sing *of* man's first disobedience and the forbidden tree that brought all calamities to the world. To begin the epic with an invocation of the Heavenly Muse (or the Holy Spirit) is to give the Muse an extra strength—a strength that partly arises from the adjective *Heavenly* which describes an element already existing in the Muse. But the suggestion we have here is that this Muse is special—it is different than the Muses of old Greek and Latin epics. This Muse is spiritual, Godly, Christian, not pagan, and it has inspired Moses, not Homer or Virgil. The strength of Milton's Heavenly Muse also

derives from the fact that the speaker persistently appeals to the Muse throughout the principium (the initial twenty-six lines of Milton's epic). The two "superhuman" sentences, as A. D. Nuttall calls them (75), that constitute the principium formally reflect the uniqueness and the strength of Milton's Muse as well, especially when considering that the Muse is present, or is asked to be present, throughout the opening twenty-six lines. However, the Muse in Aboud's translation does not appear as strong as Milton's Muse, and the reason for this loss of strength is encoded in the way Aboud structures the opening passage:

> min-al-ʿiṣyāni-l-ʾawwal, wa min ṯamarati
> tilka-l-šağarati-l-muḥarramah, almuhlikati-l-maḏāq
> ğāʾa-l-mawtu ʾilā-l-ʿālam, wa ğāʾat kullu maṣāʾibinā
> wa ḍāʿat ğannatu ʿadnin, ʾilā ʾan ğāʾa ʾinsānun ʿaẓīm
> faʾaʿādanā waʾaʿāda ʾilaynā miqʿadanā-l-mubārak
> faṣdaḥī yā rabbati-l-šiʿri-l-samāwiyya, allatī ʿalā qimmati
> ğabal ḥūrībi-l-sirriyah, ʾaw fī saynāʾ, ʾalhamti
> ḏālika-l-rāʿī, fakāna ʾawwala-l-buḏūri-l-muḫtārah
> fil-badʾi kayfa ʾanna-l-samāʾa wal-ʾarḍ
> nahaḍatā mina-l-ʿamāʾ . . .

> From man's first disobedience and the fruit
> of that forbidden tree whose taste is mortal,
> Death, and all our woes, came to the world,
> And Eden was lost, until a great man came

And restored us and regained for us our blessed seat.

So sing, heavenly goddess of poetry, that on the secret top

of Oreb, or in Sinai, inspired

that Shepherd who first taught the chosen seed

In the beginning how heaven and earth

Rose out of chaos . . .

(*FM*.I.1-10)

The opening preposition in Aboud's translation is key. The rendering of the preposition *of* into *min*—which could be back-translated in this context as *from* or, more accurately, as *because of*—instead of *ʿan* (of/about) has had a transformative impact on the meaning. This impact is clarified by examining the way Aboud deals with the syntax of the opening lines. The Arabic translation divides the opening lines into two sentences: the first is in the indicative mood and the second is in the imperative mood. The indicative sentence states that paradise was lost, and death and all our woes came to the world because of man's first disobedience and because of the mortal fruit of the forbidden tree until a great man regained paradise for us. The imperative sentence appeals to the Heavenly Muse to sing, for she inspired Moses to teach the chosen seed. Obviously, this is not how Milton structures his opening lines. The first ten lines of Milton's epic consists of one long independent clause in the imperative mood, and this long independent clause is made up of a series of indicative phrases and clauses. The independent clause starts with the phrase "Of Man's first disobedience" and ends with the

caesura (the colon) in the middle of Line 10. The main verb in this clause is *Sing* which is in the imperative mood:

> Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
>
> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
>
> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
>
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
>
> Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, [5]
>
> Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
>
> Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
>
> That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
>
> In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
>
> Rose out of Chaos: . . .
>
> (*PL*.I.1-10)

It is possible that Aboud has stumbled over the complexities of Milton's Latinized English syntax, but Aboud's syntactic rearrangement of Milton's opening ten lines has considerable consequences. Milton's opening lines ask the Holy Spirit to inspire the narrator and to tell him of Man's first sin and the loss of Eden. Inspiration is the power needed to narrate the story and to endow it with divine support. In Aboud's text, the Muse is asked to sing just as she did with Moses when he was inspired to lead the first enlightenment of the Jews, represented in the knowledge of the beginnings of the world. Yet, what does the Heavenly Muse have to say? What is the subject of her song? Based on Milton's text, the subject is supposed to be man's first disobedience, the Fall, and the

loss of Eden. But Aboud, having broken down Milton's first independent clause into two sentences (one indicative and one imperative), has separated between the subject of the song and the demand for singing.

The Muse is reduced in Aboud's translation to a singer providing only an extra aesthetic device in the background and is deprived of her inspirational and authoritative role as a spiritual power granting narrational powers. This, in turn, affects the analogy between the narrator and Moses. Ann Baynes Coiro notes that in the opening lines "the narrator of Paradise Lost seeks to assume Moses' role himself, asking the Muse to inspire him as she had inspired Moses" (68). In Milton's poem, the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to teach the Jews about the origins of heaven and earth and is asked to inspire the narrator to tell the story of Man's disobedience. Yet, because the justification of the Muse's requested song is not clear in Aboud's translation, the narrator's pursued assumption of Moses' role is not realized. Thus, the authority of the Heavenly Muse is neutralized, and the value of the comparison with Moses, as a prominent religious figure in all Abrahamic religions, is lost.

Whether the transformations that took place in the poem's opening are caused by a mistranslation or by intentional tactics, the outcome is that the figure Satan is revolting against is not a spiritual figure but rather a political entity that—like the nineteenth-century state—monopolizes decision-making and maintains its power by force. While God's creative power is acknowledged, this power is still material and not spiritual. God's concrete creativity is a tool that solidifies the tyranny of Heaven as implicated in Beelzebub's speech. By making the Holy Spirit a silent Muse having no spiritual,

inspirational function, Aboud neutralizes the Holy Spirit and emphasizes that the conflict is between the Father as a political leader and Satan as an ambitious bourgeois rebel—until the Son comes with his spiritual heroism to conclude the conflict. This relegation of the Holy Spirit to a Muse having no substantial influence on the narrative prepares the readers for the literary situation and contributes to the suspension of the ideological/religious preconceptions that would cloud the readers' understanding of Satan's argument despite its flaws.

The imperialistic turn in Satan's political agenda

In the early books of the Arabic translation of *Paradise Lost*, Aboud presents a political conflict between bourgeois rebels driven by unlimited freedom and labor and a tyrannical God who is stripped off his spirituality. The Satanic rebellion seems to be a legitimate act, since God's absolute power has become, in the fallen angels' opinion, a stifling force that limits economic growth and closes the horizons of liberty and political ascent. Plus, the proclamation of the Son as "King anointed" (*PL.*V.664) has been perceived by the fallen angels as an infringement of the principle of merit. Yet, the devils' council in Book II is a very important point in the epic; it is in this council that the rebellious angels disclose their imperial agenda. The emergence of the language of empire in the discourse of the Satanic camp bespeaks the inconsistencies of their agenda and the development of Satan as a character. Abruptly, the bourgeois dream of Mammon's economic prosperity and Satan's political independence develops into—or turns out to be—an imperial vision grounded in an expansionist rivalry with Heaven.

Before delving into the imperialist project of the fallen angels, it is important to illustrate the way Aboud underscores the imperial theme in the Arabic text. The words *ʾimbrātōriyyah* (empire), *ʾimbrātōr* (emperor), and *ʾimbiriālī* (imperial) are mentioned 36 times in Aboud's text, while Anani's translation of *Paradise Lost* uses the words *ʾimbrātōriyyah* (empire) and *ʾimbrātōr* (emperor) only three times—one of Anani's uses of the word *ʾimbrātōriyyah* refers to Satan's rule over Hell and the other refers to earthly empires, while the only use of the word *ʾimbrātōr* refers to Satan. In Aboud's translation, the concept of empire is mainly used in reference to Satan's realm in Hell and to God's realm in Heaven. The reason for the frequent occurrence of references to empire in Aboud's translation is that he translates the adjectives *imperial* (relating to empire) and *empyreal* (relating to the empyrean—the highest heaven of pure fire) into the same Arabic adjective *ʾimbiriālī* (or *ʾimbiriāliyyah* if a feminine noun is modified by it). The former adjective is translated in Anani's text as *malakī* (kingly), whereas the latter is rendered as *samāwī* (heavenly). Aboud acknowledges in the footnotes of Book VII that the adjective *ʾimbiriālī* used in the translation of the phrase "Empyreal Aire" (*PL.*VII. 14) means "heavenly" and that the adjective *empyreal* is related to the empyrean. He adds in another footnote, commenting on his translation of the line "Up to the Heav'n of Heav'ns his high abode," (*PL.*VII.553), that God's high abode is in the empyrean, and that the word *empire* shares a semantic sense with the word *empyrean*, since they both denote a massive, formidable, and supreme entity.

The adjective *ʾimbiriālī* (imperial) is already a loan word adapted from European languages. The foreignness of the word is indicative of the partial foreignness of the

concept although it shares some characteristics with the expansionism of Islamic *futuhat* (a word that literally means *openings* but is often translated as *conquests*). As a term, imperialism is associated in Arabic with the political, military, economic, and cultural threats of the USA in the post-colonial period and with the colonial pursuits of the European powers in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. It is not only the memories of the War on Iraq that shape the anxiety over imperialism; according to Roger Hardy, "events of a century ago such as the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration are remembered as if they happened yesterday, and in the blackest terms." (2) As a concept, imperialism is often projected as the antithesis of any nationalist system in the Arabophone world. As priorly mentioned, the Syrian regime often uses the anti-imperialist propaganda to warn the public of foreign-backed freedom movements—a strategy that was also used by Saddam Hussein in the late twentieth century (Humphreys 107). Arendt describes imperialism as a new idea whose central aim is geopolitical expansion and whose newness lies in its adoption by multiple competing nations (125). The idea of competition distinguishes imperialism from the ancient and medieval idea of empire which was "that of a federation of States, under a hegemony, covering in general terms the entire known or recognised world." (Hobson 6) It is important to take the ideas of expansion and competition into consideration to explore the applicability of the concept of imperialism, as defined by Arendt, to the political ideology of God and Satan.

The imperial vision presented in Book II is debated by the rebels in their council, but Milton's narrator is not impartial; he does not let the characters speak or act without

any intervention on his part. The shift in the rebels' council from one speaker to another leaves a space for the narrator to jump to the foreground and put forth his point of view. Between Mammon's speech and Beelzebub's, Milton's narrator says that the rebels want "[t]o found this nether Empire, which might rise / By pollicy, and long process of time, / In emulation opposite to Heav'n." (*PL*.II.296-298). Satan's desired empire opposes Heaven's empire by "emulation". On the one hand, the phrase "In emulation opposite" is almost oxymoronic, for emulation implies copying, while opposition implies a breakaway. On the other hand, emulation may also imply competition, but it is a competition devoid of originality. A closer look into the structure of the sentence indicates that the lower empire of Satan may rise in emulation opposite to God's higher empire. The antithesis between "nether" and "rise" is very striking, and it may suggest that the Satanic empire may rise to be Heaven's equal, but the fact that it rises "[i]n emulation opposite to Heav'n" has completely canceled out this suggestion for two reasons. The first reason has to do with the understanding of emulation as copying. After all, Satan's empire, if it ever rises, would be nothing but a copy, almost fake, and Heaven's reign will remain the original. The second reason arises from the absurd logic of the argument of rising. The terms used by Milton's narrator point to the futility of the rebels' endeavors; "Heav'n" suggests highness, "rise" suggests a progression towards a higher or better position, and "nether" suggests lowness. The rise of the low in a direction opposite to the already high leads to lowness anyway. In other words, it is a vicious cycle; any attempt on the part of the nether empire to rise will lead to its degeneration even further.

Aboud's rendering of the narrator's lines does not mirror the rhetorical tactics that undermine Satan's imperial enterprise. However, it exposes the inherent motives for his enterprise by using more explicit terms. The narrator in Aboud's text says:

> wa-lam tahdaʾ raġbatuhum
> fī taʾsīsi hāḏihi-l-ʾimbrātōriyyah taḥta-l-ʾarḍ, fayumkin ʾan
> taqūma bil-siyāsah, wa-ʿalā madā ʾazmānin ṭawīlah
> fatakūnu munāfisatan muʿādiyatan lil-samāʾ
>
> Their desire did not wane
> To found this empire beneath the earth so that
> It might rise, by policy and through long periods of time,
> To be Heaven's rival and enemy.
>
> (*FM*.II.295-298)

The translation uses explicit political terms that straightforwardly point to the imperial intent of rebellious angels. Aboud chooses the more concrete sense of the word *nether*, rendering it into "taḥta-l-ʾarḍ" ("beneath the earth") instead of any other Arabic word that means *lower* or *inferior*. Opting for the concrete sense of *nether* is indicative of Aboud's explicative strategy in this part; what is implied in the narrator's lines in Milton's text is brought to the surface. Furthermore, the concept of emulation is lost, for *munāfisatan* (rival or competitor) does not imply imitation in Arabic. While the loss of the idea of emulation and the absence of Milton's subversive rhetorical tactics gives Satan's empire a more apparent force, Aboud's rendering elucidates that nothing justifies the Satanic

imperial plans except for mere political rivalry. The establishment of the nether empire is driven by one aim: to be God's rival and enemy.

Beelzebub's speech in the devils' council is extremely important as well, for it offers a revisionist approach to Satan's imperial ambitions. In fact, Beelzebub does not entirely reject the imperial idea, but he believes that settling in Hell in the materialistic bourgeois manner described by Mammon is not a sound policy. According to Beelzebub, Hell is after all a part of God's dominion, so it is a prison for the rebels rather than an independent state. Hence, the fallen angels, who are in Beelzebub's view supposed to be "Imperial Powers, off-spring of heav'n" (*PL*.II.310), will be downgraded to "Princes of Hell" (II.313) or, rather, God's "captive multitude" (II.323) if they stick to Hell. The way out of this humiliating situation is to strive to expand the Satanic domain by attacking, with "force or guile" (II.188), God's creation. Beelzebub concludes his speech with a sarcastic note: "Advise, if this be worth / Attempting, or to sit in darkness here / Hatching vain empires." (*PL*.II.376-378) If the fallen angels want to stay in the "vast recess" (II.254) as suggested by Mammon, then the outcome would be a vain empire.

The word *vain* is key in Beelzebub's final remark, for it ironically negates the very existence of the empire. The word *vain* suggests futility, worthlessness, and, to some extent, emptiness. The sense of emptiness is accentuated by Aboud, and this emphasis on the emptiness of the Satanic empire in Hell magnifies the irony of Beelzebub's final sarcastic remark. Beelzebub's remark is rendered into Arabic as: "ʾin kānat naṣīḥatī ǧadīrah / faḥāwilūhā, ʾaw ẓallū qābiʿīna hunā fi-l-ẓalām / tafqisūna-l-ʾimbraṭōriyyāt al-ẖāwiyah . . ." ("If my advice is worthy, / then try it or stay here in the darkness / and

hatch empty empires") (*FM*.II.376-378). To describe the empire as *ẖāwiyah* (empty) is to deny its status as empire; it relegates it to a bubble, an illusion, or, at best, an abstract idea in the rebels' minds that has no basis in reality. An empty empire is not an empire. Thus, describing the plan of settling in Hell as valueless or unsuccessful does not deliver the full force of Beelzebub's intended irony. And, of course, the emptiness of the empire of Hell in the Arabic translation captures its failure and worthlessness as well. Beelzebub hence advocates expansion and occupation; he appears as a colonial leader trying to persuade his fellows into invading the new world of humankind. Yet, his reasons for occupation are neither economic nor commercial, for the angels, Milton shows us, could easily "[dig] out ribs of Gold" from the earth (*PL*.I.690). Their imperial pursuits are not motivated by the dearth of resources in Hell. Again, it is the ambitious rivalry with God that motivates Beelzebub and his camp to try to occupy the New World. Beelzebub is more of a colonial leader in the imperialist sense; without expansion, the desired empire would be, in Beelzebub's opinion, empty, and hence, nonexistent.

The first step towards the realization of Satan's imperial intent in the New World is to seduce Adam and Eve. Having spied on them, Satan launches into a monologue that shows some regret, but he soon decides to pursue his aim, justifying his decision by public reason:

> And should I at your harmless innocence
>
> Melt, as I doe, yet public reason just,
>
> Honour and Empire with revenge enlarg'd,
>
> By conquering this new World, compels me now

To do what else though damnd I should abhor.

(*PL*.IV.388-392)

Ironically, the public reason is nothing but Satan's private reason at that specific moment. Milton's narrator says a few lines afterwards that "with necessitie, / The Tyrants plea, excus'd his devilish deeds" (*PL*.IV.393-394). Satan appears here as a Hobbesian sovereign whose power over the fallen angels is unconstrained, and thus his reason and judgment become public reason. Public reason here is actually a façade for the parenthetical phrase "Honour and Empire with revenge enlarg'd,". The parenthesis exposes the fact that the justification of seduction and occupation by public reason is absurd. The real justification is honor and empire.

The Arabic translation interestingly exposes the underlying contradictions in Satan's rhetoric. Aboud shows, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that it is not public reason that compels Satan to seduce the innocent couple and conquer the New World of Eden; it is honor and empire that *require* him to proceed with his plans:

faʾin kuntu layinan maʿa ṭahāratikumā

kamā ʾanā ʾalʾān, faʾinna-l-ʿaqla-l-ʿāma ʿādel,

falšarafu wa-l-ʾimbrāṭōriyyah yataṭallabāni tawsīʿa-l-intiqām

biġazwi hāḏa-l-ʿālami-l-ğadīd, mimmā yaḍṭarrani ʾalʾān

ʾan ʾafʿala mā kuntu ʾakrahuh, waʾin kuntu mudānan.

If I am mild with your innocence,

As I am now, then public reason is just,

For honor and empire require the expansion of revenge,

By conquering this new world, which compels me now

To do what I abhor, though I might be damned.

(*FM*.IV.388-392)

Milton's English text makes "public reason" a subject and makes "compels" its verb and subordinates the reference to empire and honor. The Arabic translation, however, only describes public reason as just, but it is not the force that directly compels Satan to do what he despises. The compelling in the Arabic text is done by public reason which is just, and by honor and empire which require the expansion of revenge and the invasion of Eden by deceit. This, however, does not mean that the Arabic translation assumes that empire and public reason are two separate causes; in fact, they are interrelated, almost two sides of the same coin. Honor and empire emerge as the real constituents of Satan's public reason, for the English parenthetical phrase "Honour and Empire with revenge enlarg'd," is upgraded in Arabic into the clause "falšarafu wa-l-ʾimbrāṭōriyyah yataṭallabāni tawsīʿa-l-intiqām" ("For honor and empire require the expansion of revenge") (*FM*.IV.390). The upgrading emphasizes the role of honor and empire as the real ends of the Satanic temptation. Besides, the use of the verb *yataṭallabāni* (require), with its legal sense, reveals a Satan who is under the authority of honor and empire, a Satan who is inwardly bound by his own lust for expansion.

The hint at the limitedness of the state of Hell and the need for expansion is emphasized by Sin in Book X. Sin tells Satan that "Hell could no longer hold us in her bounds," (*PL*.X.365) indicating that expansion was a necessary measure to enjoy freedom

and exercise unlimited political hegemony. The remark made by Sin mirrors the bourgeois mind in the late nineteenth century which saw in the nation-state an idea incompatible with infinite growth, not only economically but also politically. In terms of political structure, Arendt points out, "the nation-state is least suited for unlimited growth because the genuine consent at its base cannot be stretched indefinitely" (126) Likewise, Satan's expansion of the state of Hell cannot be based on the political consent given to him by the fallen angels, because humans will not give him that explicit consent. Alternatively, Sin and Death are his imperial agents who will facilitate his control over the New World through temptation and deceit.

The abstract role of Sin and Death in securing Satan's imperial domination over the New World is concretized by the construction of the bridge by Sin and Death over Chaos. As stated by Fallon, the image of Satan's return to Hell is the image of a colonizer returning from a successful expedition and it owes debt to seventeenth-century global affairs, particularly Oliver Cromwell's Western Design (130). Yet, what is very significant about the construction of the bridge is that it is delineated as the marker of the official establishment of Satan's empire. Pleased with Sin's and Death's efforts in building the bridge, Satan tells his offspring that they

> Amply have merited of me, of all
>
> Th' Infernal Empire that so neer Heav'ns dore
>
> Triumphal with triumphal act have met,
>
> Mine with this glorious Work, and made one Realm
>
> Hell and this World, one Realm, one Continent

Of easie thorough-fare. . . .

(*PL*.X.388-393)

The way the scene of Satan's return to Hell is depicted presents him as a victorious leader, ceremoniously and formally welcomed into his homeland. The references to Hell as empire before this scene were only references to an idea, i.e., a project rather than a fact. Now the empire is established and named as "Th' Infernal Empire" and Satan is "The Prince of Darkness" (X.383). The formality of the name of Satan's empire is even more pronounced in the Arabic text, for the adjective "Infernal" is transposed into the noun *alǧaḥīm* (Hell). After the construction of the bridge according to the track Satan first made, the empire is formally proclaimed as "ʾimbrāṭōriyat alǧaḥīm" (the Empire of Hell) (*FM*.X.389). The bridge is symbolic for the successful seduction of Eve and is an empire-building instrument that made Hell and the New World "one Realm" or "mamlakatan wāḥida" (one kingdom) in Aboud's translation (*FM*.X.392). But, most importantly, it will allow for further future expansion as it facilitates the transportation between the imperial center and the targeted colonies.

God's imperial project and the return of the spiritual

Satan's imperialism, as shaped in the infernal council and afterwards, has had its impact on God's empire as well. The first reference to God's empire is made by Satan himself when he claims that his forceful rebellion has made God fear for his rule:

That Glory never shall his wrath or might

Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace

With suppliant knee, and deifie his power,

Who from the terrour of this Arm so late

Doubted his Empire, . . .

(*PL*.I.110-114)

At this point, Satan was only a bourgeois rebel whose uprising against God's rule has not succeeded in achieving its ends. At the time of Satan's revolution, God's empire was universal, unrivalled. Of course, Satan's claim that God doubted his imperial status because of the fallen angels' revolution could be unreliable. However, what supports Satan's claims is the expansionist tactics to be adopted by God later. Because God often reacts to Satan's actions, the way Satan's speech is phrased underlines a cause-and-effect relationship between "the terrour of Satan's Arm" (*PL*.I.113) and God's doubts in his own rule.

These alleged doubts are quite important because they will make God change his policies and seek expansion to solidify his rule in the form of creating Eden, humankind, and the universe. The Arabic translation, however, downplays God's reaction as a ruler doubting his power; the focus in the Arabic text is on Satan's action which unsettled God's imperial rule:

ḏālika-l-mağd lā yumkin liġaḍabihi ʾaw quwwatih

ʾan yantazʿāhu minnī wamā-l-inḥināʾu waṭalbu riḍāhu

bilrukūʿi alḍāriʿ, walinṣiyāʿi lisulṭath

wahuwa man irtaʿada ruʿban min hāḏihi alḏirāʿ

alllatī hazzat imbrāṭōriyyatih wa-tarannaḥat fiʿlan

fa-laysa siwa-l-ẖizyi wal-ʿār . . .

This glory cannot be removed by his anger or strength.

To bow and ask for his grace

With suppliant knee, and to obey his power,

Who was terrified by this arm

Which shook his empire and actually staggered it,

Is nothing but a shame . . .

(*FM*.I.110-115)

Although the elimination of the reference to God's doubt is a significant loss, the use of the verb *hazza* (shake or disturb) and the verb *tarannaḥa* (stagger) as a replacement for the idea of God's doubting his empire has a strong political implication. The verb *hazza* collocates with the noun *alḏirāʿ* (the arm), but it is also used in political contexts to denote the unsettling impact of a massive event, like a revolution, a war, or a political scandal. The verb *tarannaḥa* is also used in similar political contexts to describe a phase preceding the ultimate collapse of a regime. Hence, the political discourse of the Arab Spring creeps into text and echoes the political terms used by Milton in his delineation of the conflict in Heaven.

The creation of the universe and human beings is closely linked to the doubts that have been cast in God's empire by Satan's empire. While Quint characterizes this act as that of "translatio imperii" (281)—that is a renewal of the empire by transferring it to Adam, it is also important to note that Raphael describes to Adam this event as an "addition of [God's] Empire" (*PL*.VII.555). According to Janel Mueller, "the narrative of

the creation of the universe and the human race encompasses the entire career of Milton's God as an imperialist." (34) Moreover, Satan, disguised as a cherub, says to Uriel that the new race of Man is created with the intention "to repair [the] loss" of driving out the rebellious angels (*PL*.III.678). Satan's statement is not contested by Uriel who happily points out for Satan the way to Adam's abode. The creation of the new world is thus an expansionist endeavor, a change in divine tactics from the absolutism and universalism of his ancient Empire to a modern imperialist policy. And because competition is at the root of this new expansionist policy, God accepts the Son's self-sacrifice as he foresees that his rival will ruin the New World and cause the Fall of Adam and Eve.

Nevertheless, the acceptance of the Son's sacrifice is also an important turn in God's imperialist work. This turn climaxed in Book VII where the Son is presented as God's agent of creation: "And by my Word, begotten Son, by thee / This I perform, speak thou, and be it don: / My overshadowing Spirit and might with thee" (*PM*.VII. 163-165). The involvement of the Son—or 'the spiritual goodness of the "omnific Word"' as Quint calls it (203)—in the process of creation is an indication of the reconciliation between God's political, creative, and spiritual sides. Mueller illustrates that "from this point onward, God altogether gives over his imperial pretensions. Never again, within the framework of human time instituted with the creation of Eden and Adam and Eve, does God invest his messianic Son in the political and military triumphalism that characterizes his earlier thought" (36).

The Son's spiritual goodness is supported by God's Spirit and might—that is God's political and spiritual sides. The Arabic translation stresses the coupling of the

spiritual and the political/military by translating the phrase "overshadowing Spirit and might" as "rōḥiy-al-muẓillah likulli šayʾin wa-ğabarūtī" ("my overshadowing Spirit and omnipotence") (*FM*.VII.165). The Holy Spirit appears here as a creative power after its role as a Muse has been marginalized in the Arabic translation. The term *ğabarūt* (omnipotence or supreme power) obviously clarifies the special nature of God's might and assigns to it a unique political sense. The reconciliation of the different sides of God is the main thing that differentiates between God's imperialism and Satan's imperialism; the former's expansionism gains through the Son a spiritual element that is lacking in Satan's project.

The logic behind God's imperial power is best demonstrated in the exchange between Satan and Abdiel where the latter explains that God's absolute power gains its exclusivity and legitimacy from his creative power:

> Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute
> With him the points of libertie, who made
> Thee what thou art, & formd the Pow'rs of Heav'n
> Such as he pleasd, and circumscrib'd their being?
>
> (*PL*.V.822-825)

Aboud translates Abdiel's response as such:

> fahal ʾanta tuʿti-l-šarīʿata lillāh, ʾatatanāzaʿu
> maʿahu fī ʾususi-l-ḥurriyyah, maʿa man ğaʿalaka
> ʿalā mā ʾanta fīh, wa ẖalaqa-l-quwwāti-l-samāwiyyah

kamā yasurruhu, wa-rasma lakum kayānakum?

Shall you give law to God, shall you dispute with him

On the principles of freedom, with whom who made you

What you are, and created heavenly powers

As he pleased and designed your entity?

(*FM.* V.822-825)

Abdiel's response to Satan's argument emphasizes that God has the right to reign because he is the creator of all beings, including Satan and the fallen angels. The fact that he has created all beings gives him his imperial power. The phrase "who made / Thee what thou art," (*PL*.V.823-824) is general enough to allow for a general interpretation. God did not only create all beings, but he also created good, evil, and the freedom Satan always claims to himself. Abdiel does not say that God created *who* Satan is, but rather says that God created *what* Satan is. If Satan is as equal in freedom as God, as he argues, then what he as a free being is created by God. Abdiel then adds that God has created the powers of Heaven, including the angels who rebelled against him, and circumscribed their entities. God is, thus, the author of forms and values. The translator captures Abdiel's generalization; God is the one who created what Satan is: "man ğaʿalaka /ʿalā mā ʾanta fīh*"* ("who made you what you are") (*FM*.V.823-824). Aboud's text also states that God is the one who created the powers of Heaven as he wills, but, interestingly, he changes the pronoun that modifies the word *being* from "their" to "your": "ʿalā mā ʾanta fīh, wa ẖalaqa-l-quwwāti-l-samāwiyyah / kamā yasurruhu, wa-rasma lakum kayānakum?" ("and created heavenly powers / As he pleased and designed your entity?")

(*FM.* V.824-825). By doing that, Aboud lays the focus on Satan and his followers and makes it explicit that God is the creator of what Satan is, including his very entity—that is, his existence. Any possible ambiguity in the phrase "what thou art" is removed by Aboud's substitution of the third-person pronoun with the second-person pronoun.

God's imperial reign and the expansion of his empire through the creation of Eden and the universe are justified by the fact that he is the Creator of all territories and all values, including good, evil, freedom, and servitude. Ironically, God's empire, as Beelzebub acknowledges in the infernal council, is extended to Hell, the center of Satan's empire, simply because God is the creator of Hell as well. God's authority is therefore based on his authorship and fecundity (Lehnhof 18). Even though God and Satan share an imperialist goal grounded in expansion and competition, what makes Satan a true modern Imperialist is that his imperialist means is usurpation rather than spiritual creativity.

Conclusion

The relationship between Aboud's *Al-Firdaws Al-Mafqūd* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* is both direct and indirect. It is direct because it is a translation of Milton's text and is indirect because it is circumscribed by Aboud's critical work on the epic and the regional and global conversations that overshadowed the publication of the translation. Aboud's thoughts on the epic in his study of the history of the novel provide a necessary interpretive background that informs the analysis of Satan's character as a freedom fighter and as an imperialist. Considering these kaleidoscopic relations, the shift from a bourgeois Satan to an imperialist Satan and the moral ambiguity of the character of the Father mark the multiple, though apparently contradictory, messages of *Paradise Lost*.

The translation underscores the what-if in a move that takes into consideration the governmental patronage, the audience's horizon of expectations, and the cloudy post-revolutionary situation in Tunisia and Egypt. The lack of a clear political stance in the translation and the prefatory material, despite the politically charged atmosphere amidst which the translation was published, suggests that the translator is attentive to the intended audience—the elites and the metropolitan bourgeoisie who, for a variety of reasons, did not actively protest Al-Assad's regime in the centers of Damascus and Aleppo. In a related vein, the translator emphasizes the supremacy of the epic's literary situation, hence presenting himself as an ideologically detached "reporter" of the fluidity of the text (Saldanha 101). In the literary situation, Satan and God are engaged in a fluid conflict which is subject to changing tactics and outcomes. Drawing on this fluidity, the translator's Introduction subtly hints at the uncertainty that overshadows the social and political situation in the Arabic-speaking world during and after the Arab Spring. The anxiety over religious demagoguery is particularly reflective of the post-Mubarak scene in Egypt where the rising Islamist parties threatened social and creative freedoms.

The Arabic translation cannot be reduced to a propagandist text presenting the Syrian regime's rhetoric against the public uprising in Syria, nor can it be described as a revolutionary text advocating a Satan-style political emancipation. The text addresses the anxieties of the Arabic-speaking public over freedom and the imperialist intents of Euro-American powers. Through the character of Satan, Aboud elucidates the two sides of the argument on freedom in both the Miltonic text and in the Arab Spring. This is evident in Satan's promotion of freedom and his adoption of democratic means in the infernal

council before he embarks on an imperial pursuit of domination over God's creation. Based on Franklin Henry Giddings' remarks on the emergence of democratic empires in the nineteenth century, Satan employs democratic methods locally but seeks domination outside the borders of Hell by aggression and seduction. As a freedom fighter, Satan represents the revolutionary point of view which seeks to overthrow the pre-2011 autocratic regimes and contribute to decision-making actively and democratically. As an imperialist, Satan embodies the deep-seated suspicions of large portions of the public about imperialist agendas masked as freedom calls. In fact, the imperialist schemes make us doubt the sincerity of Satan's freedom slogans; Arendt, in *On Revolution*, notes that only movements whose aim is freedom could be described as revolutionary (29). Satan's violent disobedience is apparently revolutionary, but Arendt tells us that violent insurgences are revolutionary when they strive for the constitution of new beginnings coupled with the continuous advancement of freedom (35). Obviously, Satan's new beginnings do not fully serve freedom but instigate the power-hungry control over Hell and the attempted colonization of paradise.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the Iraq War, there were many speculations that Syria would be "the next target in the Middle East for coercive democratization" (Encarnación 57-58). However, unlike the contemporary form of democratic imperialism which exercises domination by advocating the universality of democracy and pushing for coercive democratization worldwide, Satan's attack on God's creation is not justified by the ideal of implanting freedom in human race, but rather by a self-professed desire for

revenge. Aboud's translation is, therefore, a product of complex local and global interactions between a variety of texts and ideas.

CHAPTER V

TOPPLING THE UPPER EGYPTIAN LEAR

Shakespeare has held a significant place in Arabic literature, theater, and even popular culture since the late nineteenth century. Mark Bayer claims that Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* was the first Shakespearean play to be translated into Arabic and the first to be made into a theatrical production under the title *šuhadāʾ al-ġarām* (*The Martyrs of Love*), which was very popular in Cairo in the late nineteenth century (6). The commemoration of Shakespeare organized by the Egyptian University (now Cairo University) in 1916 also testifies to the Bard's cultural and literary value in Egypt (Awad 7). Sameh Hanna has paid special attention to the sociocultural circumstances that surrounded and shaped Shakespeare's reception in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. As documented by Hanna in his book *Bourdieu in Translation Studies*, the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed the production of many translations, staged performances, and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, especially the tragedies. However, *King Lear*, Ramsis Awad points out, was not given due attention in the early twentieth-century translation and adaptation movement. Awad argues that this is because *King Lear* is better read than performed and that the scene of putting out Gloucester's eyes is very disturbing to the Egyptian audience as much as it is disturbing to the British audience (105).

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a new interest in *King Lear* in the Egyptian popular culture with the production of the 1979 popular TV series *abnāʾi-l-aʿizāʾ, šukran* (*Thank you, my Dear Children*) which sheds light on the theme of filial ingratitude. In 1987, the British director Deborah Warner presented a staged performance

of *King Lear* at Al-Gomhuria theatre in Cairo, and in 1991 Mohamed Abdel-Hadi made another production of Shakespeare's tragedy for the avant-garde theatre (Selaiha 2). The year 2002 saw the popular staging of *King Lear* at Egypt's National Theatre, featuring the veteran star Yahia El-Fakharani in the role of Lear. Interestingly, El-Fakharani was the elder son in *Thank you, my Dear Children.* The huge success of the 2002 production encouraged a restaging in 2019 at Cairo Show theatre. However, between the 2002 performance and the 2019 restaging, *King Lear* was brought to the small screen in 2014 through the Upper Egyptian tragedy *Dahša* (hereinafter referred to as *Dahsha*) which featured Yahia El-Fakharani in the role of El-Basel, the leader of the southern fictional village of Dahsha (meaning *bewilderment*). The TV series was directed by Shadi El-Fakharani and the script was written by Abdel-Rahim Kamal, an Upper Egyptian writer, famous for his writings and TV shows that focus on the Egyptian South. This is an instance where a previous stage performance provides the screen adaptation with an important resource embodied in the lead actor. The encounter between Kamal and the Shakespearean text is mediated through the 2002 Egyptian performance; the mediation as a phenomenon is accounted for by Margaret Litvin in her analysis of the reception of Shakespeare in the Arabic-speaking world.

The TV series came three years after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution which ended the reign of President Mubarak and was followed by political vacuum and widespread social chaos. The circumstances that surrounded the production of the TV series and its exploration of the theme of power stimulated a comparison between Egypt's sociopolitical context and the events of the series. Although El-Fakharani pointed out in a

2014 interview that the parallelism between El-Basel and the rulers of the Arab Spring countries is a mere coincidence, the assumption that the series offers an indirect political commentary on contemporary Egypt is unescapable. In Abdel-Rahim Kamal's interview with *Al-Masry Al-Yawm* (*The Egyptian Today*), he stated that the political changes influenced the script only because he lived through them, and not because he wanted to create a politicized show.

The political reading of the Egyptian Lear is supported by the fact that the 2002 staging was buzzing with political undertones, given the fact that the Fool recited multiple colloquial Egyptian short poems by Ahmed Fuad Negm who outspokenly criticized and opposed Mubarak's regime. Hazem Azmy believes the 2002 Egyptian play was "a missed opportunity to touch upon the aging President Hosni Mubarak and his perceived vanity in seeking to hand over the country, along with its people, to [his son Gamal Mubarak]" (108). The most recent appearances of Lear in Egypt are hence informed by political questions that cannot be sidelined. Like Hamlet, the Egyptian Lear is concerned with "political agency: the desire to determine one's fate, to be an actor in history rather than a victim of it" (Litvin 22). But if *Dahsha* does not offer a direct commentary on the Egyptian revolutionary scene as emphasized by El-Fakharani and Kamal, how does the play's focus on political agency manifest itself in relation to the Egyptian context? The answer to this question lies in the setting chosen for the Egyptian TV series. The Upper Egyptian setting has long been a site for a conflict between traditional leaders and the modern central government. Kamal invokes scenes from the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath to shed light on the peripheralization of Upper

Egypt, the limits of traditional rule and legal rule, and the power vacuum when both types of authority fail to maintain their legitimacy.

The present discussion focuses on the sociopolitical dynamics of Kamal's *Dahsha* by exploring its relations with Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the issues of rulership and political agency in the Egyptian South. Through Kamal's *Dahsha*, this chapter probes the politics of the household as a microcosm of the patriarchal system, the conflict between traditional rule and legal-bureaucratic rule, and the ruler-subject relationship. Max Weber's typology of legitimate rule is useful to this argument, for it offers a detailed analysis of traditional rule as opposed to rational, bureaucratic rule. Kamal chooses to set the events of his story in a pre-1952 Upper Egyptian context which exhibits patriarchism in a conspicuous form. The proximation between the English and the Egyptian cultural contexts is enabled by the conservatism of the Upper Egyptian society and culture which offers a valid and remarkable analogy with Lear's pre-modern England. The protagonist, El-Basel, is faced with the challenge of deciding the fate of his paternal and political power, but in the process of deciding this fate, he is brought into full-scale confrontation with tradition, the very source of his authority. Amidst the ensuing chaos, pre-modern and modern forces engage in a fierce clash that leads to the protagonist's tragic fall.

The first rebel

The first lines of Shakespeare's *King Lear* are a statement that defines the underlying principle of Lear's rule. To use Weber's categorization, Lear's rule is defined neither by "levelling" (qualification and competence) nor by "formal impersonality" (the absence of passion or hatred); it is a traditional rule where favoritism is a customary,

predictable norm (Weber 353). Even though the traditional nature of Lear's rule is already implied in its being a hereditary monarchy, Kent's and Gloucester's opening exchange hints at the inherent problems that would later lead to Lear's tragic downfall:

> Kent. I thought the King had more affected the Duke
> of Albany than Cornwall.
> Gloucester. It did always seem so to us, but now in
> the division of the kingdom, it appears not which
> of the dukes he values most, for equalities are so
> weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice
> of either's moiety.
>
> (*KL*.I.I.1-7)

Kent assumes that Lear, who apparently liked Albany more than Cornwall, would favor the former and grant him a larger portion of the kingdom, but Gloucester assures him that the kingdom is to be divided equally regardless of who the king favors most. Kent's assumption arises either from a deep understanding of Lear's mindset or from a firm belief that this is the order of things in Lear's administration. Both interpretations expose the problem in Lear's body politic which, prior to the love test, is not separated from his body natural yet.

Ironically, the same scene proves Gloucester wrong, for Lear arranges a public love test for his three daughters; the results of the test would determine the fate of the kingdom. What is even more problematic than the principle of favoritism itself is that Lear does not apply it based on who he internally favors or loves most but based on who

publicly and ceremonially expresses love for Lear. The external, staged, and verbal show of love is to be used by Lear to judge "[w]here nature doth with merit challenge" (*KL*.I.I.58), but the test is not a valid proof of nature (affection) or merit. In fact, merit plays no formal role in traditional rule; in "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," Weber indicates that "the material means of administration are [completely] managed under . . . the lord." (10) Therefore, the test of nature and merit is a self-contradictory and absurd attempt on Lear's part to rationalize the irrational transition of power and to have it governed by a specific principle. Max Weber points out that traditional rule uses "principles of material ethical equity, justice, or utilitarian expediency and not, as in the case of legal rule, formal principles." (355) The principle of merit laid by the love contest between Lear's daughters is, in Lear's point of view, just. But, as Carolyn A. Weber indicates, it "ironically disadvantage[s] those who ethically deserve the inheritance of power." (115) The employment of irony in the opening scene of the play is not just a preparation for the anticipated tragic upheaval, but also "a method of treating ideas" (States 3). The ideas that underlie traditional rule and social order are under the attack of Shakespeare's irony. The questioning of tradition is, of course, best manifested in Edmund's private rejection of the dominant social order through the invocation of nature in his soliloquy in Act II Scene II. This will be explored later, but the first scene sets the tone for the questioning of the absurd principles of traditional rule whether in the household realm or the administrative realm.

The protest of the use of the love contest as a legitimizing principle for power transition comes from Cordelia. Cordelia does not respond with silence to her father's

demand for a verbal demonstration of love; her response is already a statement: "Nothing, my lord." (*KL*.I.I.96) Such a reply does not simply arise from the assumption that filial affection is "[m]ore ponderous than [her] tongue." (*KL*.I.I.87); Cordelia sees the relationship between herself as daughter and heiress and Lear as father and king in terms of a "bond" defined by rights and duties:

> Cordelia. Good my lord,
>
> You have begot me, bred me, loved me.
>
> I return those duties back as are right fit:
>
> Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
>
> Why have my sisters husbands if they say
>
> They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
>
> That lord whose hand must take my plight shall
>
> carry
>
> Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
>
> Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
>
> To love my father all.
>
> (*KL*.I.I.105-115)

The language used by Cordelia is not comprehensible to the father and the patriarchal ruler for whom paternal and political authority is defined in terms of reverence and obedience, and not in terms of returned duties. Cordelia comes across as "coldly legalistic" (Bell 144-145), and Lear attributes such strange legalistic formalism to youth and lack of tenderness. Cordelia's unexpected answer "breaks apart affective-hierarchical

bonds by introducing rational-contractarian ones: love is a fungible asset, to be balanced as if in an account ledger." (Schulman 104) By introducing this rational, contractarian bond, Cordelia proposes an alternative to the bonds established by tradition. We are thus dealing with a conflict between an old traditional authority and an emergent rational paradigm that revises the terms of paternal and political authority.

The revolt against tradition and patriarchism occupies a central position in Kamal's *Dahsha*. However, the resistance to the patriarchal rule starts with a household rebellion where Neimah does not offer an alternative formal paradigm to the patriarchal paradigm determined by obedience. In Episode 4, which witnesses the love protestation, Neimah does not speak the contractarian language used by Cordelia but takes a more radical stance to the love test. She protests the transactional essence of the love test, for she does not only state that she has nothing to say to her father, but also says she wants nothing of his fortune if it is to be traded for a staged expression of love. Cordelia's explicit denunciation of "respect and fortunes" (*KL* I.I.288) comes after Lear's sentence to deprive her of his wealth and Burgundy's rejection of her as a wife. But Neimah's rejection of her father's exchange of wealth for verbal love comes before El-Basel's decision: "maʿindīš we-maʿayzāš ḥağa. elḥāğali tamanha kalām maʿawzahāš. maʿayzāš minak wers" ("I have nothing to say. And I want nothing. I don't want the thing whose price is words. I don't want your dower") (*Dahsha* 4). Unlike Cordelia who formally addresses her father as "your Majesty" (*KL*.I.I.101), Neimah does not use any terms of respect in a clear linguistic revolt against the customs of filial reverence. Neimah's disregard for patriarchism is also manifested in her acceptance of Bilal as a husband

against her father's will, her tense interactions with Bilal's parents, and her giving Bilal her jewelry so that he can build them a private house away from his parents' home.

This pattern is sustained throughout the narrative. Towards the end of the show, Neimah—having realized the inefficiency of Bilal whom she tasked with the pursuit of the mad El-Basel as a condition for marital reconciliation—is determined to seek out her father herself. This instance parallels Cordelia's invasion of England to rescue Lear, aided by her husband, the King of France. But Bilal is not a king and does not have a power that parallels the King of France's military power. Although El-Basel reunites with Neimah by accidently walking into the house of Gharabawiya, a common woman who hosted Neimah after the latter had left her husband's house, Neimah's determination establishes her as a parent-like figure assuming the responsibility of saving El-Basel who, given his madness and powerlessness, is reduced to a dependent child. As noted by Fred B. Tromly in his commentary on father-son relationships in *King Lear*, "The parable of the Prodigal Son is ironically inverted, as fathers are driven from their castles by angry children, forced to confront elemental hardships, and finally harboured by the loyal children whom they had rashly banished." (187) Interestingly, Neimah says to Gharabawiya, as she prepares to leave the house to pursue her father, "men fien ya ẖāla ġarabāwiyya hagdar ʾanfaʿ waladi-lli ğāy wana ḍayaʿt ʾabūya?" ("How should I be of use to my expected child if I lose my father, aunt Gharabawiya?") (*Dahsha* 26). The comparison between El-Basel and her expected child reveals the former's dependence on her and the fragility of paternal authority. From a modern perspective, this newly fulfilled

agency marks Neimah's and Cordelia's heroism, but for El-Basel and Lear, it marks the disintegration of their patriarchal system.

Neimah's revolt against traditional codes raises questions about its genesis. What are the causes of Neimah's rebellion? Is her rebellion only triggered by an internal initiative or an inherent revolutionary impulse? The answer requires an investigation of the way El-Basel himself deals with tradition as the source of his authority as a father, i.e., as a ruler of the household. It is true that the first episode presents a stubborn Neimah who protests El-Basel's business trip and refuses to have breakfast or to say goodbye to him. But if we assume that Neimah's characterization as a stubborn daughter is the cause of her rebellion, we might run the risk of reducing the Egyptian adaptation into a didactic, morality work on filial disobedience and the rashness of young people. In the characters of Lear and El-Basel, the audience is introduced to tragic heroes who are chased by Nemesis even though they have realized the gravity of their mistakes and have tried, especially in the case of El-Basel, to take rectifying measures to undo the damage they have caused. Therefore, it is not Neimah's stubbornness or the sheer greed of her sisters that causes El-Basel's ruin; his tragic fate is sealed by his manipulation of the limits of tradition.

The idea of retaining authority after giving up the sources of such authority exposes El-Basel's hubris. He assumes he is invincible, and his belief in his invincibility is evident in the fact that he is the one who starts abusing tradition, the basis of his fatherly legitimacy. During El-Basel's business trip, his business mentor, unmarried and childless, dies leaving behind a huge wealth that could fall into the wrong hands. The

death of a wealthy childless friend and the past prejudices that shape El-Basel's relationship with his half-brothers give way to fear, and fear triggers a response. As Allan Johnson points out, the patriarchal reaction to fear usually involves a desire for more control:

> Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control; to fear other men's ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire. In this sense, although we usually think of patriarchy in terms of women and men, it is more about what goes on among men. (26)

El-Basel is not willing to give up his power entirely. On the contrary, he is afraid of losing it to his half-brothers and assumes that the transfer of his fortune to his daughters will safeguard him from the destiny he fears. According to John J. McLaughlin, this is also Lear's intent, for he thinks that relinquishing his office "will enable him to consolidate the personal powers he fears are slipping away with advancing years." (37) Out of this fear, El-Basel seeks more control by organizing a family meeting, followed by the love contest.

In fact, the idea of transferring his fortune to his daughters is not completely his. A day before the love test, he visits his full sister, Sakan, and shares his concerns with her. Sakan rebuke him for thinking he should give up his wealth to his half-brothers and suggests instead that he should transfer his wealth to his daughters:

> Sakan. mīn gāl šagāk yurūḥluhum?

El-Basel. šarʿ rabina ya bint-abūy!

Sakan. tiddi šagāk liʿyāl marat abūk zumurruj? yak kibbirt witdabbiet winsiet nōmtil-hōš.

El-Basel. mansītiš

Sakan. šagāk libanātak ya-wild abūy, willi ḥaramak ḥagak, mayāẖudš šağāk.

El-Basel. yaʿni huwwa da kalāmik ya-sakan?

Sakan. ya-wād kalāmi ğuwwāk miš barrāk

Sakan. Who said your hard-earned fortune should go to [your brothers]?

El-Basel. It's God's law, sister!

Sakan. You want to hand your fortune to the sons of your stepmother, Zumurruj? It seems like you are got old and lost your mind and forgot she made us sleep in the yard.

El-Basel. I never forgot.

Sakan. Your fortune should go to your daughters, brother! Those who denied you your right shouldn't take your fortune.

El-Basel. Is this what you think, Sakan?

(*Dahsha* 3)

Sakan's advice seems like a validation of what El-Basel has been already considering because he, without much pondering or deliberation, takes her advice and decides to hold a family meeting at her house the following day.

The family meeting starts with a reckoning with the past that ends in disinheriting El-Basel's half-brothers. It is in this scene that Kamal makes El-Basel a self-professed

god-like patriarch: he judges Muhran on his greed and Allam on his lechery before he disinherits them based on these “sins” and based on past offences committed by Muhran’s and Allam’s late mother against El-Basel and Sakan. In Islamic jurisprudence—referred to by El-Basel as “šarʿ rabina” (“God’s law”), the half-brothers are supposed to have a third of the inheritance while the remaining two thirds go to the daughters. And according to Salwa El-Mahdy, it is very common for a man in Upper Egypt to pass down his estate to male inheritors only in order to keep the fortune under the family’s name instead of passing it down to a daughter who might get married into another family. Hence, the assignment of all the wealth to the daughters is already against the traditional codes of the Egyptian South, whether these codes originate from religion or from the patriarchal structure of the Upper Egyptian society.

The reckoning scene is meant to justify the love test and uncover some of the secrets that will shape the rest of the show’s action, including the fact that Allam has an illegitimate son. Although Allam insistently refuses to call him his son and labels him “a servant,” he eventually challenges El-Basel by saying “law huwwa waladi, baga ʿandi waladein, weld ḥalāl we weld ḥarām. hatġūr min ʿala ḍahrildunia maghūr. ẖulūftak banāt” (“If he is my son, I now have two sons: one is legitimate and one is illegitimate. But you will die in misery; your offspring are girls.”) (*Dahsha* 4) Following the end of the reckoning and the exit of El-Basel’s half-brothers, he is left with Sakan and his three daughters. Obviously, Allam’s statement has rubbed salt into a deep wound, which provokes El-Basel to make an important speech: “hayʿayirni biẖalūfit-ilbanāt ya sakan. mayiʿrafš ʾin nawāl rābḥa wi niʿnāʿa, ḍufr waḥda minhum bisilsāluh kulluh. rabina

ẖalagkum banāt, wana haʿmilkum wilād" (He shames me that my offspring are girls, Sakan. He doesn't know that any of Nawal's, Rabha's, or Neimah's fingernails is worth his entire lineage. God made them girls, and I will make them boys.") (*Dahsha* 4) Apart from the fact that Nawal and Rabha will later disappoint him, El-Basel's statement is another strong blow to tradition since it implies a revolt against God and gender roles. For him, the act of giving up his fortune to his daughters would reverse the gender designated by God. Not only does this statement "[open] the script to the interpretation that Bāsil's acts incur divine retribution" (Ibrahim 72), but it also implies a dangerous denunciation of the conventions prevalent in the conservative cultural system of the Egyptian South—the conventions which legitimize El-Basel's authority in the first place.

El-Basel's belief in his god-like omnipotence tempts him into manipulating the limits of traditions whose object is, according to Eric Hobsbawm, is "invariance." (2) Regardless of any modern progressive view of it, it is tradition that endows his authority with legitimacy. El-Basel resists the traditional social order by disinheriting his half-brothers (although his justifications seem valid) and by pledging to re-gender his daughters as men. The subsequent disintegration of the private and public orders arises from El-Basel's tragic flaw—his belief that he is above the established rules of tradition and that he can trespass its boundaries without suffering the consequences. According to Max Weber, in the traditional order, "[w]hatever is in fact newly created has to be legitimated as something that has always existed," (355) but El-Basel fails to justify how his radical decisions are backed by antecedents from tradition.

After El-Basel sinks into madness, he reunites with Neimah and decides to take corrective measures that involve giving Neimah a part of his fortune that was not disclosed before. But the tragic ending is inevitable because the hero's flaw has not been rectified: El-Basel's attempt to compensate Neimah involves his messing with tradition again. El-Basel kept an enormous amount of gold in his grave and decided to give the gold to Neimah. The act of keeping part of his wealth in a grave is a desecration of the conventions of death in a culture that has always treated death and its rituals with considerable regard, whether for religious reasons or for deep-rooted cultural considerations. The scene where El-Basel and Neimah walk towards the cemetery delineates a massive ritualistic procession that resembles a typically traditional funeral, for El-Basel asked the whole village to join him as he restores Neimah's right to her. It goes without saying that what is intended to be a public ceremony in the cemetery turns into a bloody stampede that results in Neimah's death. That is, what appeared like a funeral has really turned into a funeral. El-Basel's final violation was preceded by another violation of no less gravity: since Neimah married Bilal against his will, he did not attend her wedding, so he asked Bilal to re-propose to her and held a new wedding although by that time Neimah was already pregnant. The blindness of the hero to his limitations is therefore unabolished by his attempts to fix his follies. In the stampede scene, El-Basel fails to rescue his daughter just as Lear fails to save Cordelia's life. Hence, their last attempt to sustain their patriarchal power is proved futile. The ending of *Dahsha* features El-Basel, now completely stripped of his authority and wealth, sitting by Neimah's grave, and desperately waiting for his death.

Law vs tradition

Neimah's revolt against at the level of the household parallels an emerging antagonism between traditional rule and legal rule outside the household. Legitimacy in *Dahsha* is contested by the traditional ruler and the legal administration, but in *King Lear*, tradition is the "curiosity of nations" or the invented rules, such as the rules governing primogeniture, which stands against reason, labelled as "nature" in Edmund's famous soliloquy:

> Thou, Nature, art my goddess. To thy law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
> The curiosity of nations to deprive me
> For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
> Lag of a brother? why "bastard"? Wherefore "base,"
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous and my shape as true
> As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
> With "base," with "baseness," "bastardy," "base,"
> "base,"
>
> (*KL*.I.II.1-11)

Edmund's words call for competence as a criterion for legitimacy. The use of the word *nature* invites a reconsideration of its meaning away from Lear's and Gloucester's interpretation of it. In other words, Edmund calls into question the pragmatic use of the

word *nature* which could be twisted in different ways. His political philosophy rejects the rules of primogeniture and pedigree which are determined by mere luck and ban a man possessing competent faculties from rulership.

Despite this apparent difference between the Shakespearean text and the Egyptian adaptation, the issue of the arbitrariness of tradition is central to both works. The principles that exclude Edmund from the social order are perceived as arbitrary and irrational just as the traditional rule of El-Basel is perceived as arbitrary and irrational by the legal administration. Moreover, Edmund does not only want to be included in or recognized by the social order; he wants to rule (Applbaum 23). Likewise, the representative of legal rule in *Dahsha* is not simply seeking the respect and the acknowledgment of traditional authority; he views himself as the legitimate ruler, whereas the traditional ruler is a criminal who, based on reason and law, must be overthrown and imprisoned.

In fact, the friction between reason and tradition is more pronounced in *Dahsha* than it is in Shakespeare's play due to the time and the place in which the Egyptian adaptation is set. Dahsha is a place that should be integrated into the legal rule of the modern Egyptian state, but Lear's pre-modern England is already outside the framework of modernity. There is no explicit reference to the historical period in which the events of the Egyptian story take place. Yet, the costumes suggest that the events take place before the 1952 Revolution against monarchy; the police officers, the sentry, El-Basel's Cairene partner, the lawyer, and some of the extras who appear in the *bandar* (a word colloquially used in Egypt to refer to a city among a group of villages) wear the traditional tarboosh

(Turkish fez)—a costume that was eliminated after 1952. It is likely that the period depicted by Kamal is the 1940s because in the first episode Nozha—the mother of Radi, Allam's illegitimate son—is seen reciting a folk song playing on the radio; the song is by the Egyptian singer Badiaa Sadiq (1923-2010) who was popular in the 1940s and the 1950s.

Until the 1952 Revolution, the British maintained their political, economic, and military presence in Egypt despite the official independence. Although the 1922 Unilateral Declaration of Egyptian Independence recognized Egypt as an independent state, it did not "[grant] Egyptians full sovereignty." (Elkins 148) The policies which were adopted since the 1882 British occupation did not significantly change after the 1922 Declaration. Upper Egypt was particularly marginalized under the British colonial rule. While the North benefitted from the imperial capitalist project, the attempts to solidify the modern nation-state by integrating the South into that project did not achieve their desirable ends, and, according to Zeinab Abul-Magd, "the fact that the south was a rebellious region and relentlessly resented ventures of economic penetration by the informal empire did not help ease its growing marginalization." (123) Abul-Magd adds that it was hard to integrate the Egyptian South through economic means given the fact that the colonial regime had "peripheralized Upper Egypt . . . through its liberal institutional and legal reforms" (124). In her commentary on the USAID attempt at economically penetrating Upper Egypt during Mubarak's rule, Abul-Magd indicates that the US imperial economic project did not achieve much success either (152). Besides, the troubled relationship between the bureaucratic administration and the informal,

traditional powers of the South persisted even after the establishment of the Egyptian republic in 1953. The security apparatus protected southern bandits and leaders (many of whom were engaged in illicit activities) at certain points, especially during the heavy-handed counter-terrorism efforts in the 1980s and the 1990s, but once these informal powers posed a threat to the central government, they were dispensed with (Abul-Magd 154). In fact, the failure of Egypt's central government in bringing about fundamental political, legal, and economic reforms in Upper Egypt was an integral part of the 2011 revolutionary discourse.

The fact that Dahsha is an upper Egyptian village dominated by El-Basel—an illicit gold miner and arms dealer hiding his business behind camel raising—is a clear indication of the fractured legal and political system. The opening shots depict an underdeveloped, almost pre-modern landscape; Dahsha is oppressively encompassed by lifeless mountains. El-Basel's house lies on a high hill that overlooks the village, and the villagers are engaged in their daily activities as the sun sets. The scene visually suggests a patriarchal, though stable, ruler-subject relationship, but the sunset and the cold, windy weather foreshadow the dramatic changes. The arrival of a masked stranger (Radi), Allam's bastard son, on foot in such a weather underscores the imminent disorder.

Around the middle of the first episode and before the sunrise of the following day, Lieutenant Fuad Othman, Dahsha's newly appointed police officer, arrives at the police station and meets the sentry who at first does not recognize Fuad as a superior representative of legal authority and generally embodies the disconnect between the traditionally and customarily run Dahsha and the legal, bureaucratic administration:

Fuad. ʾana-l-mulāzim Fuʾād Osmān, zābit-il-nugṭa ya ğazma!

The sentry (Zu'bur): la muʾāẖza ya bieh, la mmuʾāẖza ya bieh, ẖaddāmīnak!

Fuad. mafīš ẖaddāmīnak, šedd ḥeilak weddi-l-taḥiyya ya mdahwal

The sentry (Zu'bur). [Giving the salute] *tamām ya bieh!*

Fuad. I am Lieutenant Fuad Othman, the police officer, *ya jazma!*

The sentry. Sorry, sir! Sorry. Your servant!

Fuad. There is no '*ẖaddāmīnak*' here. Straighten up and give the salute, *ya mdahwal*!

The sentry. [Giving the salute] Aye aye, sir!

(*Dahsha* 1)

The exchange between the officer and the sentry paves the way for the conflict between two types of rule. The officer scolds the sentry for using the word "ẖaddāmīnak!" ("your servant") as a greeting and demands a salute that fits the hierarchical, bureaucratic relationship between the officer and the sentry. That the sentry, who is supposed to be an agent of the bureaucratic system, is oblivious to these dynamics is a manifestation of his belonging to El-Basel's traditional empire. By greeting Fuad with the word "ẖaddāmīnak," he linguistically reduces himself to the position of a retainer.

The idea of being a part of a legal, bureaucratic administration is not immediately understandable to the local sentry. In fact, the sentry's failure to understand his role is a source of dark comedic relief in the Egyptian adaptation; the function of his fool-like character (although it is stripped of the wit and wisdom of Shakespeare's fools) is to lay bare the nonsensical political situation. The absurdity is foregrounded once the sentry

opens the police station, and to Fuad's astonishment, he finds that the sentry has turned it into a poultry house. His justification is that raising chickens and ducks is better than leaving the space for mice and snakes. The apparent absurdity implies that the police station has been closed for a stretch of time and that the legal authority, represented in the police, has been absent. This fact also discloses the historical marginalization of Upper Egypt to the extent that the central government did not care to send a police officer for a significant amount of time.

The contrast between the officer and the sentry reveals a broader discord between rational rule and traditional rule. The officer wonders about thieves and murderers, but the sentry denies that Dahsha might have any because Dahsha is "ğannet rabina" ("God's paradise") (*Dahsha* 1). Of course, Fuad sarcastically dismisses the sentry's statement, wondering if Dahsha is inhabited by angels whereas all other places are occupied by devils. Obviously, the officer and the sentry speak two different languages; the former's language shares the rationalism and the formalism that characterizes Cordelia's discourse in the love test, while the latter's is that of Lear's camp. Ironically, the first episode ends after El-Basel passes by the police station with his carriage and the sentry salutes him, justifying the gesture on the basis that El-Basel is the owner of the police station and the whole land of Dahsha. In Episode 2, it is revealed that El-Basel was on his way to a meeting with some partners who are involved in illegal gold digging and arms trafficking. Dahsha, God's crime-free paradise, is hence dominated by a wealthy patriarch engaged in illicit activities. And after the love contest, greed, disorder, and death will prevail and

testify to the inanity of the sentry's argument for the inherent and untainted innocence of the people of Dahsha.

Towards the end of the first episode, the audience is introduced to another aspect of the problematic structure of political authority in Dahsha: El-Basel is the actual ruler and Mayor Nafadi is the official ruler of the village. As of the year 1895, mayors were directly appointed by the central government, particularly by the ministry of interior (Hussein 23). According to Zeinab Hussein, a law issued in March 1895 stipulated that the mayor is the only ruler of their village and is responsible for maintaining peace and security in it. The appointment system replaced the election system and was used by the British to strengthen their grip over the peripheries in the north and the south (Hussein 10). Yet, the situation in Dahsha exposes the frailty of the center in the face of the traditionally ruled southern periphery.

In the exchange between El-Basel and Nafadi, the latter tells the former that a new officer will take over the police station. El-Basel responds with indifference, saying, "we ʾeh yaʿni? yakshi yiḥuṭu ḥākimdār! da-kalām yigūluh ʿumdit dahša barḍu? il-balad baladna winta kabīrha" ("So what? Even if they send a sheriff! Is this what the Mayor of Dahsha had to say? The land is ours and you are its Head") (*Dahsha* 1). Though flattered by the acknowledgment of his legal status, the mayor nervously says that he is nothing but an image and that El-Basel is the real leader of Dahsha. In what seems like a power test aimed at confirming El-Basel's authority over the legal ruler, El-Basel also tells the mayor that a stranger (Radi) arrived in the village the previous night, and the mayor admits that no one informed him about that incident. The conversation does not show any

tension between the traditional ruler and the legal ruler, for the latter is obviously a puppet in the hands of El-Basel. Like the sentry, the mayor is also reduced to the position of a retainer. Even after El-Basel had removed the mayor, by means of his informal connections with the legal authority, and appointed Amer, Nawal's husband, instead, Nafadi maintains his loyalty to El-Basel and pledges to remain a close confidante (*Dahsha* 12). The real schism between traditional and legal authorities is thus represented in the relationship between El-Basel and the new police officer.

The confrontation between El-Basel and the police officer takes place after the love test—specifically after El-Basel leaves his house to Nawal's house in El-Hawakmah Sharq. The act of leaving the house symbolically foreshadows a power vacuum that allows Fuad in Episode 8 to enter the house and search for traces of illicit activities. The sentry, still unable to align himself with the legal rule, reluctantly takes part in the mission and sends his wife to inform Mayor Nafadi of Fuad's intentions. As soon as Fuad gets so close to accomplishing his mission, the mayor arrives and warns the police officer against the consequences of his deeds. In a heated exchange between the mayor and the police officer, the mayor accuses Fuad of violating *al-ʿurf* (customs) and *al-qānūn* (the law), but the reasons he provides for such an accusation have only to do with customs; according to him, breaking into El-Basel's house in his absence is unacceptable (*Dahsha* 8).

Despite the arbitrariness of traditional rule, Weber tells us that testing the limits of traditions could be counterproductive, because "any infringement of the traditional limits to the legitimacy thereby created could be very dangerous for the ruler's own traditional

position." (355) What Weber warns against is exactly what constitutes Lear's and El-Basel's blind spot as political leaders. According to Emily Sun,

> *King Lear* stages a crisis of sovereignty that ensues from the title character's decision to violate the indivisibility of the king's two bodies— the body politic and the body natural— prior to his physical demise. Lear exercises the political and legal authority, which belongs to him alone, to put himself outside the political realm, parceling out the kingdom in exchange for promises from his daughters to secure the freedom he thinks he will gain thereby. (2)

Lear infringes the limits of tradition by assuming he can retain the prestige of rulership without having any authority over the English territories. A. C. Bradley sees Lear as a ruler whose "absolute power, in which he has been flattered to the top of his bent, has produced in him that blindness to human limitations and the presumptuous self-will" (282). In fact, the abdication of power, performed through the love test and the tearing of the map, is an application of a procedure that does not align with the traditional patrimonialism constituting the essence of his legitimacy. Cordelia's contractarian response in the love test was thus invited by Lear's infringement of tradition.

On the other hand, El-Basel, whose patriarchal power is sustained mainly by wealth, violates tradition by giving up his wealth to his daughters and abandoning his house, the only property that is still in his name. Like Lear, he assumes he can retain his authority over his daughters and over Dahsha after he had relinquished the tangible source of such authority. The abandonment of the house invites Fuad, as a representative

of the modern legal and contractarian rule, to break into the house—which is now devoid of its symbolic value as the seat of the traditional leader.

In the house, Fuad finds an underground recess where arms are kept. This initiates the confrontation between traditional rule and legal rule. The confrontation results in the humiliation of the police officer who was forced in Episode 8 to take off his police uniform and return to the police station wearing a jellabiya. The replacement of the police uniform with a southern jellabiya is not only an insult to the police officer and the kind of rule he represents but also a symbolic triumph of tradition. This scene best reflects the unresolved conflict between tradition and bureaucratic administration in Upper Egypt throughout different historical phases. As pointed out before, these dynamics are largely shaped by the peripheralization of Upper Egypt and have informed the 2011 revolutionary agenda. The conflict between El-Basel and Fuad is hence a clear commentary upon the failed attempts at the political and legal integration of the South before the Arab Spring.

The triumph of tradition in the confrontation between El-Basel and Fuad is not only attributed to the unequal power dynamics between the traditional ruler and the representative of legal order. In the conversation between El-Basel and Fuad, the former disregards and ridicules the latter's emphases on his authority as a representative of the law. Besides, he says that Fuad's seniors know that he owns the arms found at his house. Although there are reasons to doubt the veracity of what El-Basel says, the fact that he is able to remove a mayor and nominate another testifies to his connections and influence. It is valid then to assume that Fuad's seniors in the police institution are complicit in the

cover-up. Again, the policies adopted by the central government are under attack, for it is not only El-Basel's violation of traditions or the southern resistance to legal integration that causes the disorder in Dahsha; the corrupt and inefficient bureaucratic rule is also a culprit. Fuad's naivety lies in his failure to realize that he is not fighting just against the person of El-Basel but against a deeply fractured system in which El-Basel is only a node.

The humiliation scene does not resolve the conflict between traditional rule and legal rule. El-Basel's men move the arms from the house, and Fuad attempts to find the new location. Fuad's renewed endeavors come at a point when El-Basel has already fallen into madness and disorder has escalated. The power vacuum, manifested in El-Basel's abandonment of his wealth and his house, that helped Fuad enter the house and search has now turned into chaos. Amidst this chaos, the limits of tradition have been already infringed and the power of the legal administration was proven inefficient, so neither traditional rule nor legal rule could triumph.

Fuad's resistance to El-Basel is hence doomed to fail. It ends in his tragic death at the hands of Amer who abuses his authority as Dahsha's new mayor and plans to steal his father-in-law's arms in Episode 21. Fuad represents the male Cordelia or the male Neimah in the Egyptian adaptation. His repeated emphasis on the rule of law, his young age, and his subsequent death reinforce that analogy. The way his father mourns his death as he holds his corpse in his arms evokes Lear's mourning of Cordelia's death in Shakespeare's play:

> ʾitʾaẖart ya ḥabībi, ʾitʾaẖart ʿaleik, sāmiḥni ya-fuʾād, irtāḥ inta dilwak, wana wiḥyāt šabābak ʾilli inta makammiltūš laẖalli-l-ruṣāṣ yiġarbil el-basel ġirbīl, sāmiʿni yā wād? maṭulliš ʿallaya kdih kanni ʾanalli mawattak ya waladi. ʾāh, ʾāh, yaritni ʾanalli mut, ma ẖalāṣ ʿomri faṭ, lakin-inta gudāmak-il ʿumr timraḥ fīh. ʾāh yā waladi!
>
> I came late, my love! I came late. Forgive me, Fuad. Rest in peace now and I swear by your youth, that was prematurely finished, to pierce El-Basel's body with bullets. Do you hear me, son? Don't look at me like this as if I am the one who killed you, my son. Ah, Ah! I wish I were dead. My age is already gone but you had ages to revel. Oh, my son!
>
> (*Dahsha* 21)

Fuad's father was supposed to come with a group of men to help Fuad in his pursuits—which shows that the legal authority in the Egyptian South, inefficient and insufficiently supported by the centralized government as it is, had to seek informal means to apply the law. Just as the belatedness of Edmund's messenger caused Cordelia's death and Lear could not save his daughter, Fuad's father arrived late and could not save his son. But unlike Lear who sinks into despair and madness upon Cordelia's death, Fuad's father explicitly acknowledges his responsibility for his son's death and pledges to take revenge.

The chaos Fuad leaves behind resembles the chaotic scene of the post-2011 Egypt where the power vacuum gave rise to multiple forces fiercely competing for power, which posed a serious threat to the very existence of the modern nation-state. The

collapse of President Mubarak's regime left a void that many Islamic, liberal, and military powers attempted to fill. Similarly, El-Basel's arms business, being the source of his enormous wealth, symbolizes the power pursued by El-Basel's sons-in-law, Amer and Abu-Zeid, as well as some of El-Basel's former retainers. Kamal uses these parallelisms between the Egyptian revolutionary scene and Dahsha to showcase the problems inherent in the political structure of the marginalized Egyptian south. The inefficiency and corruption of legal rule will constantly leave the Egyptian south outside the borders of modernity, especially if traditional rulers fall as well.

Subjects and rulers

One of the notable issues in *King Lear* is that authority and legitimacy are mainly explored, debated, and contested in courtly spaces. The absence of the commons projects an image of a king without subjects. Shakespeare's depiction of these exclusively courtly dynamics underlines the nature of traditional rule where "[t]he actual exercise of rule is governed by what the ruler and his administration can usually allow themselves in their dealing with traditionally deferential subjects without provoking them to resistance." (Weber 355) The only representatives of the people are two courtiers disguised as commoners: Kent as a peasant and Edgar as Poor Tom. These two, alongside with the Fool, help Lear reach moments of recognition, so the fact that Lear repeatedly refers to Edgar/Poor Tom as his "philosopher" in Act III Scene V is not simply a sign of his declining mind; it is a sign of the wisdom of the people and the foolishness of the ruler.

Yet, the main force that makes Lear realize his disregard for the subjects of his kingdom is the storm. Kent says that "[t]he stars above us govern our conditions,"

(*KL*.IV.III.39), but nature is not just an agent of fate or justice; it is an agent of enlightenment as well. According to Paul A. Cantor, the storm teaches Lear "that the king is not by nature superior to other human beings but instead shares the physical limitations of humanity." (232) The subjects enter Lear's world, at least as a thought, when he is exposed to the storm:

> Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your looped and windowed raggedness defend
> you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp.
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou may'st shake the superflux to them
> And show the heavens more just.
>
> (*KL*.III.IV.32-41)

It is too late now for Lear to make changes to his former policies, for he has already lost his power. Yet, the soliloquy uncovers the distance between the ruler and the ruled. The depiction of Lear as an isolated ruler offers a striking familiarity that speaks to the Egyptian context. In the last years of President Mubarak's reign, his public appearances were infrequent; the public dissatisfaction with his rule was often attributed to the assumption that he was growing older and less engaged in the duties of his office.

The image of Lear as an isolated leader inspires Kamal's depiction of El-Basel. Like Lear, El-Basel does not interact with the people of Dahsha until he is forced into the heath. Immediately before the love test (or the reckoning scene), El-Basel is seen walking with Neimah as they head towards Sakan's house where the reckoning takes place. The fact that he chooses to walk rather than use his carriage is questioned by Neimah, and El-Basel tells her that he wants to show her the empire she and her sisters are supposed to inherit. The people at the *qahwa* (traditional café') are surprised to see El-Basel with his daughter on their feet; a villager wonders: "elbāsel ḥamad el-bāša ʿala riğlieh wiğāruh bittuh?!" ("El-Basel Hamad El-Basha on his foot next to his daughter?!") (*Dahsha* 4). For the common people of Dahsha, it is very unusual to see El-Basel walking around, and his decision to walk instead of taking the carriage has nothing to do with the people; it is only a stage in the process of transferring wealth and power to his heirs. The scene of him passing by the qahwa defines the dynamics of his relationship with his subjects; the people at the qahwa wave at him and greet him with the casual phrase "minawwir ya-ḥağ, itfaḍḍal" ("Welcome, *haj*! Come in!") (*Dahsha* 4) El-Basel responds by formally waving back without making eye contact or saying anything.

The distance between El-Basel and his people is obvious, especially when we support the analysis of El-Basel's body language with the opening scene of the TV series which shows that El-Basel's house is located on a high hill, separated from the village. Yet, this distance does not prevent the people from recognizing El-Basel as their ruler. The scene of Dahsha's ruler passing by a qahwa triggers a conversation among the commoners that touches on the source of the ruler's wealth. This conversation is very

normal, because the traditional Egyptian qahwa, especially in such a rural area, is a communal space for "socialization [and] entertainment . . . in addition to being a place for cultural debates and political mobilization" (Mostafa and Elbendary 4); it is a space that stimulates the exchange of stories and ideas rather than a space of private reflection or silent observation. In such a space, there is always a place for rumors and unsubstantiated narratives; one of the villagers tells his fellows at the qahwa that the source of El-Basel's fortune is that he was married to a fairy (*Dahsha* 4). Of course, some of the commoners are convinced by this supernatural account and some are not. The important thing about this discussion is that it justifies the villagers' subjecthood by their poverty and El-Basel's authority by his wealth; the villager says, "rabbina ẖalag nās katīr fagriyya zayīna . . . wi-ẖalag wisṭīhum nās musʿadīn wi-murzagīn . . . minhum elbāsel." ("God created many poor people like us . . . and created among them lucky and wealthy people . . . El-Basel is one those.") (*Dahsha* 4) This remark, coupled with the narrative of El-Basel's secret marriage to a wealthy fairy, legitimates him as leader who obtained his wealth and power through the mysterious machinations of divine will and luck. The commoner's statement evokes the medieval European political doctrine of the divine right of kings or Robert Filmer's philosophy on the natural right of a patriarchal figure selected by the mystical will of God (Rowley and Wu 77). Most importantly, it confirms tradition as the basis of El-Basel's power in the eyes of the commoners. Therefore, deferring to such fortunate, divinely chosen man is a must.

If the love test led to Neimah's revolt and to a power void that sparked a confrontation between traditional rule and legal rule, it has also caused changes in the

dynamics between El-Basel and the people of Dahsha. The first sign of these changes is represented in an incident in Episode 5 where Radi leads the villagers towards El-Basel's house to celebrate Neimah's wedding to Bilal—a wedding that El-Basel did not approve or attend. Encouraged by Allam, Radi led such a demonstration to provoke El-Basel's anger. No one dares to do such an act except for an unrestrained bastard, a stranger born outside Dahsha and out of wedlock. The scene ends with the capture of Radi by El-Basel's men and anticipates his active role in the collapse of El-Basel's order.

The awe that surrounds the figure of El-Basel is now debased by an outsider who represents the Other in every sense. Like Edmund, Radi has no place in the social order and to assert himself against "the plague of custom" (*KL*.I.II.3), he describes himself as the world's brother, for he is the son of a prostitute, and so is the world (*Dahsha* 6). Radi's world is similar to Edmund's nature "whose law is that of the stronger, and who does not recognize these moral obligations which exist only by convention" (Bradley 301-302). The othering of Radi, who comes from the *bandar* (the city), demonstrates the antagonism Upper Egyptians have traditionally harbored towards the center due to the historical marginalization. While, as Abul-Magd notes, Upper Egypt has been a threat to the central government, the roles are reversed in *Dahsha*, since the center, embodied in Radi and his mother, is now a threat to the established social order of Dahsha.

The power vacuum left by El-Basel coincides with Radi's revolt against his father, Allam, and the banishment of Allam's legitimate son, Muntasir, from Dahsha after Radi had plotted against him. The revolt is caused by Allam's persistent refusal to acknowledge Radi and takes the form of Radi's putting out his father's eyes. The image

of the city as a representation of the dangerous Other is reinforced by the fact that Muntasir, after his banishment, hides in the city and works as a barman. Kamal masterfully applies the technique of role reversal to demonstrate the disorder in Dahsha: Muntasir who belongs in Dahsha escapes to the city and Radi who comes from the city is to rule the outlaws in Dahsha.

El-Basel's madness and Allam's blindness leave the space for Radi to proceed with his scheme to achieve the status he has long aspired for. In a play on the bandit trope typical of Upper Egyptian drama, Kamal makes Radi the leader of a group of outcasts who inhabit the mountains around Dahsha. The outcasts threaten the peace and security of the people and engage in burglaries and armed robberies in a way that mirrors the proliferation of thugs and the breakdown of the security apparatus during and after the 2011 Revolution. The outlaws, who do not show up until Episode 25, could also be analogous to the fundamentalist groups that were banned or suppressed during Mubarak's reign and reemerged after the fall of his regime. With the police officer's death and El-Basel's madness, neither legal administration nor traditional authority can protect the villagers from the alternative regime of thuggery launched by Radi.

Since their security is now seriously threatened, the people of Dahsha start to mobilize in a moment of profound disillusionment with all forms of power. They march towards the house of Nafadi, the former mayor—after the current mayor has been killed--only to find that Nafadi's house was also burglarized by Radi's group. Meanwhile, El-Basel has been already reconciled with Neimah and is trying to regain his position as a father. However, his status as a traditional leader is considerably shaken but not entirely

lost. Thus, the villagers, disappointed by the former mayor's inadequacy, head towards El-Basel. In the meantime, the outlaws are celebrating the marriage of the head of their state, Radi, but his emergent political power is doomed to fail as well. Like El-Basel whose paternal failure translates into political failure, Radi's impotence translates into the collapse of all his social and political aspirations and, subsequently, his death. The private failure, as a father in the case of El-Basel and as a husband in the case of Radi, leads to their political downfall.

The villagers' gathering in front of El-Basel's temporary residence (at Gharabawiya's house) takes the form of a public protest. But after El-Basel's men try to disperse the people, the protest takes the form of a sit-in in a manner that recalls the sit-ins at Tahrir Square. Upon hearing the noise, El-Basel decides to face the crowd. Yet, instead of comforting them or taking serious measures to help them, he distances himself from the people again by using a condescending language and resorting to threat. Like the leaders of some Arab Spring countries who dismissed the public demands, El-Basel is not aware of his diminishing power and of the changes taking place in Dahsha.

The significant thing about the sit-in scene is that the people can now see that El-Basel has become a fool because he has invited them for his daughter's second wedding to Bilal:

> Villager. ya-rāǧel fūg! Dahša ẖirbit wi-ʿaglak ḥirib.
>
> angullak inǧidna, tugulina faraḥ bintak
>
> El-Basel. ʾinta, ʾinta kief tikallimni kedeh, hah?
>
> benti we-maḥaḍartiš faraḥha. ḥaʿmilu tāni wa-ḥḍaru tāni.

mīn šarīki fi-benti, yabnil-markūb

Villager. Wake up, man! Dahsha is a mess and so is your mind!

We asked you to help us, and you are talking about your daughter's wedding?

El-Basel. How, how dare you talk to me like this, huh?

I didn't attend my daughter's wedding. I will do it again and attend it again.

Who shares with me my daughter, *yabnil-markūb*

(*Dahsha* 29)

The boldness with which the villagers speak to El-Basel's withering power is unprecedented, and the people are now aware that his wealth—whether it is acquired by luck, divine will, or any other means—should no longer justify his power because he is as inadequate as legal authority. One of the protesters says to El-Basel, "bantīu-l-guṣūr we-sāybenna lil-magatīʿ lieh? maḥadiš yirawwiḥ gabl mayḥilliha.. meš inta-l-kabīr? ḥillaha!" ("You built palaces and want to leave us to the outcasts. Why? Nobody will go home before you fix our problem. Aren't you our senior? Fix it.") (*Dahsha* 29) As Weber points out, resistance in a traditional order "is directed to the person of the ruler (or of his servant) who has disregarded the traditional limits to power and not against the system as such" (355). The woman's statement implies that this public movement is not directed towards the entire system of traditional rule (at least not yet) but is aimed at El-Basel. The woman challenges El-Basel while also acknowledging that leadership is decided by being *al- kabīr*, a word that originally denotes seniority in size or age. The patriarchal system is hence unquestioned by her; it is El-Basel's fitness for such seniority that is now doubted.

At this point, El-Basel, having relinquished his wealth and lost his mental strength, is only maintaining a façade of power just as the mad Lear appears wearing a crown of flowers and weeds and claiming that nobody can "touch [him] for coining." (*KL*.IV.VI.102) The people at the qahwa discuss El-Basel's madness and his fall from power. Some of them are hopeful that he will restore his power because Dahsha should be led by a patriarch: "wallahi hayirğaʿ. wil-balad di lazem yusūgha ḥad kabīr" ("I swear he will be back. This land must be ruled by a senior/strongman.") (*Dahsha* 29) The criterion of seniority or strength is vague but, given the dynamics of Dahsha, seniority and strength are defined by wealth and connections. Some people are thus hopeful that El-Basel may retrieve or renew the resources already acknowledged as the regulations of rulership. The commoner's statement that Dahsha needs a strongman also mirrors the divisive debates triggered by the post-2011 widespread chaos over the need for an autocrat who can restore security and order.

By ridiculing the protesters for being poor, not addressing their problem, and coming across as a mad man pursuing his personal gratification, El-Basel is trespassing the limits and upsetting the balance between the personal and the political, hence the final straw that will cost him the remnants of his patriarchal legitimacy. The stampede scene in the final episode ends in Neimah's death and represents a violent act of disobedience, which marks the ultimate loss of legitimacy and the complete collapse of El-Basel's rule.

Conclusion

If Tawfik's *Utopia* is a creative prophecy of the uprisings, Abdel-Rahim Kamal's *Dahsha* is an after-the-fact examination of the fulfilled prophecy. And if Aboud's *Al-*

Firdaws Al-Mafqūd is an expression of the cloudiness of the revolutionary scene in 2011, Kamal's TV series capitalizes on the relative clarity in 2014. Kamal presents an Upper Egyptian Lear whose power tempted him into thinking that he can cross the lines of tradition while retaining his power as a father and as a ruler of his village. The Egyptian adaptation provides a commentary on and a modern interpretation of *King Lear* by promoting the modern political concept of the rule of law and by diving into the sociocultural landscape of Upper Egypt, which has long been detached from the rule of law. In this respect, the global kaleidoscope model suggests that rewriters respond to "the interpretations of their elders." (Litvin 21) The universal theme of filial love and disobedience governed the earlier interpretations of Shakespeare's play—as evinced in the 1972 Syrian theatrical production created by the Baathist director Ali Aqla Arsan or the 1979 small-screen Egyptian adaptation. This interpretation was responded to in the 2002 Egyptian theatrical production which carried political undertones. Kamal built on the political interpretation by reflecting on the Upper Egyptian sociopolitical realities and by inserting into the TV show scenes that evoke the Arab Spring uprisings.

Kamal masterfully mixes such elements as civil disobedience, sit-ins, demonstrations, and the failure of the police apparatus with the tropes of Upper Egyptian drama and places them within the Shakespearean framework. The Arab Spring is not simply delineated in the TV series; it inspires its formula. The revolutionary event is not just a political action; it is an event that has renewed and reactivated the dramatic repertoire as seen in *Dahsha*. Even though Kamal claims that the TV series neither reflects his perspective on the Arab Spring nor comments on the post-revolutionary scene

in Egypt, the invocation of revolutionary moments resonated with the show's wide audience across many Arabic-speaking countries. The small screen as a medium, aided by the availability of satellite channels, expanded the viewership of the show. It also challenged the association between Shakespeare and high literature. The medium, the vast audience, the setting, and the sociopolitical context necessitated serious revisions of the Shakespearean play, which is not always guaranteed if the production is made for theatrical performance. The fact that the series was broadcast in Ramadan—a time when viewership and commercial success are sought after by producers—also justified the revision of the Shakespearean text.

The show is an intriguing example of what Martin Orkin has termed "local Shakespeare" which consists in the knowledge given to a Shakespearean play by its recipients, including the producers and the audience. The knowledge given by the recipients to *King Lear* is evident in the scriptwriter's utilization of the distinct generic tropes, motifs, and themes of Upper Egyptian drama, including bandits, superstition, illicit activities, and the status of women. Although these tropes are often criticized as outdated and stereotypical, the historical period in which the events take place justifies their presence. Most importantly, their presence is not meant to reduce the Egyptian south into a caricatural, exotic setting devoid of serious social and political problems.

The parallelisms between *Dahsha* and the chaotic situation in the post-revolutionary Egypt underscore the seriousness of Kamal's political observations. The analogy shows that the modern nation-state and the other political markers of modernity are susceptible to collapse when the inadequacy of the legal rule brings about a political

void. Moreover, the failure of El-Basel's traditional rule once his parental authority is shaken marks the fragility of traditional rule and its incompatibility with modernity. In turn, the modern state is threatened from within if legal rule is ineffective or complicit in reinforcing the rule of tradition. In fact, it is this issue that marks the specificity of Kamal's adaptation to the political context of Upper Egypt as well as its relevance to any regional or global political context where the public sphere is contested by other forces than the rule of law.

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