

**THE
STORY
OF THE
BANNED BOOK**
NAGUIB
MAHFOUZ'S
*CHILDREN
OF THE ALLEY*

Mohamed
Shoair

Translated by
Humphrey Davies

The American University in Cairo Press
Cairo New York

First published in Egypt by
The American University in Cairo Press
113 Sharia Kasr el Aini, Cairo, Egypt
One Rockefeller Plaza, 10th Floor, New York NY 10020
www.aucpress.com

Copyright © 2018 by Mohamed Shoair
First published in Arabic in 2018 as *Awlad haratina: sirat al-riwaya al-muharrama*

English translation copyright © 2022 by Humphrey Davies

This translation is based on the third edition of *Awlad haratina: sirat al-riwaya al-muharrama* by Mohamed Shoair (Cairo: Dar al-'Ayn li-l-Nashr, also published in 2018). Divergences from the Arabic text reflect changes made by the author in anticipation of future editions.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

[Library of Congress CIP data]

1 2 3 4 5 26 25 24 23 22

Designed by Jon W. Stoy
Printed in the United States of America

A donkey cart passed under the window, loaded with clapping singers.

Recite a prayer for the soldier boy.

He threw off his fez for a job as a saint!

Qassem smiled, remembering the night Yahya had sung this hymn stoned on hashish. Oh, if things would only straighten themselves out, all you'd have to do is sing, alley of mine!

Children of the Alley

“I’m a tourist in a museum where nothing belongs to me.

I’m merely a historian. I don’t know where I stand.”

Kamal ‘Abd al-Gawad, in *Sugar Street*

CONTENTS

21 September 1959	1
No Taboos in Literature	7
Abd al-Nasser Asks a Question	15
An Angry Message	19
How Do Sheikhs Read Literature?	31
A Prisoner of Symbolism?	35
The Moral Education of the Citizen	43
I Am Not a Philosopher	57
The Search for the Manuscript	63
The Ultimate Origin	69
13 October 1988	77
14 October 1994	105
Confronting Sayyid Qutb	117
Publication by <i>Force Majeure</i>	125
30 August 2006	133
The Waste Land	137
The Neglected Commandments	153
Appendix: Documents	
Articles by Naguib Mahfouz:	
“On Bernard Shaw’s <i>Back to Methuselah</i> ”	159
“My New Direction and the Future of the Novel”	169
Sayyid Qutb’s <i>Ashwak</i> (Thorns)	175
The Reports of the Islamic Academy against <i>Children of the Alley</i>	178
Two Letters to Philip Stewart	183

A Letter to Dr Muhammad Hasan ‘Abdallah	183
Minutes of the Questioning of Naguib Mahfouz Following His Attempted Assassination (1994)	184
Confession of the Individual Charged with the Attempted Assassination of Naguib Mahfouz	188
Glossary	195
References	207