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Refiguring and Normalizing Urban Space: Naguib Mahfouz's *Awlād ḥāratinā* and Its English, Polish, and Spanish Translations

Abstract

The Arabic term *ḥāra* denotes a specific topographical unit of the traditional Middle-Eastern, especially Egyptian, city. Variously translated into English—e.g., as *lane*, *alley*, but also *quarter*, *district*, *neighbourhood*—it belongs to the category of culture-bound terms. This article presents an analysis of its use in the novel *Awlād ḥāratinā* (1959) by the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006), in which it plays a crucial role, and of how it has been rendered in four translations into English, Polish, and Spanish. The difficulty which the translators had to negotiate when dealing with *ḥāra* lies not only in its cultural specificity, but also in its polysemy: five semantic facets of this term are distinguished in this study (geographic, metonymic, architectural, social, and cultural/economic), of which four can be found in the novel. A number of occurrences of *ḥāra* in these four senses and their equivalents used in the four translations are discussed in terms of their semantics and connotations. Special attention is paid to the non-canonical use of this term to which Mahfouz resorted in order to refigure the topography of the Egyptian city and to give the novel an allegorical dimension. In translation, this meaningful alteration is reverted and literary space normalized back into a conventional shape. The analysis shows how the translators have domesticated the literary representation of urban space to suit Western notions, normalizing it in certain cases, but in some others have opted for foreignizing solutions.

Keywords: Arabic literature, translation, culture-bound terms, Naguib Mahfouz, *Awlād ḥāratinā*, urban space.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1959, Naguib Mahfouz, then an acclaimed Egyptian writer with the well-known Cairo trilogy (1956–57) to his credit, published another novel, serialized in the respected and widely circulated newspaper *Al-Ahrām*. The novel, given the innocuous title *Awlād ḥāratinā* (*Children of Our ḥāra*, henceforth: *Awlād*), was soon to turn problematic, because it easily reads as an allegory of Judeo-Christian-Islamic history: the *ḥāra* with its inhabitants stands for the world and the main characters are identifiable with Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, represented as rather mundane, and God, embodied by the community's ancestor, who eventually dies. All of this, combined with the number of the novel's chapters being 114—as many as those in the Quran—made some circles, especially the Islamic al-Azhar University, consider the novel sacrilegious. Mahfouz himself was unwilling to see it republished. Consequently, it did not appear as a book until 1967, in Beirut; however, the author shared neither in its production, nor in the profits (Stewart, "Introduction" xviii).[1] In 1988, when Mahfouz was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, the book, translated by Philip Stewart into English as *Children of Gebelawi* (1981), was among those cited in the Nobel press release. In Egypt, it was republished in 2006, just months after Mahfouz's death.

The object of our interest here is the Arabic word *ḥāra* used in the novel's title and recurring on nearly every page of this work. It denotes a specific topographical unit of the traditional Middle-Eastern, especially Egyptian, city. Although a number of analyses and commentaries from various perspectives have been devoted to *Awlād* (e.g., Abu-Haidar, El-Gabalawy, el-Ghitany, Roded, Khalifa, Zaki and Mohamed, to name just a few published in English), in none of them was due attention paid to the term *ḥāra* featured in its title. The allegorical value of the *ḥāra* standing for the entire humanity has been well recognized, but the topography of the city represented in the novel has not been adequately analyzed and problems related to the translation of the terms naming its parts raised little interest among scholars.

By way of introduction, let us consider how differently the term *ḥāra* has been translated:[2]

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[1] See Shoair for an account of the history of the book's publication, including how the popular militant Islamist preacher Umar Abd al-Raḥmān (Omar Abdel-Rahman) conflated Mahfouz's case with the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, which led to the assassination attempt against the Egyptian writer in 1994.

[2] For Arabic quotations, I use one of the standard transcriptions and provide my own translation, leaving the problematic words in their original form.

(1)

a. *wa-**ḥārat**unā, **ḥārat** al-Jabalāwī, aṭwal **ḥāra** fī l-minṭaqa* (*Awlād* 75)
[and our ***ḥāra***, the ***ḥāra*** of al-Jabalāwī, it the longest ***ḥāra*** in the area]

b. *Gebelaawi **Alley** is the longest in the district* (Stew. 99)

c. *Our **alley**, Gabalawi Alley, is the longest in the whole area* (Ther. 93)

d. *Nasza **dzielnica**, dzielnica Al-Dżabalawiego, leży przy najdłuższej ulicy w tym rejonie* (*Dzieci* 123)
[Our **neighbourhood**, the **neighbourhood** of Al-Dżabalawi, extends along the longest street in this area]

e. *Nuestro **barrio**, el barrio de Gabalaui, es el más largo de los alrededores* (*Hijos* 102)
[Our **neighbourhood**, the **neighbourhood** of Gabalaoui, is the longest in the area]

In these four translations, two types of equivalents can be distinguished, denoting two different components of built environment: one (English *alley*) refers to a topographical element typically conceptualized as having length, the other (Polish *dzielnica* and Spanish *barrio*, both of which I render as *neighbourhood* in this article) to one normally measured as a surface. In both English translations *ḥāra* is rendered as *alley* and characterizing it as long or longest seems natural. By contrast, length being a distinctive quality of *barrio* used in the Spanish version may sound surprising. In the Polish translation, the message has been modified: *ḥāra* is rendered as *dzielnica*, which itself is not characterized as longest but as extending along the longest street.

That *ḥāra* is a semantically complex term is also evidenced by dictionaries. In most Arabic-English, Arabic-Polish, and Arabic-Spanish dictionaries—to limit the sample to the languages covered by this study—the proposed equivalents of *ḥāra* show this twofold meaning:

Arabic-English dictionaries:
(i) "1. . . . quarter, district; neighbourhood . . .; 2. . . . lane; alley . . ." (Arts 204–05)
(ii) "quarter, part, section (of a city); . . . lane, alley, side street . . ." (Wehr 212)

Arabic-Polish dictionaries:
(iii) "1. dzielnica, kwartał 2. zaułek, uliczka..." (Daneckiand Kozłowska 272)
[1. neighbourhood, quarter 2. narrow passage, alley . . .]"
(iv) "zaułek; uliczka" (Łacina, *Sł. arabsko-polski* 281)
[narrow passage, alley]

Arabic-Spanish dictionaries:
(v) "barrio . . .; callejón, calleja" (Corriente and Ferrando 275)
[neighbourhood . . .; alley, narrow street]
(vi) "barrio; . . .; callejón" (Cortés 274)
[neighbourhood; . . .; alley]

However, when the above-listed English, Polish, and Spanish words meaning "district," "neighbourhood," "quarter," etc., are looked up in current English-, Polish- or Spanish-Arabic dictionaries, what one finds in most of them (e.g., Karmi 351, 856; Baalbaki and Baalbaki 359, 763, 945; Wahba 308, 901, 1197; Arts 1489, 1614; Łacina, *Sł. polsko-arabski* 181) is *ḥayy* or *minṭaqa*, not *ḥāra*; the only exceptions are the dictionary by Reda and that by Karmi, which give *ḥāra* as one of the equivalents of *barrio* (96) and *quarter* (1094), respectively. Similarly, when one consults these dictionaries for the Arabic equivalents of English, Polish, and Spanish words meaning "lane," "alley," etc., in most of them one finds *zuqāq* and *darb*, not *ḥāra*, an exception being the dictionary by Łacina, where *zaułek* is translated as *ḥāra* (beside *zuqāq*) (894). This lexical and lexicographic asymmetry, not to say chaos, suggests that in *ḥāra* we encounter a term denoting a specific cultural concept, closely connected with traditional Arabic cities, unknown to the lexical systems of Western languages. This is why some authors writing about this novel, or *ḥāra* in general, decide to leave this term untranslated (e.g., Somekh passim; Abu-Haidar passim). This solution is also adopted in the present article.

To demonstrate the kind of translation problems that the concept of *ḥāra* can generate and the ways in which they were dealt with in the four renditions selected for this study, I start by discussing the semantics of this term. Next, after a brief characterization of the translators and their works, I analyze how *ḥāra*, as used in various senses in the original edition, was rendered into the three languages—when necessary, with a focus on the connotations of its translation equivalents. A special case is that of the term *ḥāra* when used in opposition to *ḥayy*, denoting another topographical unit—a relation which Mahfouz creatively refigured in the novel. Although no statistical examination of particular translation solutions is intended in the present study, some generalizing statements about evident tendencies are ventured.

THE VARIOUS FACES OF *ḤĀRA*

Descriptive definitions of *ḥāra* help us to clarify the meaning of this term. It was registered by Arabic lexicography as early as the 8th century: in the famous first Arabic language dictionary by al-Ḫalīl ibn Aḥmad al-

Farāhīdī, it is defined as "*kull maḥalla danat min manāzilihim, fa-hum ahl ḥāra*" (vol. 1, 378), which can be rendered as: any settlement clustered around people's dwellings, and they (viz. the inhabitants) are (referred to as) "the people of a (particular) *ḥāra*." This definition, repeated with modifications in modern Arabic-Arabic dictionaries (e.g., Mas'ūd 289; 'Umar, vol. 1, 579 and 593), is as vague as it is laconic (typically of classical Arabic lexicons). A more informative characterization can be found in a modern dictionary of Egyptian culture and traditions:

> A *ḥāra* is an area on either side of a major street (*šāri'*) inhabited by a group of people bound together by shared ties. The major street consists of *ḥāra*s, or lanes (*darb*), while a *ḥāra* consists of minor lanes (*'aṭfa*). The *ḥāra* is a unit of social organization superior to the family, as the family corresponds to one house, while the *ḥāra* is organized as a set of houses or families. The street is where the inhabitants of the *ḥāra* find space for business activities, the mosque, the furnace, and the market.
>
> The residents of a single *ḥāra* are united by strong social bonds. They share funerals and weddings and meet at evening parties. Every person in the *ḥāra* knows the other. In the past, every *ḥāra* used to have a large gate with a watchman. In the middle of the gate, there was a small door that was used if someone arrived at night . . .—all this because of lack of security and the risk of nocturnal assaults. The large gate would normally be locked in order to prevent thieves from entering the *ḥāra*. The *ḥāra* was a source of pride for its residents, who identified with it, saying, "We are the sons/children of *ḥāra* (*awlād al-ḥāra*) so-and-so," following the ancient tradition of taking pride in one's tribe. . . . (Amīn 133, translation mine)

Highlighting two aspects—the spatial (area) and the social (unit of social organization)—Amīn's definition becomes clearer when complemented with the explanation given in the dictionary of Egyptian-Arabic by Badawi and Hinds: "narrow lane, alley (traditionally constituting a small neighbourhood)" (231). In a paper devoted to the concept of *ḥāra*, Al-Messiri Nadim defines it as "a narrow alley, an *'aṭfa* as a narrower alley, usually branching from a *ḥāra*, and a *zuqāq* as an offshoot of an *'aṭfa*" (321). The term *ḥāra* also denotes "the larger unit" (ibid.), comprising the main alley, the thoroughfare, i.e. the *ḥāra* in the first sense—let us call it architectural—with all its labyrinthine ramifications,[3] forming a residential neighbourhood.

[3] Sometimes the term *ḥāra* is associated with the maze-like character of these parts of a city and derived from the radical *ḥ-y-r*, meaning "confusion" (the Arabic verb *ḥāra* means "he got confused"). For instance, Abdelmonem claims that it is derived from *ḥayyara* and *ḥayra* (in my transcription), which means "confuse" and "confusion,"

In former times, the *ḥāra*s were overseen, religiously and administratively, by a *šayḫ al-ḥāra* ("sheikh of the *ḥāra*") and protected by strongmen called in Egypt *futuwwa*. Calling the *ḥāra* "one of the distinctive features of the Arabic city," French Arabist Raymond characterizes such entities as follows:

> They have a very consistent structure: there is one entrance point, which can be shut by a gate, and if necessary guarded; one main street, on to which alleys and cul-de-sacs are grafted. There are no specialised markets in these districts, only the *suwayḳas* [minor markets, translation mine] . . . where the many activities necessary to daily existence take place. The life of the district is that of a community that is quite closed in upon itself; it is open only toward the centre [of the city], where the local inhabitants undertake their activities and towards which the network of roads leads in a hierarchically organised scheme. ("MADĪNA" 552)

It is natural that the term *ḥāra* is used by way of metonymy to refer to all its inhabitants; as such, it connotes a sense of community and solidarity. As Raymond observes, the *ḥāras* "provided dwelling for a population that could hardly have exceeded around a thousand inhabitants (around 200 families), so that they lived there in a familiar environment, akin to a village where everyone knows everyone else" ("Organization" 63). This identificational facet of the notion of *ḥāra* has been signalled above in the quotation from Amīn's dictionary.

In the social dimension, the word *ḥāra*, not unlike the English expressions *the street* or *outdoors*, denotes public space—understood as one offering free access and charged with various types of shared responsibility—as opposed to private space, home. However, what has primarily shaped the distinction between public and private space in Islamic societies is, in many ways, sex segregation. Public space can thus be perceived as male and private space as female, i.e. one in which women are safe from being seen by strangers, namely males not belonging to the kin group. In addition, Abu-Lughod, to whom I owe the above observation on the "public–male vs. private–female" parallelism, notes that "when it is impossible to achieve the physical and visual separation required between strangers," the local neighbourhood is considered "an extention of the home and therefore the family" ("Islamic City" 168). In order to capture

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respectively, "caused by a lot of people and houses in tight spaces" (120). This explanation, however, is evidently folk etymology. Most probably Arabic *ḥāra* is an old borrowing from Aramaic (Syriac).

this, she proposes a third category—"semi-private space."[4] There, women can perform their daily tasks without having to "cover themselves as fully as they would have, had they been going into public space" (ibid.). This is, generally, the case with the poorer inhabitants of the city, who are unable to achieve complete gender separation.[5]

Culturally and economically, the *ḥāra* is the part of a city where people live the old, traditional way, where religious and patriarchal values predominate, change is unwelcome, and poverty and ignorance not unusual. As such, these areas are opposed to more central and more modern parts of the city, with a regular grid of wider streets. We can find instances of this semantic facet of *ḥāra* in a book by the Egyptian literary critic Ġālī Šukrī devoted to Mahfouz, in which one reads phrases such as: "since he was a child in the *ḥāra*" or "the genius of the Egyptian *ḥāra*" (12, 22, translation mine).

One arrives thus at five uses, or meanings, of the term *ḥāra*, obviously overlapping in some contexts, relevant to our considerations: geographic (a neighbourhood), metonymic (its inhabitants), architectural (its main thoroughfare), social (public space), and cultural/economic.[6]

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[4] See also Abu-Lughod "Relevance," especially page 8.

[5] In an extreme interpretation, based on the criterion of "the manner and form of familiarity with which various intimate activities are carried out in the harah passage," El-Messiry Nadim claims it to be evident "that the alley [the *ḥāra*, addition mine] is actually considered by both sexes to be a private domain" (174; see also Abu-Lughod, "Islamic City" 168).

[6] The meaning of *ḥāra* is, of course, not fixed and absolute, but has changed with time: "[I]ts precise meaning varies with the historical, administrative, socio-cultural, and perceptual frames of reference," observes Al-Messiri Nadim (313). In another passage, however, she mentions *ḥāra* among those urbanism-related terms the meaning of which has "not changed significantly since medieval times" (321). Indeed, Gaber, who in his analysis of how public space is viewed and referred to in Arabic in Egypt after the 2011 revolution observes that "[s]ome of the imported terms are inherited from colonial legacies and administration; others simply fail to map neatly onto the conditions on the ground" (103), gives *ḥāra* and *ḥayy* as examples of terms belonging to "a significantly rich set of meanings and understandings encoded in the words that laypersons use to describe the places in which they live" (104). In his opinion, such terms might well serve the needs of the discourse related to urban social justice and governance provided that they are "translated critically rather than literally" ("alleyway" or "lane" and "neighbourhood" being their respective literal translations) (ibid.). He argues that "[t]heir best translations into English might for instance be found in American slang terms: block or hood, rather than street or neighbourhood. These terms effectively combine the physical configurations in question with a communitarian ethos embodied in these places by the (largely marginalized) communities using the terms" (ibid.). Gaber's observations seem to complement well the analysis presented in this article by showing how, on the one hand, concepts related to urbanism depend on context and, on the other, how some of them resist translation irrespective of historical period.

THE *ḤĀRA* BETWEEN PARTICULARITY AND UNIVERSALITY

From the discussion in the preceding paragraphs *ḥāra* emerges as a culture-bound term.[7] More specifically, it falls into the category of untranslatable *termini technici* referring to local creations of human culture, notions which the target language is incapable of expressing by means of its vocabulary. Such notions, even when explained or described in the target language, do not evoke in the minds of the recipients of the translation the same associations as the recipients of the original text tend to have (Wojtasiewicz 66–67, 71). Faced with such a situation, the translator can opt for some approximate equivalent in the target-language, i.e. an expression sharing some relevant semantic content with the original one and harmonizing with the norms of the target-language and target-culture. This domesticating strategy has been metaphorized by Schleiermacher as leaving the reader in peace as much as possible and moving the writer toward the reader (56), and summarized by Venuti as "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" ("Strategies" 242). A subtype of the domestication strategy would be what Schreiber describes as a procedure in which the target-language norms are respected more than a norm-violating ("normverletzend") source text, and which results in the levelling ("Nivellierung") (294–95), or normalizing, of a text. The outcome is then an adaptation ("Bearbeitung"), not a translation ("Übersetzung"). Domesticating translation is usually a means of achieving fluency, transparency, idiomaticity, readability, or whatever we call it—an ideal extensively discussed and questioned by Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility*. Foreignization, the strategy situated at the opposed pole, consists, in simplest terms, in adhering in the translation process to the values of the source-language and source-culture, and making the linguistic and cultural differences visible in the target-text. "Such a translation strategy," observes Venuti, "can best be called *resistancy*, not merely because it avoids fluency, but because it challenges the target-language culture even as it enacts its own ethnocentric violence on the foreign text" (*Invisibility* 24).

The local colours and flavours present in Mahfouz's works, exemplified by *ḥāra*, intersect with this author's international fame and universal reach which ensued from the Nobel Prize and led to his works being translated into many languages. As observed by Jacquemond, giving the Nobel Prize to Mahfouz, a Third-World author, was a continuation of "the integration of the literatures of the South into the world republic of letters" (126), initiated by the boom in Latin American literature. If there is such a thing

[7] Culture-bound terms, sometimes referred to as culturemes, are "formalized, socially and juridically embedded phenomena that exist in a particular form or function in only one of the two cultures being compared" (Katan 71). See Nord (33–34) for more references.

as world literature, definable, following Damrosch, as "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (4), Mahfouz's novels undoubtedly belong to it. How all these Egyptian peculiarities are to be rendered into other languages is an obvious question which Mahfouz's translators ask themselves: should they be, in one way or another, retained in the target-texts, or, rather, sacrificed at the altar of Mahfouz's universality? In the subsequent parts of this paper, I will analyze how the authors of the four translations of *Awlād* dealt with *ḥāra* in light of the above observations on untranslatability, particularity, and universality.

Before discussing these issues, however, it seems fitting to briefly outline the translators' profiles and to evaluate, at least generally, the quality of their work. Philip Stewart (United Kingdom) was the first to translate *Awlād* into a foreign language. He did it in 1962, while in Cairo, as an academic working for a PhD degree (not accepted by the university). Later, he "changed course completely, taking a further honours degree in forestry" (Ffrench) and dedicating himself to the sciences. Although his obituary (he died in 2022), published by his alma mater, states that "[h]is publications ranged from Arabic translations, forestry, economics and ecology to the history of chemistry, and poetry" (ibid.), digital library catalogues do not show literary translations from Arabic other than that of *Awlād*. Whatever the case may be, Stewart devoted a good part of his life to this text. His translation, published in 1981 with a small print run, was based on the 1959 "Al-Ahrām" text (the manuscript, which Mahfouz did not recuperate from the "Al-Ahrām" editors, is considered lost). During his work on *Awlād*, Stewart discussed with the author some more difficult expressions and "words and phrases" missing from this edition (Shoair 63–64). When the book was reissued in the USA, he seized the opportunity to introduce certain improvements. After 1996, when comparing the Beirut edition with the "Al-Ahrām" text, he discovered that certain words or sentences were missing in the former as well. He counted "961 discrepancies between the two texts, (not including the thousands of differences in punctuation. . . . In some two hundred cases the difference is significant even in translation, affecting who does what, with what or to whom" (Stewart, "Introduction" xviii).[8] From this comparison he concluded that the Beirut edition was based on both the manuscript and the "Al-Ahrām" text, but was still incomplete. On these grounds he argued that his own revised translation into English is arguably "the only version in any language to take full account of both the original sources" (ibid.).

[8] Over a hundred of the most significant discrepancies are listed in Stewart "*Awlād*." Nevertheless, they do not affect the issues under examination here.

The second translator of *Awlād* into English, Peter Theroux (USA)—one of the three Theroux brothers, alongside Alexander and Paul—engaged in literary creation himself, and has translated over ten novels from Arabic, some by luminaries such as Elias Khoury (Lebanon) and Abdelrahman Munif (Jordan/Saudi Arabia). Following Mahfouz's Nobel Prize, the American University in Cairo Press entrusted Theroux with a new translation because they failed to obtain the rights to use the translation by Stewart; the latter "thought that a world-wide re-launch of the book in the wake of the Rushdie affair was potentially dangerous for [himself], for Mahfouz, for [their] families and associates and for Islamic-Western relations" (Stewart, "Children"). Theroux claims, however, that the reasons for commissioning a new translation may have been financial (668). More interestingly at this point, Stewart, whose translation was praised by Theroux as a "perfectly adequate work" (ibid.), was very critical of his follower's accomplishment. Not only did he remark that Theroux's translation, being based only on the Beirut edition, does not reflect the author's original intentions, but he also criticized his style (which "often does not sound like English") and even pointed out that Theroux "reproduces mistakes that [he himself] made in [his] 1981 edition, amounting cumulatively to strong evidence of plagiarism" (Stewart, "Children").[9]

The author of the Polish translation, Izabela Szybilska-Fiedorowicz, is one of the most competent and prolific translators of modern Arabic literature into Polish, although only occasionally active in this field since 2013. Apart from *Awlād*, her translations from Arabic include four novels, among which three are by Egyptian authors (Salwa Bakr, Miral al-Tahawy, and Alaa Al Aswany); she has also translated books from English dealing with the Arab world. Finally, not much can be said about the five translators of *Awlād* into Spanish, namely D. G. Villaescusa, P. M. Monfort, I. Ligorré, C. de Losada, and E. Abelleira. Apart from *Hijos*, no trace of them can be found in the digital catalogues of Spanish university libraries or in the search engines, which makes one wonder whether these names are real or pseudonymous.

Space constraints preclude discussion of the quality of the translations under analysis or their reception in respective countries. However, summary research reveals that the reviews, at least those available online, have been positive and tended to commend the book's allegorical and universal nature as well its timelessness.[10] As a rule, the reviews are not

[9] See Khalifa's "Violence" for an examination of the disputes between Stewart and Theroux which manifested themselves in various paratexts (including Stewart's negative review of his rival's version on Amazon).

[10] The reviews by Czechowicz and Yardley can serve as specimens.

concerned with the issue of faithfulness, which is usually the case when translations from "exotic" languages are discussed in non-specialized publications. At any rate, all of the four texts deserve to be judged as fine in terms of correct language and fidelity.[11]

It cannot be doubted that the authors of the four translations under analysis were well aware that *ḥāra* is not an unproblematic word. This is illustrated by Stewart's explicit justification of his decision in his "Translator's Introduction" to render it as *alley*:

> *Hara* is translated as "alley," and it is worth insisting on the fact that this is correct. Several learned critics have imagined that it means "quarter" or "district," and one has even claimed that it is the whole of the old city. Any attentive reader will agree that in this book "alley" is right; it is a single thoroughfare (chapter 67), short enough for someone at one end to follow what goes on at the other (chapter 104), and narrow enough for conversation to take place across it (chapter 97). Its people live in appartments [sic] opening on to the stairways to the central courtyards of tenement-houses. These form two facing terraces, and their flat roofs provide alternative routes from one end of the Alley to the other (chapters 33, 60, 83). (xix)

Something to the contrary can be found in the Introduction which leading Polish Arabist and translator Jolanta Kozłowska wrote for the Polish edition: "The word *ḥāra* used in the title, rendered as *dzielnica* in the Polish translation, denotes in contemporary language a lane, a street, an alley ('uliczk[a], ulic[a], zaułek'). The author uses this term interchangeably with *ḥayy*, which nowadays means a neighbourhood ('dzielnica')" (7, translation mine). This disagreement on terminology results from *ḥāra* being not only a culture-bound term, but a polysemous word as well. In the course of this article, however, it will be shown that this is not where the translator's problems with *ḥāra* in this novel end. For the time being, let us observe that out of the five meanings of *ḥāra* distinguished above, four (1–4) are actualized in *Awlād*. In the subsequent paragraphs, I will examine how its translators have tried to express these meanings in their languages and how the picture of the Egyptian (and more generally Middle Eastern Arabic, but finally also Mahfouzian) city has been refigured in translation.

[11] Minor mistakes, usually induced by (near-)homography (frequent in Arabic script)—but at times made clearly against grammar and logic—do occur, mostly in *Hijos* (see Elhalwany, esp. 118–33). However, they do not affect the overall validity of the translations and in particular those passages in which the term *ḥāra* is used.

GEOGRAPHIC SENSE AND METONYMIC USE

It seems justified to begin the discussion of the equivalents of *ḥāra* in its geographic sense, roughly corresponding to English *neighbourhood* or *district*, with its occurrences in neutral contexts, i.e. those with no reference to its being distributed along a street or being long itself. The regular equivalents in the four versions (also used in the titles—except for Stew.) are *alley* (Stew. and Ther.), *dzielnica* (*Dzieci*), and *barrio* (*Hijos*). These two general ways of conceiving of the *ḥāra*, one as a street-like entity and the other as a neighbourhood-like area, seem to be equally justified. Complications arise whenever the longitudinal shape of the *ḥāra* is referred to, with its beginning, called *maṭla'* (literally: "starting point"), *ra's* (literally: "head"), or *nihāya* (literally: "end"), and many ends, or cul-de-sacs. Translating *ḥāra* as *dzielnica* or *barrio* would sound unconvincing in such contexts since neighbourhoods do not tend to have one identifiable beginning. Therefore, the Polish and Spanish translators depart from their regular practice and opt for an equivalent denoting a street, as illustrated in (1) earlier in the article and (2):

(2)

a. *ašāra ilā l-bayt al-kabīr 'alā ra's al-**ḥāra*** (*Awlād* 7)
[he pointed to the Great House at the head of the ***ḥāra***]

b. *wskazuje na Posiadłość na końcu **ulicy*** (*Dzieci* 11)
[he points to the Estate at the end of the **street**]

c. *señala hacia la Casa Grande, al comienzo del **callejón*** (*Hijos* 9)
[he points to the Great House, at the beginning of the **alley**]

Sometimes, however, for instance in (3) and (4) below, it is *alley*, the term denoting a street-like entity, that may sound less than fluent or unnatural when taken out of the context of the novel:

(3)

a. *innanā abnā' **ḥāra** wāḥida, wa-jadd wāḥid* (*Awlād* 130)
[we are sons of one ***ḥāra***, and one ancestor]

b. *we're all sons of one **Alley** and one Ancestor* (Stew. 181)

c. *we all share one **alley** and one ancestor* (Ther. 166)

(4)

a. *a-lā tūjad kūdiya fī l-**ḥāra**?* (*Awlād* 168)
[Isn't there an exorcist in the ***ḥāra***?]

b. *Isn't there an exorcist down the **Alley**?* (Stew. 236)

c. *Couldn't you find an exorcist in the **alley**?* (Ther. 216)

In English, Polish, Spanish, and many other languages, it is usual for speakers to identify with a neighbourhood, a district, rather than with a street or an alley. Likewise, one does not expect an alley to be an area large or individuated enough to have its own exorcist. The readers of the English translations, then, have to get used to this identity-creating and individuating potential of the alley as they become acquainted with the universe represented in the novel. It would be difficult to imagine a more vivid example of foreignizing translation as regards *ḥāra* in *Awlād*.

As far as the metonymic use of *ḥāra* to refer to its inhabitants is concerned, the translators consistently resort to the terms which they have adopted for the translation of *ḥāra* in the geographic sense, e.g., "the Alley slept" (Stew. 246), "Dzielnica już spała" ["The neighbourhood slept already"] (*Dzieci* 285) (apart from cases in which they use general terms like English *people* and their Polish and Spanish equivalents: *ludzie* and *gente*). This terminological consistency only corroborates the notional architecture of the city represented in each particular translation.

There is, however, one place in *Awlād* where one of the translators into English—Theroux—departs from the use of *alley* as the equivalent of *ḥāra* in the geographic sense. As a result of a series of internal conflicts, a number of the inhabitants of the *ḥāra* emigrate to create their own settlement, which is also referred to as *ḥāra*, more specifically, *al-ḥāra al-jadīda*, "the new *ḥāra*." As if feeling that "founding a new alley" would sound somewhat atypical, Theroux domesticates this phrase into "the new neighborhood" (Ther. 330). But even Stewart, rather than being satisfied with the most obvious equivalent ("the new alley"), reads *al-ḥāra al-jadīda* as a proper name—an interpretation not at all suggested by the Arabic fragment, which has no capital letters—and additionally uses quotation marks to present the reader with "the 'New Alley'" (Stew. 364).

It is a puzzling choice of Theroux's to render *ḥāra jadīda*, "a new *ḥāra*" in this sense (*Awlād* 253), as "a new civilization" (Ther. 329). One can only guess that he saw—wanted to see?—in this place of the original text the Arabic word *ḥaḍāra* "civilization," similar to *ḥāra* graphically and phonetically. Admittedly, it makes sense in this context, but does not seem to have been intended by Mahfouz. I mention this case not only as a curiosity, but also as another piece of evidence showing that the renderings of the Arabic term *ḥāra* in the geographic sense are by no means consistent and often hardly reflect the original meaning.

ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIAL SENSE

As already mentioned above, the thoroughfare along which the *ḥāra* as neighbourhood extends is also referred to as *ḥāra* (alternatively *darb* or *sikka*). In some passages of *Awlād*, even when its longitudinal dimension is not hinted at, it is clear that *ḥāra* denotes not the whole neighbourhood, but this more limited area where, for instance, people can gather. This meaning is clearly reflected in translation equivalents such as English *road* (e.g., Stew. 167) and *street* (e.g., Ther. 153) and their Polish and Spanish correspondents: *ulica* (e.g., *Dzieci* 198) and *calle* (e.g., *Hijos* 174).

Since the area of the *ḥāra* qua street is considered public space, the term itself can be metonymized in this sense, as opposed to private space, home. At this point, it should be remarked that the concept of the *ḥāra* as (extended) (semi-)private/female space introduced by Abu-Lughod does not seem to be instantiated in *Awlād*. This is probably due to the fact that nearly all events depicted in the novel take place within the *ḥāra* qua neighbourhood, with which no outer world (the rest of the city/world)—thus, no public space—contrasts. Instead of being one of the two opposed terms, Mahfouz's *ḥāra* itself can be divided into public space and private space. In the novel, however, the latter is referred to not by means of the usual term *bayt*, "house, home," but rather *rab'* (and its plural *rubū'*), a specifically Cairene term denoting a tenement-house with a shared courtyard. Although this particular type of lodging constituted the majority of the houses in the neighbourhood (*Awlād* 75), it seems that the opposition *ḥāra* vs. *rab'* has not been recognized by the translators as relevant, and has often been lost in translation, for instance by way of omission:

(5)

a. *wa-ḫarajū ilā l-**ḥāra** wa-l-**rubū'** tatajāwab bi-l-ṣuwāt* (*Awlād* 263)
[and they went out into the ***ḥāra*** while the ***rab'*s** echoed with clamour]

b. *and went out into the **road** or the courtyards* (Stew. 378)

c. *and went out into the **alley** and courtyards* (Ther. 342)

d. *wylegli na **ulice** i podwórza* (*Dzieci* 429)
[went out into the **streets** and courtyards]

e. *el griterío atronaba casas y patios* (*Hijos* 376)
[the clamour thundered through houses and courtyards]

In this example, all translations, departing quite far from the Arabic text, fail to convey the original message that even those who remained in the

*rab'*s—i.e. the women, who generally tended to stay indoors (private, female space)—were protesting.

ḤAYY AND *ḤĀRA*—A RELATIONSHIP REFIGURED

The term *ḥayy* (plural: *aḥyā'*) is the commonest Arabic dictionary equivalent of words such as English *neighbourhood/district*, Polish *dzielnica*, and Spanish *barrio*, i.e. those denoting a larger part of a city individuated in some way. The *ḥayy al-Ḥusayn* and *ḥayy Ḫān al-Ḫalīlī* (commonly spelt in English as Khan el-Khalili) are examples of the traditional central *ḥayy*s of Cairo (nowadays also tourist attractions). They are composed of a number of *ḥāra*s and would never be referred to as *ḥāra* themselves. A topography structured in such a conventional way is the setting of the initial (1–23) chapters of *Awlād*, which narrate events prior to the creation of "our *ḥāra*." In the Polish and Spanish versions, *ḥayy* in the initial chapters is translated in the same way as *ḥāra* throughout the book: as *dzielnica* and *barrio*, respectively (for example *Dzieci* 33 and *Hijos* 27). Consequently, the distinction between the superordinate *ḥayy* and the subordinate *ḥāra* is lost. This is the result of the decision to generally use the terms *dzielnica* and *barrio* as translations of *ḥāra*. In the English translations, *ḥayy* is rendered as *district* (e.g., Stew. 20) and *neighborhood* (e.g., Ther. 22), which adequately contrasts with *alley* for *ḥāra*: the distinction between the superordinate and subordinate units is clear.

In the topography of the initial chapters, the *ḥayy*s are, as is the custom, composed of *ḥāra*s. For instance, expelled from the Great House into the outer world, Adham strays into one of the *ḥāra*s (*Awlād* 39), perhaps part of his own *ḥayy*. However, this is where the conventional use of the terms *ḥayy* and *ḥāra* ends in the novel. The *ḥāra* founded on a wasteland outside the Great House expands (end of chapter 23) and develops into a world of its own, itself divided into *ḥayy*s. The two terms, *ḥāra* and *ḥayy*, are strictly distinguished by Mahfouz (cf. Kozłowska 7), as seen explicitly in the example below:

(6)

a. *fa-yafriḍ nafsahu futuwwa 'alā* ***ḥayy*** *min* ***aḥyā'*** *al-****ḥāra*** (*Awlād* 76)
[and imposes himself as a protector on some ***ḥayy*** among the ***ḥayy*s** of the ***ḥāra***]

b. *making himself the strongman of one of the* ***sectors*** *of the* ***Alley*** (Stew. 100)

c. *imposing himself as a protector on a* ***neighborhood*** *somewhere in the* ***alley*** (Ther. 94)

d. *uzurpując sobie rolę futuwwy—obrońcy któregoś* ***terytorium dzielnicy*** (*Dzieci* 124)
[usurping the role of a *futuwwa*—protector of some **territory** of the **neighbourhood**]

e. *se nombraba a sí mismo jefe de uno de los* ***sectores del barrio*** (*Hijos* 103)
[proclaiming himself the chief of one of the **sectors** of the **neighbourhood**]

Theroux's decision to render *ḥayy* as *neighborhood* in (6c) results in the rather awkward idea of "a neighborhood somewhere in the alley." There are also other expressions of this kind: "make the rounds of the alley's neighborhoods" (Ther. 254) or "alley with its feuding neighborhoods" (Ther. 270). All of them make the surprised reader wonder: can an alley have neighbourhoods? In the following section, I will venture the hypothesis that such a surprise might in fact have been Mahfouz's intention.

DISCUSSION

The usual Arabic expression reflecting the hierarchical relationship between the concepts *ḥāra* and *ḥayy* is *ḥārāt al-ḥayy*[12] ("the *ḥāras* of the *ḥayy*"), not *aḥyā' al-ḥāra* ("the *ḥayy*s of the *ḥāra*"), as is the case in (6). In *Awlād*, the initial conventional meaning of *ḥayy* ceases to be actualized at some point, and "our *ḥāra*," historically part of a *ḥayy*, now itself divides into *ḥayy*s. The typical urban space is thus refigured into an unfamiliar one, and the topographical labels become semantically altered. This new topographical terminology is too consistently used in the novel to be the result of terminological carelessness on the author's part. It seems that Mahfouz wanted to demonstrate in this way that the ontological status of the *ḥāra* is not a standard one. As a result, the notion of *ḥāra* acquires new dimensions—those of a city, of a universe. It is no longer an alley or a small neighbourhood, and the reader of the original text is very often reminded of the fact through such new topographical terminology.

This refiguring of space and alteration of nomenclature invalidates the meticulous terminological adjustments made by the translators when dealing with *ḥayy* and *ḥāra* in the novel's initial chapters. The labels have to be rethought. Indeed, in the chapters from 24 onwards, the translators' regular choices for *ḥayy* as part of the *ḥāra* are those exemplified in (6): English *sector* (Stewart) and *neighborhood* (Theroux), Polish *terytorium* ("territory"), Spanish *sector*.

[12] With *ḥawārī l-ḥayy* being a morphological variant.

Theroux's choice—*neighborhood*—aside, the remaining solutions seem felicitous inasmuch they do not strike the reader as incongruous. In Venuti's terms, they are fluent: an alley can conceivably be divided into sectors in English, *dzielnica* into *terytoria* in Polish, and a *barrio* into *sectores* or *barriadas* in Spanish. At the same time they are not adequate since they result in a loss of incongruity present in the norm-violating ("normverletzend," to use Schreiber's terminology again) original version. As far as the division of the *ḥāra* is concerned, these three translations offer a picture that has been domesticated, normalized, subjected to *Nivellierung*, or levelling.[13] Theroux's foreignizing choice is the most felicitous in terms of reflecting the incongruity found in the original text and suggesting that what is being described is not just a conventional alley.

It also seems that the use of terms meaning *neighbourhood* and *street* to render *ḥāra* in its usual sense can be considered in terms of foreignization and domestication. *Dzielnica* (*Dzieci*) and *barrio* (*Hijos*) are instances of domestication, assuming that these terms foreground that aspect of *ḥāra* which secures fluency in the target-texts, i.e. is easily understood and normally used in similar contexts in the Polish and Spanish cultures. The use of *alley*, i.e. the term conveying the meaning of *street*, by Stewart and Theroux, is foreignizing in many contexts, because it has a sense of the foreign, as examples (3) and (4) show. Thus, Stewart's aforementioned explanatory note on *ḥāra*/alley was not only self-defence; it was also meant to help absorb this estranging effect.

CONCLUSION

The initial idea for this article was to also examine the use of the terms *ḥāra* and *ḥayy* and their translation equivalents in other prose works by Mahfouz, such as *Bayn al-Qaṣrayn* (1956; English *Palace Walk*, 1990, by William

[13] Domestication, or levelling, can also be identified in the manifold ways in which the translators tried to mask the lexical strangeness of the original text presenting *ḥayy* as a meronym of *ḥāra*: omission (e.g., *aḥyā' al-ḥāra*, "the *ḥayys* of the *ḥāra*," becoming just "the alley" in Ther. 107), hypernyms (e.g., *ḥayy* becoming "part" in Stew. 276), hyponyms (e.g., *ḥayy* becoming "zaułek" ["backstreet"] in *Dzieci* 142), and metonyms (e.g., *aḥyā'* becoming "facciones" ["factions"] in *Hijos* 298). Some of their decisions were rather unsuccessful. When *aḥyā'*, referring to the parts of the *ḥāra—barrio* in the Spanish version—is translated as *barrios*, the result is the meronym becoming indistinguishable from the holonym. (7b) is bound to create confusion as to the relationship between the *barrios* and the *barrio*.

(7) a. *naḥnu lā nufarriq bayna* ***ḥayy*** *wa-****ḥayy****, fa-l-****ḥāra*** *ḥāratunā* (*Awlād* 259)

[we don't make any difference between one ***ḥayy*** and (another) ***ḥayy***, the ***ḥāra*** belongs to (all of) us]

b. *nosotros no hacemos distingos entre* ***barrios****; el* ***barrio*** *es nuestro* (*Hijos* 371)

[we don't make any difference between ***neighbourhoods****; the* ***neighbourhood*** *belongs to us*]

Maynard Hutchins and Olive E. Kenny), or the entire Cairo trilogy. This could not be carried out due to space limitations. For the time being, suffice it to say that the use of these terms in the Cairo trilogy, in *Ḫān al-Ḫalīlī* (1945; English *Khan al-Khalili*, 2008, by Roger Allen) and *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* (1947; English *Midaq Alley*, 1966, by Trevor Le Gassick)—to name only the earliest and most famous novels, all set in the traditional Cairene *ḥārā*s and *ḥayy*s, but in which *ḥāra* and *ḥayy* play no conspicuous part as lexemes—is utterly conventional. The same holds true for the later collection of stories, *Ḥikāyāt ḥāratinā* (1975, literally: *The Stories of Our Ḥāra*), again featuring "our *ḥāra*" in the title and in the narratives, which is, however, lost in its English translation by Soad Sobhy, Essam Fattouh, and James Kenneson, titled *Fountain and Tomb* (1988). A promising path for further exploration could be an analysis of how the terms *ḥāra* and *ḥayy* have been translated into other languages, with some versions already demonstrating interesting modifications in their titles. For instance, that of the French translation by Jean-Patrick Guillaume, *Les fils de la médina* (*The Sons of the Medina*, 1991), uses a term absent from the novel's vocabulary: *médina* refers to the old (and touristic) parts of an Arab—but primarily Maghrebi, or even more specifically, Moroccan[14]—town or city. As a result of this decision, the reader's associations gravitate towards the region of the former French colonies in North Africa. Thus, it can be assumed that a study of other language versions of Mahfouz's novel might not only demonstrate a given translator's inclination towards conceiving of the *ḥāra* as a street or a neighbourhood, but could perhaps also reveal less expected lexical shifts, resulting in texts that offer a refigured topography of the Middle-Eastern, or Egyptian, city.

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[14] Cf. the two following definitions of *médina* in popular dictionaries of French:

(i) "Dans les pays arabes, et surtout au Maroc, la vieille ville, par opposition aux quartiers neufs" ("In the Arab countries, especially in Morocco, the old town, in contradistinction to the new districts") ("médina," *Larousse*)

(ii) "Partie ancienne d'une ville, en Afrique du Nord (spécialement au Maroc)" ("Old part of a town in Northern Africa, especially in Morocco") ("médina," *Le Robert*).

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