

## **Alive In The Dead Sea: A Case Study Of Cross-Cultural Frontiers In Novel Translation**

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### **Abstract**

Novels that are impregnated with cultural references, historical, political, social, folkloric and religious allusions pose a serious challenge to a translator, particularly when these references and allusions are the sole property of a national language and culture. Such elements form an insurmountable obstacle in the path of transference from one culture to another. These elements, in my view, require from a translator not only a full command of the SL and the TL, but an encyclopedic knowledge of different literary, historical, political and social traditions and customs relating to both cultures, so as to convey the message of the original text to the new one.

In this paper, I attempt to show that in the absence of these criteria, a translator falls into serious errors that distort and misrepresent the original work, even if his/her knowledge of both languages is acceptable. Al-Razzaz's novel, *Ahya' fi al-Bahr al-Mayyit*, is taken as a case study of such a translation where, in her translation, Eliane Abdel Malek, in spite of her tremendous effort, many misinterpretations and misunderstandings of both the context and the allusions relating to the Arab-Islamic culture make her work fall short of conveying the social, cultural, linguistic and literary properties across the cultural divide.

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The fundamental intent of every literary translation is to strive for maximum equivalence of target and source texts (Catford, 1974: 27). The concept of “equivalence”, however, is problematic as each text has several levels of interpretation, ranging from the denotive, connotive, text normative and pragmatic ones (Koller, 1979: 186-91), and therefore the selection of an equivalence to one level will most probably exclude all the others. Moreover, each text depends on its own culture for intelligibility, and a translator would strive to transport “the most precise sense possible of the resistant, of the barriers intact at the heart of understanding” (Steiner, 1975: 378) causing permutations that either distort the original text, its ideas and views, or transform the whole work into a totally new version that lacks the flavour and distinctive properties of the original, alienating it from its own culture and presenting it to its new audience in a kind of “with-it translatese”<sup>1</sup> In this paper I attempt to show how a translator whose objectives are not clearly defined right from the beginning, and whose knowledge of the source and target cultures is inadequate, falls into some pitfalls that deprive the target text of many valuable aspects, in spite of his/her good command of the language to which the work is translated.

In taking up for translation al-Razzaz’s novel, *Ahyaa’ fi al-Bahr al-Mayyit*<sup>2</sup> (*Alive in the Dead Sea*), Eliane Abdel Malek probably made the right wrong decision: right in the sense that the work is similar in both form and narrative technique to many Western works of “modern Realism” that received much attention during the twentieth century across the Atlantic, particularly those of Proust, Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner. In this work, metafictional elements and the use of stream-of-consciousness technique, in addition to similarity in themes and motifs, all these factors make such a work seem close to Western novels, and tempt a translator to attempt to create an equivalent text in the target language. The decision is also right because, as Steiner rightly observes that “to class a source-text as worth translating is to dignify it immediately” (1975: 189), and probably al-Razzaz’s novel is one of the greatest Arabic novels of the late 20th century.

Yet the decision is wrong because of the demands the text places on its translator who, if not properly equipped with the necessary knowledge of both cultures of the SL and TL can distort the whole work and present it in a form that evacuates it from its main message. The text makes use of diverse cultural elements, ranging from the Arab-Islamic history, thought, literature, Western classical thought, philosophy, to modern life. It is impregnated with ideologies (whether political, social or economic), folkloric allusions and proverbs, and linguistic tropes, making any translation a “thin”<sup>3</sup> reading of the original work. In the absence of a translator’s introduction<sup>4</sup> to a translated work, it becomes difficult to determine the objective of the work, and the interpretation adopted by the translator in his/her approach to the original text – what features are significant and what others could be missed out.

The novel itself, however, starts with an introduction, which is written by Mithqal Tuheimer al-Za’al, a homodiegetic narrator-character who assumes the role of the editor of the memoirs and notes of the protagonist, Inad, and in this introduction, we are presented with the circumstances of both the protagonist and the condition under which the work is undertaken. In this part, the reader is confronted with a group of proper names drawn from various literary, political and historical contexts from the two divides of the globe. The context in which these names occur is the state of confusion that envelops the papers of Inad and his psychological alterations; and the difficulty of the task the editor is to combat with in order to produce this work out of the mess. Therefore, the emphasis is laid on the interlocking of time and the impact of the psychological state on the perceived objects. The present turns into past, and the past is revived in the present; moving in a spiral manner from the real to the historic, the mythical and the illusory. In the English version, the movement is narrowed down to two main axes: the time of sleep and that of awakening. Certain names appear in this part, each one belongs to a specific field and whose characteristics are distinct from the others. The ones that the translator finds to introduce to the reader are important, but the information supplied is very scant and lacks focusing. For example, the fourth endnote informs the reader who al-Manfalouty is, indicating his nationality and presenting him as a “contemporary prose

writer”; but nothing is mentioned about the nature of his prose writing, nor is there an indication of the period of his life. In the fifth endnote, Taisir Sbul is identified as “a Jordanian writer of Palestinian origin who shot himself in the head in January 1973”. In this piece of information, both his origin and the date of his death are inaccurate; and the inaccuracy destroys some later constructs which the novel seeks to confirm. Some of this inaccurate information, it is true, depends on a footnote which appears in the Arabic text (al-Razzaz, 1982: 47); but even in that footnote Sbul’s origin is not altered as in the English translation, and the only possible explanation regarding the date of his death may be referred to a typing error.<sup>5</sup>

The number of endnotes exceeds the hundred, and in many instances, they are repetition of previously given information.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the number can be reduced by approximately a third, and this number will still be large. Since the significance of the work is peculiarly indigenous, the translation needs to be “overt”,<sup>7</sup> heavily dependent on supplementary information, whether in the form of expansions, insertions or annotations.

For example, in describing how Inad al-Shahed caused confusion by mixing different papers together: papers that were meant for different purposes – the novel, his biography, and the sayings of “others” – we encounter the following lines that require much explanation:

...He used to lay on the table three sheets of white paper, one beside the other.., and jot down some lines of a novel he was writing, which he sometimes called "Arabs" and sometimes "Arabers" (following Joyce's *Dubliners*). Then he would turn to the other paper and scribble some lines of his autobiography, then suddenly turn to the third sheet and register whatever the others were saying. By "others" I mean his friend AbuMaut [Father of Death], myself, the Marshal- but not the Marshal the readers might think of- 'Abd-al Hamid- again not the one known to us from history and reality- Plato, Hamlet, Antara2, Dimitri Karamazov and Sa'id Hazoum3.<sup>8</sup>

In this quotation, we notice the presence of only two endnotes, while there are many references that require explanations. The English reader cannot guess the allusion to “the marshal” and its historical context; nor would the reference to “Abd al-Hamid”, which to the Arab reader is obvious, signify the double allusions to present and past historical characters. The note about Antara informs the reader that “Antara ibn-'Amr-ibn-Shadad-al-'Abssi (A.D 525- 615) an Arab writer (sic) and poet. His mother was an slave and his father an Abyssian lord who acknowledged his son's existence only after Antara fought with his father's tribe against an Arab assault”. The error in presenting Antara as a writer is more than obvious, since at that time writing was still not very common among the Arabs, and the reader is thus misled to take Antara for one of the elite of his age who had the privilege of learning to read and write.

On another aspect of the translation, we find in the introduction an employment of a classical allusion in the English version, meant to convey an equivalence of an Arabic expression of fickleness or unpredictability. This allusion, however, connotes moodiness,<sup>9</sup> while the Arabic text does not contain any allusions, but expresses fickleness and instability. The original text can be translated as follows:

.... For my friend, Inad, was almost pathologically sensitive, and in his fickleness and extremity, when touched by a shadow of lunacy or juvenile behavior resembles a frantic, unruly weather (al-Razzaz, 1982: 5 my translation).

Eliane Abdel Malek uses the following equivalence: “My friend 'Enad is incurably sensitive. When hit by that sudden fit of craziness, he would become as rebellious and unpredictable as Poseidon.” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 47)

This similarity between Inad's character and the weather in their unpredictability and fickleness on the one hand, and Poseidon's moodiness on the other, in my view, alters the whole argument of the passage in a radical manner by bestowing mythical dimensions on the character of Inad, thus giving it a totally different interpretation.

It is necessary to indicate in this context another misunderstanding on the part of the translator. This time it is a misinterpretation of a classical philosophical allusion indicating mutability to become power. The name of "Heraclitus" (al-Razzaz, 1982: 11) which appears in the Arabic text is erroneously presented in the English version as "Hercules" (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 53). It seems to me that such a mistake could have been avoided if the translator had taken the trouble to comprehend the exact connotations of the text, taking into account the explication which directly follows the name in the Arabic text.

On yet a different level of misrepresentation, the translator confronts the proverbial aspect which is incorporated in the Arabic text. Here the text presents the reader with a wide variety of connotations that cannot by any means be communicated fully to the new audience. For example, the following quotation contains at least three proverbs that are culture-bound, and do not yield the same meaning when transferred to another language:

Yes, I saw him toy with water. No, he was *toying with his blood*. Then he suddenly turned and *played with fire*. I am stupefied, Mithgal *plows the sea* and I pave it (13). I think that plowing the sea is a voluntary act, while paving it is a desperate reaction. The Captain said: "If you like things here, then you are most welcome to stay. Otherwise *go and pave the sea* ." So I went to pave the sea and drink, until I became the sea. Mithgal laughed and said: "You are the Dead Sea (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 58 my italics).

In this quotation we confront proverbs that range in their connotations from defiance to warning, and the sarcasm implied in them cannot be conveyed easily. And a few lines below, the Arabic proverb: "Tidhak bila Snan" (al-Razzaz, 1982: 15) is simply translated as "I hope the day will come when I see you laughing with no teeth" (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 58) does not at all convey the underlying meaning of dissatisfaction and anger, but instead conveys a meaning that is close to a wish for a long life.

Another proverb which is used in the novel, and which belongs to folklore is when Maryam tells Inad that there is no need for apology, and “Let bygones be bygones” (al-Razzaz, 1982: 12; my translation). Eliane Abdel-Malek translates it in the following manner:

“- No need to apologize, what has been done is long gone now” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 55).

This translation, in my view, evacuates the text from its cultural element and turns it into an expression of indifference and neutrality.

Similarly, the translation of the following paragraph which contains a folkloric proverb shows a misreading of both the text and the context:

The face of the Captain suddenly crops up, and Kafa as his horse. He said, “The horse is of its knight, and you are a knight who only deserves to walk on foot (al-Razzaz, 1982: 37).

Eliane Abdel-Malek presents this paragraph in the following translation:

The Captain’s face suddenly appears, he is riding a horse and the horse is Kaffa. The horse tells the rider: “You are an image of a rider, only fit to walk and ride the earth (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 85).

It is obvious from this translation that the speakers are confused, namely, the Captain is substituted by the horse. In addition, the folkloric proverb<sup>10</sup> which indicates that the user and his skill are the most decisive factor in determining the efficiency of the tool is totally ignored.

The different cultural elements that appear in this work, it is true, cannot all be exported faithfully to the target text. Some of them are exclusively the property of the source language, others belong to the national or religious heritage; still others are associated with proverbial and folkloric connotations that, if the translator attempts to convey, fails to find equivalences for them. For instance, most of the names of the characters in the novel reflect certain properties of the Arabic language.

The name “Inad,” reflects obstinacy; “al-Shahed” is the witness; “Mithqal” expresses burden, “al-Za’al” denotes anger, etc. The employment of such names in certain contexts sometimes provides puns where one can interpret the statement in two different ways. Such a possibility is rendered impossible in translation, as such qualities are exclusively the property of the source language. For example, in the following quotation, there is a play on the name of Kafa which, in addition to being a proper name, could mean enough:

But Kafa withdrew, wiped her tears, and exiled herself. She said she was just a case of my mind’s creation, she said she is neither a woman nor a horse, nor am i—I am a mental notion, a nervous state. I said, “Enough” (al-Razzaz, 1982: 37; my translation).

In this final word, the play on the word “Kafa” makes two statements out of one: It is either that the speaker calls the name of the character, or that he is simply telling the character to stop talking. This is how it appears in the English version:

But Kaffa cries and dries her tears and denies her existence. She says that she is only a state in my mind. She says:” I’m not a woman, I’m not a horse, I’m not.. I’m only an idea in the brain, a state in the nerves.” I say: “Stop” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 85).

In this quotation, the reader is given only one possibility of interpretation and it is very unlikely that any translator can communicate both meanings in one word, and this is naturally due to the difference between the source and target languages. The work under discussion is impregnated with such cultural elements, and the translator strove hard to overcome some of these impasses. A few examples may elucidate some of the successful transfer of such cultural elements through the skillful manipulation of equivalences. In a passage where the protagonist, Inad, runs into his Bedouin friend, Mithqal, in Beirut, Inad’s literal remark that “Mithqal is a bedouin, and Beirut is no basket of figs” (al-Razzaz, 1982: 13; my translation) brings to the consciousness of an Arab a proverb to the effect that some vulgar gluttonous person finding a heap of food; or yet another proverb that a nomad finding himself all of a sudden in a city.

These two Arabic proverbs<sup>11</sup> are naturally recalled by word collocations. Eliane Abdel Malek, however, overcomes this predicament by saying that “he was merely a Bedouin! Beirut is simply no bed of roses” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 55).

It is obvious from this translation that to a Western audience, the expectations which Inad has on his mind will be met, and this almost what the Arabic text seems to convey. It is true that the two Arabic proverbs are not evoked by this sentence, yet the function of such an evocation is achieved. Another example of a folkloric proverb which is exclusively the property of the Arabic culture is when Inad, the protagonist is back home, and Kafa tries to have a love affair with him, in spite of his sense of impotence. In their conversation, he says,

“Kaffa whispered, but I did not understand why she did that: Half a thousand is five hundred!” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 107). To overcome this dilemma in translation, the translator gives an explanation in an endnote: “An Arabic saying which means that things are simpler than they seem.” This explanation may reveal to the target audience at least one of the dimensions which this proverb holds to the source audience, and this, perhaps, reduces the ambiguity of the expression.

On another cultural aspect which the translator finds herself confronted, and requires clarification for the new audience, is the issue of intra-Islamic conflicts, particularly those that occurred during the early Islamic history. One of these allusions is the reference to the battle of Siffin:

“She lifted Mayakovsky's poetry as if ready for the Battle of Siffin” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 55). This reference with all its gloomy and tragic indications to an Arab or a Muslim cannot be accurately experienced by a Westerner. The context in which this allusion appears is a confrontation between Inad the protagonist and Mariam, whose cousin, Mahjoub, a member of the communist party, is betrayed by Inad, handed over to the authorities, and is eventually murdered. The allusion in this context is probably meant to reveal the rift between the two leftist movements – the Arab nationalists and the Communists. The endnote

which explains the nature of the battle of Siffin makes such a cleft intelligible.<sup>12</sup>

This Islamic cultural allusion is just one of many similar references that inform the original text; and their presence is significant to the thematic structure of the work. Their exact implications, one may contend, cannot be precisely conveyed across the cultural divide, but, at least, some special traits of them can be communicated. I will cite a final example relating to this type of unconscious part of Islamic cultural influence which the translator accommodated in her interpretation, and that is, the impact of listening to the Holy Koran recitation on those who are about to commit a sin. The unconscious Islamic ideology has a strong influence on people, even if they claim to be leftists. In her translation, Eliane Abdel Malek manages to convey this sense of schism of the psyche through an endnote informing the reader of Abdel Basset and his career. This is how she puts the equivalent text:

'Abd-al-Bassit's (38) voice held him back from the whore's body. Demoralization nibbles at him. "It is not the time for this, 'Abd-al-Bassit!"

He thought. And 'Abd-al-Bassit, in spite of dialectical materialism, vegetated in the deep valleys of his mind (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 102).

As we have seen in this quotation, the underlying criticism of the discrepancy between intentions and the unconscious ideology has been communicated in the translation, notwithstanding the cultural divide which separates the original audience and the prospective one. In yet another cultural barrier, I would like to point out, that pertains to rhetorical devices and linguistic tropes, poses in some instances an unsurmountable obstruction for the translator's work. Any literal translation of such rhetorical devices, or semantic signification of the text, cannot successfully communicate the original impact or anything close to it. I shall cite, for the sake of demonstration, a few examples. In a passage where the contrast is established between the time experience in both Amman and Beirut, the author employs paronomasia in the contrast between the swift movement of time in Beirut on the one hand,

and the stagnant one of Amman on the other. The original sentence runs as follows:

Anhar al-nahar tanhar, wa-huna, haythu al-Bahru al-Mayyit, anharu ana, wal-bahru mayyitun, wal-miyahu rakidah, wal-inaa'u muqfir (al-Razzaz, 1982: 13).

In this text, an Arab would discover a medley of sounds, meanings, associations and connotations that cannot, in my view, be experienced from the following translation:

The rivers of the day collapse. And here, where the Dead Sea is, I collapse, and the Sea is dead, the water is still and the pot is dry (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 56).

The play on the double meaning of the word (Anhar) which means both the plural of a river and the verb collapse has no equivalence in English and thus cannot be conveyed in one word simultaneously. Similarly, the word (*al-Nahar*) Which has a close pronunciation to the word (*Anhar*) Can by no means have affinity to its English equivalent (day). Similarly, when the protagonist comments on the interlocking of time, the reader of the Arabic text confronts the following passage:

“... wa anharu fi anhar fi al-nahar” (al-Razzaz, 1982: 40).

The translator finds it impossible to communicate a similar sound effect, exactly as in the example before. Thus in the English translation, we confront the following passage:

“Day and night die away. Rivers collapse at daytime” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 88).

In this translation, in addition to the absence of the effect of paronomasia, there is a misinterpretation of the original meaning due to the misunderstanding of the word “Anhar” which has two meanings: (1) “Rivers”, and (2) “collapse”. In my view, what the text means to say literally, is that Inad collapses in the rivers of the day, but the translator

mistook the first “Anhar” to mean rivers while the second “Anhar” to indicate collapse.

Such aesthetic privilege which the original text enjoys is, however, counterbalanced by other advantages that the reader of the English version can more easily experience than the reader of the Arabic text. This can be attributed to the employment of many Western cultural references and allusions in the text that are readily present in the prospective audience’s unconscious mind<sup>13</sup>. Of course, the pleasure can equally be experienced by the original audience, provided it is the right particularised elite one. In the absence of such a readership, one may claim, those allusions will simply appear as a list of foreign names and words that are either overlooked, or, in some cases, looked up from different information sources. In the last analysis, these Western allusions make the text naturalised and accepted by its new audience. Examples of these Western allusions are interspersed across the whole work, and it is, I think, very unlikely to turn a page without finding one or two of them. I shall for the sake of brevity cite just a few examples. In one of the passages, Inad remarks that Mithqal read three times “Rosa Luxemburg’s work” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 57), and comments that Mithqal did that only because Rosa is a woman. To the lay reader in the Arab world, this name does not evoke any other response. For the English reader, and certainly to the readers of the Arabic text who belong to the elite group, the name evokes much more than this naïve response. Similarly, After Inad’s unsuccessful encounter with Kafa’s sexual advances, and just as she leaves his house, the reader finds a classical allusion expressive of desperate determination:

“With a Sisyphus-like determination, Kaffa insisted on reaping fruit from my barren body which was destroyed by drugs and scorched by midday sun” (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 108). This reference poses a difficulty to the lay Arab reader who is not acquainted with Greek mythology, and would pass uncomprehended, unless the reader looks it up from a reference work.

A final example of the countless Western cultural references that are difficult and incomprehensible to the lay Arab reader may suffice to

prove my point. A group of so-called cultured people gathered at a café in Beirut, and we have the following description:

They were a gang and they sat in the “Dolce Vita”. Some were drinking beer, others were drinking coffee or tea.. and chocolate mousse. The main subject was rumors about different people. Their eyes turned to the sky and their spoons in their cups. Legs crossed over.., and war planes were roaming in the sky. We were neither in Sabra nor in Fakahani. Rousheh is a safe and far-away continent.. We smoked cigarettes, pipes and cigars. We were all educated people, except for me of course. Our eyes turned to the sky and to the cups. We talked about a number of things; from dialectics to Maoism to Khumenism to Rambo and Descartes, and then .....,the party in Poland, solidarity (Abdel-Malek, 1997: 134).

These references to European writers, philosophers, ideologies and political parties require much effort and explanations on the part of the Arab lay reader to familiarise him with this culture.

To sum up the main arguments in this paper, a novel that combines a diversity of cultural elements ranging from the historical, political, religious, literary, mythical and folkloric allusions, in addition to rhetorical devices and linguistic tropes demands from its translator not only competence in the languages of both the source and target, but an encyclopedic knowledge of both cultures, in order to produce an equivalence that influences its prospective audience as effectively as the original text. The translator of *Alive in the Dead Sea*, as a result of her command of, and ability to use English, managed to produce a smooth, consistent version into which the various cultural elements are unobtrusively incorporated, lending itself easily to its readers. The translation, however, suffered from some flaws probably as a consequence of the unreliable sources of information which she employed, and some misunderstanding of certain contexts.

The work in both languages has much affinity to Western novels of the 20s and 30s of the past century, particularly in its theme and recurrent motifs: the permeating sense of boredom, ennui, and the overwhelming

absurdity of life, disillusionment, and the sense of loss and fragmentation. These same themes and motifs appear in many works of European and American writers, especially, those of Woolfe, Proust, Joyce, Sartre, Camus, Faulkner, and others. In this respect, the translation has the power of easily crossing the boundaries that separate the two cultures and the ability to appeal to its new audience as a masterpiece of literary merit.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," in *Outside in the Aching Machine* (London and New York: Routledge), 1992; rptd in *Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London, New York and Toronto: Routledge), 2000, p.398.

<sup>2</sup> Mu'nis al-Razzaz, *Ahyaa' fi al-Bahr al-Mayyit* (Beirut: al-Muassassah al-Arabiyyah lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, 1982). All subsequent references to the Arabic text refer to this edition, and are documented within the text.

<sup>3</sup> I employ "thin" translation here to contrast with Anthony Appiah Kwame's "thick translation," *Callaloo* 16:4 (1993): 808-19. Copyright © 1993 by Charles H. Rowell. the Johns Hopkins University Press, where he questions the use of the "Gricean mechanism," wherein communicative intentions are realized through inferential meanings derived from conventions. A literary translation, Appiah argues, doesn't communicate the foreign author's intentions, but tries to create a relationship to the linguistic and literary conventions of the translating culture that matches the relationship between the foreign text and its own culture. The match is never perfect and might be "unfaithful to the literal intentions" of the foreign text so as "to preserve formal features."

<sup>4</sup> The work under discussion was originally written as a dissertation presented in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the Master Degree at the University of Jordan; and contrary to the expectations, there is no introduction written by the translator.

<sup>5</sup> In the footnote on p.47 of the Arabic text the following information is supplied: "Taysir Sboul: A Jordanian creative writer who committed suicide on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1973 by a bullet which he fired into his head".

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, endnotes nos. 4, 5, 6, 15, 20, 25, 75, 87 and 96.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Juliane House and Shoshana Blum-kulka (eds) *Interlingual and Intercultural Communication: Discourse and Cognition in Translation and Second Language Acquisition Studies* (Hibingen, Germany: Narr), 1986 17-35 where there is a discussion of "covert" and "overt" translation.

<sup>8</sup> *Alive in the Dead Sea* translated by Eliane Abdel-Malek (Amman: Ministry of Culture, 1997) p. 43. All subsequent references to this translation are documented within the text.

<sup>9</sup> Poseidon in Greek mythology is the god of the sea. Poseidon was a very moody divinity, and his temperament could sometimes result in violence. When he was in a good mood, Poseidon created new lands in the water and a calm sea. In

contrast, when he was in a bad mood, Poseidon would strike the ground with a trident and cause unruly springs and earthquakes, ship wrecks, and drownings.

<sup>10</sup> (الفرس من الفارس). “The horse is of its knight”.

<sup>11</sup> The first proverb in Arabic is: (هجين وقع في سئل تين), while the second Arabic proverb says: (طبة بدوي في مدينة).

<sup>12</sup> In her endnote on the battle of Siffin, Eliane Abdel-Malek states that it is “A battle between ‘Ali ibn-abi-Talib, the fourth Rashid caliph, and Mu’awiyah ibn-abi-Sufyan, the first Umayyad caliph, over the caliphate, in Siffin, south of al-Raqqah, on the west bank of the Euphrates, in 657.” This explanation reveals to the reader the nature of the battle and the factionalism which caused it within the Muslim world— a situation analogous to divisions within the leftist movements in the Arab world.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, the attempt to create a similarity between this work and James Joyce’s *Dublinners* p.47; the reference to Joyce and Camus p.160; the reference to Proust’s work, *Temps Perdu* p.63, 223; the reference to Virginia Woolf p.225; the allusion to Faulkner’s work, *The Sound and the Fury* p.81, and many other literary allusions to modern Western writers and thinkers.

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