

discusses the travel-novel writer Ahmet Mithat (1844–1912) in the chapter “Imaginary travel(s) as a discursive strategy. The case of Ahmet Mithat and Ottoman constructions of Europe” (pp. 203–26). Akyıldız is primarily interested in separating Mithat’s real-life trip from his learning about Europe through reading and his imaginary world of travel. The essay is closely argued, with textuality (and consequently, reading) determining the connections between information, knowledge and imagination. Within the category of “mental” travel Akyıldız distinguishes “imaginary” and “literary” travels, in part based on Mithat’s own use of the terms (pp. 205–9). Figures offered on pp. 212–3 and 214 graphically illustrate the progress of Mithat’s creative and intellectual activities and published output before and after his “real” travel. Because Mithat’s travel writing is self-referential, Akyıldız is able to construct a critique of Orientalism from Mithat’s “textual attitude” (p. 215). She finds that, although Mithat engaged in “a severe critique of ‘Orientalism’”, he used multiple creative mechanisms for the legitimization of his own authority as travel writer (p. 217). The central purpose of his travel to Europe was to take part in the 1889 Orientalist Congress; therefore Mithat observed and experienced the prejudices of Orientalist scholars as well as Europeans in general. But more than his travel memoir, the fictional travels of his alter-ego repeatedly bring up the Europeans’ preconceptions and prejudices – without ever acknowledging that he himself might hold any faulty preconceptions or, indeed, make mistakes or encounter difficulties. By reversing Said’s template, Akyıldız presents us with an intriguing portrait of a privileged “Ottoman occidentalist” Ahmet Mithat. It is such careful questioning and nuanced discussion, applied to travel narratives across subgenres, that make this book a serious and valuable contribution to cultural and political history extending “beyond borders”.

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NATHANIEL GREENBERG:

The Aesthetic of Revolution in the Film and Literature of Naguib Mahfouz (1952–1967).

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Naguib Mahfouz, the Arab world’s only Nobel Laureate (1988), is far and away the most celebrated and surely the most widely read modern Arab author in translation. Nathaniel Greenberg has chosen an intriguing – and ambitious – approach to exploring the literary production of the great master. He seeks to explore Mahfouz’s “revolutionary aesthetic” by examining both his novels and his substantial output of film scripts penned between the onset of Nasser’s Free Officers movement in 1952 and the *naksa*/setback of June 1967.

What makes the project most intriguing is that in the early 1950s, on the heels of his magisterial “Dickensian” novels, Mahfouz began to devote increasing energies to work on a series of equally influential screenplays. Greenberg, echoing the Egyptian film critic Samir Farid, refers to this as a “parallel” career (p. 16, n. 8). Some were adaptations of major literary works by different authors (Mahfouz left the adaptations of his own stories to others), and some were original scripts. All became popular hits that form part of the great film canon of the early Nasser

era. Some helped define the careers of a new generation of film makers and actors, particularly the leading director of social melodrama, Salah Abu Sayf.

Somewhat precipitately, in 1959 Mahfouz published another, very different, large novel, the religious-historical allegory, *Children of the Alley*. The book was denounced by al-Azhar and published in Beirut (Mahfouz never allowed it to be published in Egypt without Azhar's approval and years later it became the rationale for an attempt on his life). Then in the 1960s Mahfouz reinvented himself, penning a second round of masterworks, shorter novels, less descriptive and focused on dialogue, that are in many ways reminiscent of screenplays.

Greenberg is thus on solid ground when he argues that Mahfouz's work in cinema was "integral to his subsequent literary output" (p. xvi) and a "bridge between his pre- and post-revolutionary work" (pp. 2–3). Why he moved in this direction and how it really impacted him remains unclear. Greenberg has a tendency throughout this study to eschew biographical investigation in favour of critical speculation. It would be nice to hear the subject speak more, as he did so often in his later years, to his own life experience and "changing rhythm" (to borrow a phrase from Sasson Somekh, one of his early foreign admirers).

This is a slim volume, and as such raises more questions than it leaves room to answer. What really drew Mahfouz to the cinema? Why does it not play a prominent role in his fiction? What was the nature of his collaboration with fellow writers like Bayrum al-Tunsi or with the cineaste Abu Sayf, who was himself deeply engaged in plotting the stories of many of his best early films? To what extent was the finished product the result of Mahfouz's vision or that of the director, cinematographer and film editor – or the personas of charismatic star players like Farid Shawqi? Why did Mahfouz shift gears to script romantic melodramas, however politically laced, like Ihsan Abd al-Quddus' *I am Free*? What about films that do not fit the twin foci on crime and modern women, such as the masterful *Between Heaven and Earth*? Why did Mahfouz suddenly stop writing scripts and return to writing novels and short stories?

Some of these are perhaps unfair questions, beyond the purview of the work under review. But I think it is fair to push back on the question of just how revolutionary Mahfouz's aesthetics, from a political perspective, really were, especially because Greenberg reads Mahfouz as disenchanted from very early on, describing Nasser allegorically in the mid-1950s as a conductor on a runaway train (p. 46). Greenberg gives particular prominence to the disillusioned social rebel in *The Thief and the Dogs*, published in 1961 (and adapted into an important film a year later, although not by Mahfouz).

Nonetheless, Mahfouz spent two decades deeply engaged with filmmakers who were leading Egypt into a new forward-looking era, and he played an important part within the state film sector (as did Abu Sayf). His works often betray a cynicism for dishonest revolutionaries and political hacks, but was that a condemnation of the revolution and its leaders or of those who subverted it from within?

To really understand Mahfouz's "revolutionary aesthetic" one needs to carry the story beyond 1967. This would hold true for any major Arab artist or intellectual, but the *naksa* represents a key moment for Mahfouz and had major repercussions on Egyptian cinema, ushering in a phase when state censors allowed a far more direct critique of the Nasserist state. Adaptations of some of Mahfouz's most important works were among the most influential films produced at the time: *Autumn Quail*, *Adrift on the Nile* and *Miramar*. Mahfouz wrote these stories prior to June 1967, but all were adapted, filmed and ultimately viewed by the public (often with special permission from the highest offices) through lenses of defeat and failure. These films – adapted by others – gave new meaning to the original texts and somewhere provided a bridge to the next phase in Mahfouz's long and brilliant career.

Ultimately, Greenberg is not served well by the book's brevity. If he were to expand this work, taking a page from early Mahfouz, with greater attention to detail and character, he could help us truly appreciate and reconsider the writer's multiple levels of creative input at such a rich moment in Mahfouz's and Egypt's cultural life.

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AYESHAH S. CHAUDHRY:

Domestic Violence and the Islamic Tradition.

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Quran 4:34 has been used by some Muslim husbands to excuse violence against their wives, and also as evidence of permission for domestic violence by some critics of Islam. But there are also verses in the Quran about the equality of human beings (Q. 30:21) and on kindness (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*) as the basis of marital life (Q. 49:13), and the mutual rights of couples (Q. 2:228). Some state that the only way to solve such paradoxes and to find the "correct" exegesis of Q. 4:34 is by referring to Islamic tradition.

In this thought-provoking book, Ayesha Chaudhry explores the exegetical and legal heritage of Sunni Islam on Q. 4:34, and presents the traditional and modern understandings of the verse in a brilliant scholarly analysis. The first three chapters describe the textual, historical and cosmological context of Q. 4:34. Chaudhry demonstrates that the verse has the potential for various interpretations. Using different translations (of 4:32–5), she records different meanings for every word. In her survey of the historical context, Chaudhry discusses two main occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) in their different versions. She speaks of the "idealized cosmology" of exegetes, which is "an ideal divinely ordered universe" in exegetes' minds, describing the world as it should be, rather than how it is (p. 40). In traditional idealized cosmology the relationship of man to woman is similar to that of God to man. This startling claim is justified convincingly by discussing traditional exegeses of Q. 4:34, mentioning the exegetes' ideas on the superior nature of man, and quoting *ḥadīths* on the rights of husbands and duties of wives. In this cosmology, man's inherent superiority makes "husbands responsible to God for the financial, moral and social well-being of their wives. Wives ... were responsible to God through their obedience to their husbands. Disobedient wives challenged God's ordering of the world, and husbands were authorized to discipline them" (p. 53).

The second chapter, which makes painful but very instructive reading, addresses different exegeses of the term *nushūz* and the injunctions following it "*idūhunna wa-hjuruhunna fi al-maḍāji' wa-dribuhunna*". *Uḥjuruhunna*, for instance, in traditional exegeses is interpreted as one of the following; "leaving the sexual relationship", "leaving the bed", "avoiding the woman in every aspect", "having sex with one's wife and avoiding her in other aspects", "using ugly obscene and vile speech", or "tethering the wife and tying her in the bed". Traditional exegetes invariably understood *wa-dribuhunna* as granting husbands the right to discipline wives physically; however, they disagreed about the procedure of permissible hitting and its extent, permissible instruments of hitting, the location on a woman's body which can be hit, and the possibility of prosecuting a husband in the case of excessive