

Description as a Fiction-Writing Mode Between Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* and Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*: A Comparative Study

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Abstract—Comparative literature expounds on the areas of convergence in literature and reproduces the cultural similarities between East and West, demonstrating its results in guiding literary and intellectual renewal movements. Arabic literature takes advantage of the works of literature of other nations and is always keen to develop and enrich its awareness and culture. As the novel is a celebrated genre used in the comparative literature area, the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, well-known as the Dickens of Egypt, is one of the key poles of the international Arab novel. Mahfouz's novels and short stories convey Cairo, the capital of Egypt, its neighborhoods, inhabitants, and groceries to the home of every reader. The images and representations of Cairo drawn by Mahfouz are compared to the masters of English literature, namely Charles Dickens who significantly impacted Mahfouz's writings, especially his great love for describing and depicting everything his eyes see. With appropriating a comparative study of Dickens's and Mahfouz's selected works, this paper examines the concept of "description as a fiction-writing mode" as reflected in two literary works—Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* (1947) following the School of Comparative Literature based on the principle of similarity in its study and analysis of literary works.

Index Terms—Charles Dickens, comparative literature, description, Naguib Mahfouz, novel

I. INTRODUCTION

The Arabs have opened up to the culture and literature of other nations and hit the books about the various international genres of literature of the contemporary era. This openness has many important manifestations, such as translation, paving the way for mutual influence between the Arab and Western cultures and works of literature. In prose, especially the novel, the Arab novelists learn about the nature and structure of Western literature in its origins due to the general and similar currents prevailing in those literatures with the Arab literature (Al-Ghalith & Al-Sayyid, 2023). Moreover, the influence of literary schools mixes in these literatures, making it difficult to distinguish the lines of their influence in our literature and determine its extent from each literature (Al-Ghammaz, 2024; Sally, 2016).

Among the Arab novelists is Naguib Mahfouz, who is greatly influenced by European writers in general and English novelists, i.e. Charles Dickens in particular. The representations of Dickens's novels are deeply positioned in the mind of Mahfouz, embodying them in his novels through the global ingenuity in his description of Egypt's capital, Cairo, its neighborhoods, and its people (Abdeen, 2013). Many intellectuals - especially critics and writers - emphasize the similarities between the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz and the British writer Charles Dickens, as both of them have gained fame as no other writer of his time had (Abu Keshk & Farman, 2022).

Even though the time gap between Mahfouz and Dickens is exactly a century, the world, the Arabs, and the Egyptians in particular have recently celebrated the second centenary of Dickens and the first centenary of Mahfouz.

Both novelists have had their works translated into almost all languages of the world (Al-Ghammaz, 2023). They also have been an inexhaustible source of knowledge for writers on theatre, cinema, and television. Although the film industry - not to mention television - has not yet begun in the era of Dickens, this confirms the importance and magnificence of literary works penned by Dickens and Mahfouz (Al-Ghammaz, 2024; Abdeen, 2013).

In this context, Charbel describes Mahfouz as the "Great Pyramid," saying "Whenever I hear the name of Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz used to stand out like a great pyramid" (2019, p. 1). Mahfouz's novels and short stories shine light on Cairo, taking its neighborhoods and inhabitants, to the home of every reader, so he or she unites with them and becomes an Egyptian citizen in all its manifestations. In this mood, Germon and Aylan (2021) confirm that "Naguib Mahfouz draws accurate paintings of his society, especially Cairo" on one hand. On the other hand, the Jordanian novelist Shalan (2006) regards Mahfouz as the master of detailed realism in the narration, hinting at the fact Mahfouz's picture of Cairo remains alive compared to the masters of European literature such as Balzac, Tolstoy, and Dickens, and thus dubbing Mahfouz as "Charles Dickens of Egypt".

Mahfouz as "Charles Dickens of Egypt" is reflected in his literary works, as Mahfouz has depicted the life of the middle class in the neighborhoods of Cairo, alongside the concerns and dreams of its people. Mahfouz has also portrayed the life of the Egyptian family in its internal relations and the extension of these relations in society. Later, after receiving the Nobel Prize in 1989, the British Channel 4 broadcast a video report from Cairo showing some features of Cairo mixed with Mahfouz's daily life (Al-Ghammaz, 2023).

Dickens's novels are characterized by extreme realism - as mentioned earlier - and the superior ingenuity and accuracy in describing all the environments in which he lived. Close to Mahfouz, Dickens is distinguished for detailing the characters of his works, exploring their depths and delving into them, along with describing their places to a point that many writers have not attained until now. Accordingly, the similarities between Dickens and Mahfouz are reflected in the deep textual structure, fondness for reading, realism in writing, and the ability to accurately describe places and analyze characters, as Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* and Dickens's *David Copperfield*, which critics almost unanimously agree that it is an autobiography of Dickens (Sehrawat, 2014). One of the important outstanding issues in modern literary thought is that Dickens and Mahfouz share the realism of plot and suspense.

With this discussion in mind about the use of description in literary works, Frederick (1977) defines description as a form of communication whose purpose is to create a soulful object, place, person, or any other related physical body. Together with argumentation, exposition, and narration, description constitutes the four rhetorical modes "also known as modes of discourse". Among the key modes of the fiction-writing are dialogue, action, summary, exposition, and specifically description (Page, 2006).

At the same level, description is a mode of fiction-writing used to convey a mental image of a certain story with its particulars. Alongside narration, summary, dialogue, and exposition, description is regarded as one of the most broadly documented of the fiction-writing modes. The significance of description as a mode of writing is reflected in Polking's words as he says that description not only builds up details of an object, person, or place but also adds life to these elements by wisely selecting and organizing words and sentences to yield the desired impact (Polking, 1990).

Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* (1947) demonstrate the literary term of description as a fiction-writing mode. Even though each work revolves around a different society—the British society in Dickens's *David Copperfield* and the Egyptian Arab society in Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*, the depiction of characters and places exemplifies the use of description as a fiction-writing mode in the two writers' selected works.

This paper, while making a comparative study, gives textual focus to Dickens's *David Copperfield* and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*, addressing description as a fiction-writing mode. This paper aims to enrich modern scholarship about Dickens's *David Copperfield* and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* by furnishing a more detailed textual analysis of the two novels. Even though much ink has been shed on Dickens's *David Copperfield* and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*, nothing has been written on the concept of description as a fiction-writing mode in the said novels.

II. SIMILARITY BETWEEN MAHFOUZ AND CHARLES DICKENS

Like the French Balzac and Jules Pomegranate, Naguib Mahfouz has picked up his models in terms of development and aims for change, and this is embodied in his first experiences, such as *Cairo Modern* and *Midaq Alley*, representing the realistic stage in the writings of the novelist. A lot of intellectuals, especially critics and writers emphasize the similarities between Mahfouz and Dickens in terms of the strong influence of the environment in which each of them has grown up with the huge difference in life and place development, the superior ability of both to accurately describe that environment to the point that makes the reader almost always live in that environment with these realistic characters (Sehrawat, 2014). Accordingly, while Mahfouz makes us live with the bullies (Al-Futawat in Arabic) and families from the Egyptian urban rabble (Al-Harafish in Arabic) in the neighborhood, the merchants in Hamzawy, and the middle-class employees in Abbasiya, Dickens succeeds in making us live with the downtrodden and poor children deprived of money, kindness, education, orphans, and shelters in the middle of the London neighborhoods characterized by extreme poverty. At that time, child beggars were called street children in the language of these days, and to the same extent that makes us coexist with lawyers, litigants, criminals, and thieves in the corridors of British courts at that time. Like Mahfouz, Dickens could describe the beauty and make it out of life's beauty and ugliness alike, along with the charm of narration in a smooth language that attacks and captures the reader's heart to read more.

The director, Al-Ghazali (2006) has explored the biographical and literary aspects of the late writer Mahfouz, which affected his childhood and later reflected on his literary works. Al-Ghazali (2006) maintains that the Nobel Prize was not given for Mahfouz's *Sons of Our Neighborhood*, but rather the basis of the award is that the Prize Committee considers Mahfouz to be similar to Charles Dickens in his monitoring of society's issues and their temporal development, including *Sons of our Neighborhood*, which we can say is the story of humanity.

III. DESCRIPTION AS A FICTION-WRITING MODE IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *DAVID COPPERFIELD*

Although much ink has been spilled on Charles Dickens's novels from social, political, and economic vantages, little attention has been given to the term description as a fiction-writing mode in Dickens's *David Copperfield*. This section, accordingly, gives a deep insight into the concept of description as a fiction-writing mode by demonstrating the manifestations of the description of the characters and places as well.

A. Representations of the Description of the Characters

The novel revolves around the main character, David, and his life full of tragedies that he has suffered since he was born. With the death of David's father before his birth, his mother assumed the responsibility of raising him, and thus his happiness was incomplete. Shortly, David's mother married a rude man named Edward Murdstone "commonly known as Mr. Murdstone", who did not like David from the beginning, promoting him to advise David's mother, Clara, not to be lenient with David and to be harsh on him in her dealings with him. As a result, Mr. Murdstone, the cruel stepfather, has plotted to send him to a boarding school, so that he can't see his mother or his kind-hearted nanny, Clara Peggotty. In the school, David meets two friends, Traddles, a good-natured, quiet boy, and Steerforth, an older student whom he admires very much.

On David's birthday, he learns the news of his mother's death, which hits him like a thunderbolt, making him leave school and go home. Mr. Murdstone and his sister, however, do not like it, so they get rid of him by sending him to work in a winery. In the wine factory, he encounters many tragedies, as his work is not commensurate with his age as a child of no more than ten years old. David gets acquainted with a respectable person named Mr. Micawber, who rents an apartment for him next to his modest apartment, and David mixes with Mr. Micawber's family, he senses the kindness of those individuals and at the same time, he senses the strangeness in their behavior, as Mr. Micawber is a person accustomed to debts from people, which put him in prison.

With this, David decides to leave his job, fleeing and searching for one of his relatives, as he travels on foot and gets robbed, and so he only finds his aunt Miss Betsey Trotwood. David arrives exhausted and dirty, so she decides to take care of him, adopt him, and send him to a new school. He settles with a lawyer who is a friend of his aunt and gets to know his daughter Agnes, who helps him with his schoolwork and stands with him side by side. After that, David trained in a legal institution for a lawyer named Spenlow to qualify for the legal profession. He gets to know his daughter Dora and marries her, but she dies, so David decides to travel abroad to ease his grief over her death. Upon his return, he marries Agnes and becomes a famous writer.

Dickens is distinguished by the accurate physical and moral description of people and places, which contributes to educating the readers and informing them of the nature and characteristics of characters and places. As for the characters, Dickens describes them in an accurate and detailed manner, even if you think that this character stands right in front of you. While heading to Yarmouth with his nanny Peggotty for the first time, he describes the cart's carrier, saying "The carrier had a way of keeping his head down, like his horse, and of drooping sleepily forward as he drove, with one of his arms on each of his knees" (p. 46).

As David arrives at Mr. Peggotty's house, he proceeds to describe the members of this family, referring to Peggotty's brother Ham, saying "He was, now, a huge, strong fellow of six feet high, broad in proportion, and round-shouldered; but with a simpering boy's face and curly light hair that gave him quite a sheepish look" (p. 48).

As gleaned from the previous excerpt, these descriptions fit his work as a sailor, like his father, Mr. Peggotty. It is evident how Dickens's description of Mr. Micawber is characterized by some wit accompanied by childish sarcasm, adding some humor to his characters. Dickens, on the other hand, does not only describe his characters in an accurate and detailed external description but also in an internal and psychological description to give the reader more insight into the realism of his characters on the physical and moral level because this description, in turn, has a great impact in defining the nature of the character, in terms of goodness and malice, richness and poverty, knowledge, and ignorance. This description demonstrates a close relationship between a character's outward appearance and his behaviors, morals, or actions. The reader, through this humorous description of Mr. Micawber, has prior knowledge of the simplicity and kindness of this character as well. Dickens, for example, shines the light on the history and success of Strong's school thanks to the efforts of its headmaster, who is a kind and gentle character, saying "But the Doctor himself was the idol of the whole school: and it must have been a badly composed school if he had been anything else, for he was the kindest of men" (p. 358).

On the other hand, Dickens proceeds to make a comparison between the Creakle School and the Strong School, saying "Doctor Strong's was an excellent school; as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil. It was very gravely and decorously ordered, and on a sound system; with an appeal, in everything" (p. 356).

What is more, Dickens describes David's good-hearted nanny as David's love for her consoles him for what he lost in his life, saying "I hear sobs and I see that good and faithful servant, whom of all the people upon earth I love the best, and unto whom my childish heart is certain that the Lord will one day say: Well done" (p. 197).

On the other hand, Dickens is back to describing Mrs. Murdstone in a way that explains how this woman is cruel, as her features strongly reflect that. On the lips of David, Dickens says "It was Miss Murdstone arrived with a gloomy looking lady and dark like her brother, whom she greatly resembled in face and voice; and with very heavy eyebrows, nearly meeting over her large nose, as if, being disabled by the wrongs of her sex from wearing whiskers" (pp. 74-75).

As drawn from the previous excerpt, this is what her unpleasant actions and attitudes toward child David have proved.

B. Representations of the Description of the Places

Dickens not only describes his characters only, but also places such as houses and neighborhoods, and everything that his eyes fall upon in an accurate and detailed manner. He describes David's old house in Blunderstone, saying "On the ground-floor is Peggotty's kitchen, opening into a back yard; with a pigeon-house on a pole, in the centre, without any pigeons in it; a great dog-kennel in a corner, without any dog" (p. 25). Dickens adds "There is one cock who gets upon a post to crow, and seems to take particular notice of me as I look at him through the kitchen window, who makes me shiver, he is so fierce" (p. 26).

During David's travel to Mr. Peggotty's house, Dickens gives us an accurate and moving description of David's house, which is a boat on land that makes the reader yearn to live in it, saying, "If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg...., I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the romantic idea of living in it" (p. 49). He adds "There was a delightful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it; but the wonderful charm of it was, that it was a real boat which had no doubt been upon the water hundreds of times, and which had never been intended to be lived in, on dry land" (p. 50). In the same vein, in describing one of the buildings that represent a large gathering of many poor people who find neither shelter nor place to live, Dickens says "The house swarmed with inmates. As we went up, doors of rooms were opened and people's heads put out; and we passed other people on the stairs, who were coming down. In glancing up from the outside, before we entered, I had seen women and children lolling at the windows over flower-pots" (p. 1065).

With this detailed description, Dickens shows that this makes the place worse than more.

IV. DESCRIPTION AS A FICTION-WRITING MODE IN NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S *MIDAQ ALLEY*

Close to Charles Dickens's novels, Mahfouz's novels in general and *Midaq Alley* in particular have been personally, socially, and politically explored. Little insight, however, is furnished to the term of description as a fiction-writing mode in Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*. This section, accordingly, expounds the literary concept of description as a fiction-writing mode through examples related to characters and places from the novel itself.

A. Representations of the Description of the Characters

Set in Khan el-Khalili in Egypt, *Midaq Alley*, an Egyptian Novel, revolves around a public street alive with exciting Egyptians thriving to cope with the daily hardships of life. The events of the novel take place in this small alley in the forties of the twentieth century after the Second World War and its impact on the Egyptians in *Midaq Alley*, a small popular alley that branches off from Al-Sadaqiyyah Street parallel to Al-Azhar Street. The story revolves around Hamida, who is considered the heroine of the story of *Midaq Alley*, where Naguib has devoted the largest space to Hamida, whose story ended in the arms of the English officers. With her immoral behavior, Hamida ended the story of her fiancé, who was murdered by the British officers.

According to the path of dramatic construction in which Naguib Mahfouz has excelled, the essence of the idea of the novel revolves around the inevitable end, which is a dramatic end for the naive hero Abbas, whose blind love for an illiterate, fiery, prostitute girl pushed him to recklessness and death. Later, Hussain Kirsha, son of the lecherous café owner who works for the British soldiers, brings the grief-stricken news to Midaq Alley, which speaks of it for a time, and then returns to its ordinary routine.

In line with the path of Dickens of the accurate description of characters and places, the precise and full-of-life description of the characters, whether it is a physical or moral description, is the feature that Mahfouz excelled at, which makes him distinguished in his prose and realistic writings in particular. Likewise, Dickens' accurate description of places contributes to raising the readers' awareness about the nature and culture of popular Egyptian life in all its details, especially its places and traits. Mahfouz always describes the characters in an accurate and in-depth description, as if he draws for readers a painting for each character in the novel. In describing Hamida, Mahfouz says "Hamida was in her twenties, of medium stature and with a slim figure. Her most remarkable features were her black, beautiful eyes, the pupils and whites of which contrasted in a most striking and attractive way" (p. 18).

Without a shred of doubt, Mahfouz, in his description of the characters, blends the physical aspect, that is, the external or physical appearance, with the moral aspect related to the psychological and ethical characteristics of Hamida. Dickens says "She could take on an appearance of strength and determination which was most unfeminine, and her temper had always, even in Midaq Alley itself, been something no one could ignore" (p. 18). Here, readers notice a shared agreement among the Midaq Street residents that Hamida is a very striking and beautiful girl. Not like other girls,

but despite her beauty, Hamida is distinguished by amazing strength and great anger, which Hamida has become famous for in the whole alley. Mahfouz continues to describe Hamida's morals throughout the novel pages, saying "Hamida continued on her way, enjoying her daily promenade and looking in the shop windows, one after the other. The luxurious clothes stirred in her greedy and ambitious mind bewitching dreams of power and influence" (p. 28).

This excerpt summarizes all the characteristics distinguishing Hamida represented by her love for money, because it is the only means capable of achieving all her dreams and desires, which are summed up in the love of power and control, the love of clothes, and the love of everything that she desires, according to Mahfouz.

With the two-character conversation between Abbas and his childhood friend Hussain Kirsha, Mahfouz provides a full picture of the morals of this young man who is completely different from his friend, saying "Just then Hussain Kirsha appeared; he was dressed in trousers, a white shirt, and a straw hat, making an ostentatious show of looking at his gold wristwatch, his small darting eyes filled with pride of possession" (p. 24).

Moreover, Mahfouz makes a wonderful comparison between Abbas Hilu and his friend Hussain Kirsha from childhood to youth, hinting at the stark contrast in the character of these two friends who have maintained their friendship. Unlike his friend, who is known for his extraordinary activities, to the extent that Mahfouz describes him as a sinful criminal, Hilu is a good, decent, religious, calm, peaceful young man who is content with his life and work. Also, the big difference and the stark difference between the morals of Abbas and the morals of Hamida are easily noticed. In other words, a tremendous gap is experienced between Abbas's kindness, consent, and contentment that his eyes speak of, and Hamida's strength and anger that ignite like a spark from her black eyes and aspiring soul for money, dissatisfaction with her life, and unwillingness to live in the alley. This image, presented by Mahfouz from the first moment of the novel, makes the readers predict directly the end of the relationship between these two young men, for Hamida, as an ambitious and rebellious girl, is not suitable for a young man like Abbas, and her arrogance and greed can never be satisfied, which is what happens at the end of the events of the novel.

In the same vein, in his description of his characters, Mahfouz is characterized by wit and humor to add a sense of humor and irony to the atmosphere of the novel and construct a deep relationship between his readers and his characters so that they appear closer and more realistic. In the description of Uncle Kamil, "Basbousa/sweets" seller, Mahfouz says "Two shops of Uncle Kamil, the sweets seller, to the right of the alley entrance and the barbershop on the left, remain open until shortly after sunset, and it is Uncle Kamil's habit, even his right, to place a chair on the threshold of his shop and drop off to sleep with a fly whisk resting in his lap" (p. 3).

Mahfouz draws a complete picture of Uncle Kamil with brilliance and accuracy and adds to it a side of humor and wit that increases our love and admiration for the simplicity of this character. Uncle Kamil's appearance indicates the extent of his kindness and good treatment, as he is a father and even a family to Abbas Hilu, and the people of the alley have grieved a lot for him when he passed away. It is clear here how accurate Mahfouz is in his description of Uncle Kamil, as he draws a picture of this uncle for the readers while he is in front of his shop and any one of us can imagine his image. It also gives him a kind of wit that suggests the popularity and simplicity of this poor man and his childlike spontaneity.

Mahfouz goes on to describe his characters one by one to provide the readers with a clear picture that informs them of the fate of each character, demonstrating the reader's awareness at the social, intellectual, cultural, and religious levels. However, in the description of Radwan Hussainy during his time at Kirsha's cafe at night, Mahfouz says "Radwan Hussainy was a man of impressive appearance, both broad and tall, a flowing black cloak covering his ample form, his face large and whitish with tinges of red. He wore a reddish-colored beard. His forehead seemed to shine with light" (p. 6).

Thanks to this beautiful picture of Hussainy, readers have already felt all this through Hussainy's dignity, serenity, beauty, and internal and external purity together. Hussainy is the sanctuary of all those who suffer distress in the alley and the man of sermons, pearls of wisdom, and guidance, as he is the wise mentor and advisor, and for this reason, all the people of the alley have loved him. This also demonstrates what distinguishes Mr. Radwan Al-Hussainy from good qualities such as patience, faith, and love for goodness and people, despite all the sorrows, disappointments, and loss of children. This character, distinguished by her faith and serenity, creates a special flavor in the novel with a novel and pure spirit. Mahfouz has excelled and shone in describing and delivering Hussainy's wisdom on his tongue, as these wisdoms inspire and communicate their messages to all humanity, calling for peace and love.

Contrary to this illuminating and bright image of Hussainy's character that is loved by everyone in the alley, making the readers fall in love with him, the same readers find Kirsha's character as a strange, abnormal, and morally and socially outcast character, to say the least. Addressing the readers, Mahfouz describes this character in the ugliest image that can describe a person who has been changed by the misfortunes and changes in life. After the war and occupation, Mahfouz says "Mr. Kirsha was a poor man, however, unlike the majority of cafe proprietors, not because his business was unprofitable, but because he was a squanderer, wasting his profits and throwing his money about with nothing to show for it" (p. 32). Unlike the first character represented by Mr. Radwan Hussainy, the ugliness of Mr. Karsh's qualities makes the reader alienate him.

B. Representations of the Description of the Places

Similar to Dickens, Mahfouz has excelled at describing places such as houses, neighborhoods, and cafes in his novels and short stories the same as his characters. If we turn to Mahfouz, he is famous for describing characters, places, and

everything he daily meets, such as streets, neighborhoods, and residences alike. The place in the novel is a substantial part of the document of time, as it constitutes the imagined social environment derived from the history of people, events, facts, and documents (Sehrawat, 2014). Usually, the discourse in the novel invests the social legacy of the dimensions of the place in the interpretation of reality and draws the demographic sign that expresses the writer's visions and aspirations, as well as his expectations (Al-Ghammaz et al., 2022).

Within this atmosphere, Sally (2016) maintains that Midaq Alley is part of a place in Cairo, where Mahfouz begins his novel to describe and convey its images as they are. Mahfouz, accordingly, has described the alley with its houses, its common people with their ordinary nature, and all its shops, along with the feeling of money and the monotony of life there, as is the habit of the life of Egyptians in similar areas. It is a picture of the simple popular Egyptian alley. In the novel, the setting is often the hero, as it is the sacred bond for all the relationships that unite the individual and his society on the one hand, and the rest of the characters on the other; that is, between all the inner man's innermost being, with all the psychological, intellectual and social struggles he experiences, and each character and its counterparts from the characters of the entire novel. The place reveals the tragedy of these characters as an image of the conflict within the novel, which is the conflict of the characters with themselves and with each other and with the place as well as the prevailing conditions in it.

With that being said, Mahfouz begins his narration with an accurate and vivid description of the alley, demonstrating the alley's originality and antiquity, saying "Many things combine to show that Midaq Alley is one of the gems of times gone by and that it once shone forth like a flashing star in the history of Cairo of the Fatimids, the Mamlukes, or the Sultans" (p. 2).

Importantly, readers easily note how Mahfouz, in his description of this alley, has focused on the ancient and original historical aspect to which the alley belongs, and he continues describing it, saying "Although Midaq Alley lives in almost complete isolation from all surrounding activity, it clamors with a distinctive and personal life of its own, and its roots connect with life as a whole and retains a number of the secrets of a world now past" (p. 2).

This alley is the miniature sample, not only of Egypt but rather a revelation of the secrets of the whole world that it declares and hides. This alley is a miniature human model of the world expressing Mahfouz's vision of the whole world. Later, Mahfouz goes on to describe the alley to give us a realistic picture of it by drawing a clear picture of the alley in its shape, its shops, the coffee shop, and the only two girls who are in it. Mahfouz sums up the alley with the phrase that it is confined between three walls like a trap to express the smallness and simplicity of this humble place, and then continues his description of the shops in it, saying "The barbershop, although small, is considered in the alley to be rather special and has a mirror and an armchair, as well as the usual instruments of a barber" (p. 3). Mahfouz describes the café, saying "In Kirsha's café, light streams from its electric lamps, their wires covered with flies and is beginning to fill with customers. It is a square room, somewhat dilapidated, and in spite of its dinginess, its walls are covered with arabesques" (p. 4).

With this description in mind, the café is yet bustling with customers day and night. Likewise, in the description of the rooms, he says in the description of the room of Umm Hamida "The room was small, with two old-fashioned sofas facing one another and a battered table on which rested an ashtray, and on the floor was a straw mat" (p. 12). This description expresses the difficult social situation in which Hamida and her mother live in such a poor house.

V. DESCRIPTION AS A FICTION-WRITING MODE BETWEEN SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE

Both novelists Dickens and Mahfouz are keen to describe their characters and portray them in an accurate and detailed way thanks to the extent of these two writers' love for description, which is a common feature between them. The love of these two writers for this description is evident in the two novels to inform the reader of everything related to their characters so that the reader has that complete and detailed picture of everything related to the characters of the novel (Al-Gahlith & Shalabi, 2022). In their description, these writers also mix the external aspect or the physical appearance and the psychological aspect as well to give the reader a more realistic picture of their characters. In describing Hamida, Mahfouz says "Hamida was in her twenties, of medium stature and with a slim figure. Her skin was bronze-colored and her face a little elongated, unmarked, and pretty. Her most remarkable features were her black, beautiful eyes, the pupils and whites of which contrasted in a most striking and attractive way" (p. 18) He adds "When, however, she set her delicate lips and narrowed her eyes, she could take on an appearance of strength and determination which was most unfeminine, and her temper had always, even in Midaq Alley itself, been something no one could ignore" (p. 18).

Mahfouz explains that, unlike the other girls in the neighborhood, despite her beauty, she is characterized by amazing strength and great anger, which she is known for in the alley (Alkam, 2023). On the other hand, in *David Copperfield*, Dickens also mentions a female model represented by Mrs. Murdstone, who is characterized by a sharp and harsh character that women are not familiar with. Dickens describes Mrs. Murdstone in a way that explains how this woman is cruel, as her features strongly reflect that, saying "It was Miss Murdstone who was arrived, and a gloomy looking lady she was; dark, like her brother, whom she greatly resembled in face and voice; and with very heavy eyebrows, nearly meeting over her large nose" (pp. 74-75).

With that, Dickens asserts that Mrs. Murdstone is characterized by a tyrannical nature and a demonic, fierce, and puritanical temperament proven by her cruel behavior with the child David. Among the points of similarity between Dickens and Mahfouz is also the elaboration in the description with the addition of an atmosphere of humor and irony.

It is evident how Dickens's description of Mr. Micawber is characterized by some wit accompanied by childish sarcasm, adding some humor to his characters. In the same vein, in his description of his characters, Mahfouz is characterized by wit and humor to add a sense of humor and irony to the atmosphere of the novel and construct a deep relationship between his readers and his characters so that they appear closer and more realistic. In the description of Uncle Kamil, "Basbousa/sweets" seller, Mahfouz says "He has a belly like a barrel, great projecting breasts, and he seems scarcely to have any neck at all. Between his shoulders lies his rounded face, so puffed and blood-flecked that his breathing makes its furrows disappear" (p. 3).

Mahfouz draws readers a picture of this uncle while he is in front of his shop, and any one of us can imagine his picture. He has also endowed him with a kind of wit that suggests the popularity and simplicity of this poor man with childlike spontaneity. Equally, Dickens and Mahfouz are always taken with describing the buildings, streets and slums, houses, and rooms. In his description of one of the buildings that is a gathering of poor people, Dickens says "The house swarmed with inmates" (p. 1065).

As gleaned from the previous excerpt, this descriptive section shows the state of poverty and misery experienced by the English popular neighborhoods, as the poor resort to housing in such gatherings full of filth so that they do not sleep in the streets and roads. On a parallel line, in *Midaq Alley*, Mahfouz shows a similar situation by describing the ruined house (Al-Kharabah in Arabic) in which Zaita, the maker of cripples, lives. Mahfouz says "In the wall facing the entrance, there is a small, wooden door which opens onto a grimy little outbuilding smelling of dirt and filth, for it has only one tiny window in the opposite wall overlooking the courtyard of an old house" (p. 38).

With this description, Mahfouz depicts that state of filth, dirt, and complete darkness surrounding it. Mahfouz depicts that state of filth, dirt, and complete darkness surrounding it, which reveals the ugliness of the situation experienced by the poor and miserable members of society. Appropriating these lengthy descriptive passages, both novelists expose reality and shed light on this class of society and the reality of poverty and misery in which it lives. The similarity between Mahfouz and Dickens appears in their combination of contradictions in one spot, where *Midaq Alley* is the full picture of what Dickens loves in terms of psychological comfort and fun alongside darkness, violence, madness, and death. Dickens's first novels combine the reality among spiritual, material, and chaotic persons, such as the meeting of the pimp with the Salafist at the café in Midaq Alley, which reminds of some of the features of Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, for these variations give the atmosphere of the novel a lot of vitality and are used as a suspense device. Nevertheless, Dickens is considered more optimistic than Mahfouz, but Mahfouz is considered the most skillful novelist to transfer the reader's body and soul to the novelist's atmosphere and his private world by exaggerating the focus on tiny and small details (Abdullah, 2005). Therefore, Mahfouz's novel is full of detailed descriptions of every small and large idea and event, whatever it may be.

VI. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, Mahfouz's appropriations of Dickens's use of description as a fiction-writing mode can be seen in six basic patterns. Firstly, Dickens's and Mahfouz's descriptions of the characters have mixed the physical aspect, that is, the external or physical appearance, and the moral aspect related to the psychological and moral characteristics to give the reader a more realistic picture of their characters, physically and morally, because this description has a great impact in defining the nature of the personality in terms of goodness, malice, wealth, poverty, culture, and ignorance. Secondly, Dickens and Mahfouz are interested in portraying their characters with sincerity and honesty. The characters' qualities in their generosity, vitality, sincerity, love, and ability to arouse the sympathy of others and reach their hearts give this world a sense of sincerity and universality.

Thirdly, Dickens's and Mahfouz's characters are inspired by reality and the local environment, whether Egyptian Arabic or European English, as these characters are familiar models in society. Fourthly, these characters, being realistic in their life, and thinking, as well as their actions, originated from the lowest classes and are reflected in thousands of people because they are a true reflection of their attitudes and traits. Fifthly, Dickens's and Mahfouz's novels are constructed on the fact that the place is often the hero and the sacred link for all the relationships that unite the individual and his society on the one hand, and the rest of the characters on the other. Sixthly, the places described by Dickens and Mahfouz are similar and focus on describing buildings, streets, houses, and rooms. These places have gathered different and contradictory characters at the same time, where the poor and the rich, the religious and the secular, the good and the bad all gathered in one place and one time.

The Mahfouzian adoption of Dickens renders him a true admirer and follower of the British Boz. Even though Dickens's high stand and position are deeply rooted among modern scholars, Mahfouz stands in a clear position towards Dickens as a universal phenomenon and literary figure that transcends regional and ritual limitations. Mahfouz's appropriation of Dickens is like an invitation to read the British Boz as an icon of comparative literature.

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