

MALE DOMINANCE AND FEMALE RESISTANCE IN
NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S SELECTED NOVELS: A CASE
STUDY

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Abstract:

The focal point of this paper is to investigate on issues that affect politics and to explore the contemporary nature of male dominance and female resistance in Arab society, mainly in Egypt by referring to three of Naguib Mahfouz's novels namely: Midaq Alley, Palace Walk, and Miramar. These selected writings of Mahfouz are used as the central body of this study due to their significance, which centralize mostly on many dilemmas that Arab communities face today in light of modernity, western influences, and religion. The significance and importance of this paper also lies in the fact that sexual equality in the sphere of gender roles and authority is one of the principles of women's liberation movement. It shows that women can rebel like men, do their own wish, and to be self-governing as men do.

Key Words: *gender, patriarchy, rebel, resistance, equality,*

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Introduction:

Both men and women build up the world in which they have created human culture. However, this culture has failed to provide both gender the same chance in life. Therefore, and during history, male dominates society as being the symbol of social position and power, while women have been mere addendums to males, and their only destiny has been to stay home. For that reason, this study examines the role of the central female characters in the three major selected novels of an Egyptian writer, Mahfouz, who is considered the pioneer of the Arabic novel, the only Arabic ever, and the second African writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. His works are deeply rooted in the milieu of Cairo's lower and middle classes. Therefore Mahfouz's, and through his novels, *Midaq Alley*, *Miramar*, and *Palace Walk* has given his readers the accurate picture of Arab women sufferings and how his three rebellious young female characters of the three novels rebel against this notion of male dominance and patriarchy differently.

Hamida, Zohra and Zaynab: Similarities and Diversities towards Change and Liberty

In *Midaq Alley*, Mahfouz's protagonist Hamida reflects his abstruse belief in the failure of a system governed by a power game and a sterile struggle for domination between male and female. Even though Hamida is the young daughter of the Alley and its inhabitants, she abominates its miserable life; she calls it as "Nothing Alley" and then "nonentities" (*Midaq Alley*, 23; ch. 3). She seems almost asphyxiating in the Alley, which compels her into a brutal struggle for survival, seeking breathing outside her Midaq alley.

Growing up in a lower middle class, Hamida occupies the most significant and largest role in the novel. She is aware of her beauty and charm of attractiveness; she utilizes it as a weapon to captivate the right kind of men who are rich and powerful to fulfil her dreams of wealth and to consolidate her control over men: "I am not the one who is chasing marriage, but marriage is chasing me. I will give it a good run, too!" and she adds in wondering voice, "Oh what a shame, Hamida. What are you doing living in this alley? And why should your mother be this woman who can't tell the difference between dust and gold-dust?" (*Midaq Alley*, 23-24; ch. 3). Foremost,

she gains comprehension of attaches herself to Abbas the barber, as a stopgap solution, no fear is caught in his eagerness and ability to earn money. She knows his financial state “was not impressive but his personality was submissive and humble”, this puzzles her and she attributed her “indifference to his poverty” (*Midaq Alley*, 37; ch. 5). It is a fact that her love “to dominant was a result of her love to quarrel, not the reverse” (*Midaq Alley*, 37; ch. 5). However, visions of depressed life and women as homemakers with nothing but “the next pregnancy to look forward to give birth to children on the sidewalk, with flies everywhere ...” (*Midaq Alley*, 170; ch. 23), quickly cure her of her love for Abbas.

Undoubtedly, Mahfouz depicts Hamida as the direct outcome of a corrupt socio-economic situation that immures and determines her fate that is why she is very indifferent in morality (*Midaq Alley*, 71-72; ch. 10). In addition, Mahfouz delineates her consequences of embracing materialistic values and moral degenerate in her rebellion against lower-class life as an opportunist for whom material comforts and wealth are the primary goal. Besides Hamida, readers meet characters, all from the lower, lower middle, and middle strata of society.

Hamida decides to challenge the outside world by leaving her home for her daily customary afternoon walk. she is always under observation, particularly by Salim Alwan, the company owner, and Abbas, the barber; four eyes are running after her from different strata as a representative of class's conflict on an object, (Hamida), who is “more precious than all the merchandise from India” (*Midaq Alley*, 60; ch. 8). Both related to society where love is measured by money. Abbas, a young and humble man, is coming from lower strata his love is his power to win over Hamida, whereas Slaim Alwan, a married man of his fifties, comes from a rich background of high middle class, therefore his wealth is his power to win over Hamida's love. Even Hamida, the poor stepdaughter, has her own ambition to gain wealth and power; however, her beauty is her power to hunt her ideal man. To parallel with Alwan, Mahfouz creates Mrs. Saniyya Afffi. She is a widow, belongs to the middle ranks of the petite bourgeoisie, and owns one of the two houses of the Midaq Alley. She earns her income as a landlady, and as the owner of two shops in al-Himzawi. She has accumulated sufficient money to have a savings account in the bank. Therefore, and as Alwan uses his money to captivate Hamida, as well she utilizes her money to buy a man who is twenty years younger than her as her second husband.

Consequently, Abbas decides to leave the Alley to make money to resist class difference and to captivate Hamida by providing her everything she wanted. Money plays an indispensable role in the world of Midaq Alley, “Money might be a dead tongue in other places, but in Midaq Alley it was very much alive language” (*Midaq Alley*, 137; ch. 20). Hamida's crazy mind for richness and power is indeed to enable her to escape the miserable life of the alley, whereas Abbas, the poor barber, helplessly wishes to court her. Nonetheless, she neither interested nor rejected his love. He decides to change his style of living by going to work for the British Army in order to please her. While he is leaving, his heart and soul remains there, “I leave you in the name of love. By its strength may I return with lots of money” (*Midaq Alley*, 93; ch. 13).

Hamida reiterates that her desire to acquire material goods and social standing are fundamental to her happiness. Indeed, upon gazing into a shop window, “the luxurious clothes stirred in her greedy and ambitious mind bewitching dreams of power and influence” (*Midaq Alley*, 34; ch. 5). Thus Hamida develops inconstant and yet candid feelings for Abbas, her acquiescent to marry him is depend on his competence to acquire wealth rather than love. Due to her covetousness of affluence for power, Hamida alters the course of both her own life and his by consciously losing her honor and becomes a prostitute, thereby forfeits her relationship with Abbas. She sees him as her best hope out of a life of poverty and monotony in the alley. But her longing for wealth and power makes her impatient, she changes her attention to Salim Alwan who is lusting for her by any means because he finds in her the pleasures he yearns for. Since her initial acceptance of Abbas’ offer of marriage is just the response for her desire to escape the alley in searching for better life, so she accepts the proposal of the wealthy old businessperson, Salim Alwan, as a second wife, abandoning her fiancé, Abbas, without a single moment of thought. She reveals her disdain for the systematic life of the alley, which hinders her aspiration for material success. This embodies the dominant struggle for power and hegemony among classes through the character of Hamida. According to Soliman Fayyad, “Power and its workings, in a social context, over time, is the fundamental percept of Mahfouz’s project.” (4).

Mahfouz is at his best in depicting the consequences for Hamida of embracing materialistic values and moral depravity in her rebellion against lower-class life. In his introduction to *The Cairo Trilogy*, Sabry Hafez points out, “Its tragic heroine, Hamida, is often perceived as a ‘metaphor’ for Egypt in her naïve but just quest to improve her life and ameliorate

her difficult situation.” (xi). Since things do not work out as it is planned by her and Salim Alwan, her rebellious nature against tradition and poverty finds a good match in Faraj, the pimp, who becomes part of the scene and manipulates the young girl, Hamida. She now apprehends herself better and perceives that her attainment lies in a different world, the world outside the scope of the alley. Since her identity is connected with materialism, Pamela Allegretto Diulio asserts that Hamida’s imaginative conquest of money “motivates her to strive for freedom and liberation from the Alley that has bound her and offers no outlet.” (44). Deceived by his “foreign” demeanour and bountiful spending in Kirsha’s café, Hamida is slowly enticed out of the Alley and she, therefore, as Rasheed El-Enany states, in his book *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning*, “She conceives of her journey as one towards light, wealth, and power.” (56). In a vicious manner, she arouses that she is triggered between Faraj’s boorish assault and a power game in which she is certain to become the tragic loser not only because of her master Faraj as a wealthy man of high status, but he is a man, in a male society that has crushed women for endless centuries. Moreover, he gradually reveals himself as “the sex merchant he was” (*Midaq Alley*, 220; ch. 31). This is, and according to M. A. R. Habib “One of the main sins of capitalism, according to Marx, was that it reduced all human relations to commercial relations.” (534).

Thus, when Ibrahim Fharaj, the ambassador of that world, makes his appearance and verbalizes his fascinated words to capture Hamida, says, “This isn’t your quarter, nor are these people your relatives of yours. You are completely different. You don’t belong here at all... You are a princess in a shabby cloak” (*Midaq Alley*, 143; ch. 20), and he points to his chest, “...this is where you belong” (*Midaq Alley*, 167; ch. 23), so fraught are the words with meanings that make Hamida to turn “her back on the past and no longer thought of anything but the future. Her body gave in to the feel of the car as it sped away from the whole past.” (El-Enany, 56). She submits herself to the pimp thinking that she can escape her world of poverty in hopes of finding love and wealth as well. But it is true that Hamida will not yield easily, but her combative nature is limited to the sex object, which she represents in her world. As war is fiercely embarks on between Hamida and Faraj, images of conflict and battlefield persist as a mark of confrontations:

Fury flamed within her [Hamida] and she gathered all her strength for the challenging battle ahead.... Her rebellious nature told her to plunge straight onto the battlefield.... He would pay a high price for this conceit of his.

Her love was neither worship nor submission, but rather a constant heated battle (*Midaq Alley*, 163 and 172; ch. 23 and 24).

Ibrahim Faraj finds no embarrassment in convincing Hamida of high quality of living in the world beyond the Midaq Alley as he appeals to the luxuriousness and comfortable living, which Hamida will enjoy if she leaves the Alley. To seduce her, he describes the Zuqaq as “a graveyard of decaying bones” (*Midaq Alley*, 167; ch. 23) and the life in the Zuqaq is a life of “household drudgery, pregnancy, children and filth” (*Midaq Alley*, 169; ch. 23). It is full of hardships, a place where beauty fades away (*Midaq Alley*, 170; ch. 23), while life in the world beyond the Midaq is full of 'light', wealth, and happiness.

Later on, he is able to change her name into “Titi” and advises her how to be more attractive to his clients. She agrees to be called "Titi", this "will amuse Englishmen and Americans and one which their twisted tongues can easily pronounce" (*Midaq Alley*, 187; ch. 26). Hamida accepted this change and everything else that goes with it: "She realized that he considered her name, like her old clothes, as something to be discarded and forgotten" (*Midaq Alley*, 187; ch. 26). New life, new name and new identity, as the recurrent image of clash between Hamida and Titi, Midaq Alley and Sharif Pasha street, Abbas and Farag, tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, East and West, poverty and wealth, virtue and vice. In addition, she realizes that she has made “her choice with all her strength and it was the one she really wanted” (*Midaq Alley*, 173; ch. 24) in the sense that she realizes, in order to achieve her dreams, she has to sink low, to demean herself. Despite of her new life has mixed with disappointment and pleasure, her dreams of clothes, jewelry, money, and men are now fulfilled. However, these spheres of realism and fantasy do not serve long as her love-hate relationship with Faraj builds on. Her position of detention and abasement has remained the same; she only “felt a sense of independence when she was soliciting on the streets or in a tavern. The rest of the time, she was tortured by a sense of imprisonment and humiliation.” (*Midaq Alley*, 221; ch. 31). In this sense, “her powerful independent nature is as useless as the withdrawal of the British army from Cairo in 1936.” (Mona Takieddine-Amuni, 31).

Indeed, the dominant conflict lies in between a struggle among those who wish to leave the alley for a prosperous life and those who are more satisfied and pleased to remain in it forever. With few possibilities for improving their material conditions, the people of the alley respond in

different ways. For many, money becomes an obsession. Each character almost has the same desire, but they fight in different way to achieve their goals and to fight against their lower-class life. Others accept their predicament with varying degrees of acceptance, good humor, and escapism. It is this solidarity and companionship, stemming from the reality that they have no one else to rely on, that holds the dwellers of Midaq Alley together with its hardships and social unrests that afflict them. By this criterion, and according to El-Enany, the fates of characters in the novel “faced with the necessity of choosing will be decided: those who sell their souls to modernity without a moment’s hesitation and pay the price with unflinching eyes, like Hamida and Husayn Kirsha will be spared.” However, those who “waver and stop to look behind, like Abbas al-Hulw will perish.” (55). It gives an impression of being that people are trying to overcome their poverty, misery, and death-in-life of the Midaq alley to the promise of a new life offered by employment in the camps of the British army.

While Hamida has hired her body to the soldiers of that army, she joins the “whore industry catering for the needs of British and allied soldiers.” (El-Enany, 56). Hence, every character has reacted differently according to his/her attitude to reach his/her aim towards change for better life; however, this change will cost them the highest price. Hamida has gained her desires, but she loses her dignity and honour, Abbas is killed, beggars to be succeeded, they are turned from able-bodied men into crippled, Salim Alwan decides to replace his wife with a younger model, but fate strikes him down, Mrs. Saniya Afify succeeds to buy a young husband, but she loses her money, and so on. All have the same aim, but they differ in their devices to reach it.

Mahfouz intends to state that in the 1940s, the working girls were usually Jewish as the starting flare that who begins modernization (*Midaq Alley*, 24; ch. 3). The materialistic stimulus, which characterizes most of the residents of the alley, has been seen in the character of Hamida, as El-Enany states, “Hamida, with her ambition, adventurism, individualism, entrepreneurialism, solipsism, shamelessness, bellicosity, freedom from emotionalism, practical (if not philosophical) atheism, etc., symbolizes in fact many of the intellectual values which made the modern West.” (57). Another intimate example to political events is through Abbas who leaves the alley to work for the British Army in pursuit of material gains to fulfil his promises. Therefore, two opposing forces pull Abbas; his intention and love of Hamida push him in the direction of the world beyond

the Midaq Alley, while his loyalty and satisfaction push him back into the alley. Additionally, the sexual politics, however, rise to its peak in towards the end of the novel, where the enraged drunken soldiers in the tavern fall on Abbas from all sides like “wild animals”, killing him with blows, kicks, and glasses fly in all directions, while Hussain is paralyzed and watch impotently (*Midaq Alley*, 241-242; ch. 34).

Hence, the majority of characters have been forced by necessity into their present life, moreover; they are quashed by social circumstances in general and by poverty in particular. Therefore, homosexuality, corruption, poverty, sexual, and political intermediary are all forms of the harlotry of the self as well as the nation. Mahfouz ferociously assails prostitution in its sociopolitical implication and sympathy. He depicts Hamida as having an irresistible urge to leave the Alley. She is an ambitious social climber who pins her hopes on rich men. Thus, she contrives a choice in life to live on and to confront her society that she allocates her body at the service of the colonizers; herein lays her heroism and tragedy.

However, the situation in Mahfouz’s *Miramar* is quite different. The novelist shifts from urban dwellers to the rural dwellers. In contrast with *Midaq Alley* and *Cairo Trilogy*, the rural dwellers, however, are somehow free from the negative effects of the foreign influence in the urban cities of Egypt, but they could not free themselves of poverty, illiteracy, and above all, they are often disdained by urban inhabitants. For that reason, Mahfouz, on the same time, has viewed Zohra as the oppressed of, and the rebellious as well against these social phenomena.

Zohra, the beautiful young peasant girl, has intentionally left her rural village after her father's death, because her relatives, particularly her feudal-minded grandfather, attempt to force her to marry an old man, whom she does not wish for to marry, for a greedily desired dowry as Zohra herself marks, “He wanted to sell me”, (*Miramar*, 42, sec. 1). However, Zohra’s escape according to her village tradition is a grave mistake, which dishonor her family, “You shamed us,” her sister cut in, “all over Zayadiyya”, (*Miramar*, 42, sec. 1). But Zohra is standing proudly as her tone marks, “It’s none of your business. I have a job here. I earn my living by honest work”, (*Miramar*, 42, sec. 1).

Zohra, the strong, proud, and enterprising housemaid, makes her own way from the hardships of her life in the country to the hazards of urban employment, to the society where male is the dominant. As she escapes the trap of her traditional oppressive family, Zohra finds herself

yet again ensnared in a web of bourgeois enticements and deceptions at Miramar in Alexandria. However, she does not surrender herself to those men ever, instead, she stands up to them and she resists these social phenomena bravely and confidently with self-assurance as well, as she declares, “I’m not scared”, (*Miramar*, 89), and “I can stand up to them like a man, if it’s called for”, (*Miramar*, 25, sec. 1). She seeks work in Pension Miramar where the old landlady is pleased to employ her as being strong, youthful peasant, makes believe that this new and beautiful face will be another asset that can turn to many useful ends of her own. However, Zohra disappoints the male inhabitants who take her for easy-prey, “They’re not gentlemen”, (*Miramar*, 47, sec. 1).

In contrast to Hamida, Zohra has rejected to marry to an elderly rich man; instead, she flees to the city wishes to emancipate herself from a future of destiny and oppression that waits her. Even so, she decides to pursue her own path in life through education, but men, despite their sympathy with her story, look at her from different points of view of culture and times. Moreover, the two elderly men (at the Pension Miramar) visualize her as if she were the past of their glory days and as their lost youth as well. Conversely, she has been viewed as the prospective future by the younger men, which they are longing for it optimistically.

Sarhan el-Beheiry seems to be the most confident and well-adjusted man, socially and politically, of the three younger lodgers. When he meets Zohra, he says, “I remembered the cotton-picking season at home” (*Miramar*, 130, sec. 4). He refers to the rural ways of life, thinks that he will seduce her easily, “What a sweet Fellaha [peasant], absolutely delicious: there she goes, pulling my vitals after her...”, (*Miramar*, 130, sec. 4). Hence, and due to his developed desire towards Zohra, he abandons his affairs with the other women—but he fails in seducing her. Unlike Hamida, Zohra, (even though she is deeply in love with him), rejects his offer to join him in bed unless he marries her, whereas his aspirations require his making a socially advantageous match, which is prohibited by Zohra's peasant status. To returns such feelings, he turns his interest to Zohra's teacher, “I find myself comparing the two of them, simplicity and ignorance, beauty and poverty on the one hand, with education, elegance, and career on the other. If only Zohra could have found herself in this other girl's world, with all its potentialities” (*Miramar*, 156, sec. 4), she is hurt by, and depressed because of Sarhan's betrayal, for that reason, she does not only end their relationship, but also she reveals Sarhan's deception to her teacher, so that he is rejected too.

Unlike Ibrahim Faraj, (in *Midaq Alley*), Sarhan el-Beheiry, (in *Miramar*), tries to seduce Zohra for his own desire, not for the others. While Ibrahim Faraj, by his appearance as wealthy and powerful Western man and by his flattering expressions and false promises to Hamida as well as to the others as he says, “I will make rivers of happiness flow beneath your feet...How beautiful gold will look on your arm! ... You are mine and I am yours” (*Midaq Alley*, 167 and 177; ch. 23 and 24), traps many innocent girls and steal their hearts by the name of love to hire them out to his main customers, “Englishmen and Americans”. Hence, none of these girls (in *Midaq Alley*) can free herself from this slavery, even they cannot change their life since they still under his mercy as Hamida reveals, “I am just putty in the hands of this horrible man” (*Midaq Alley*, 228; ch. 32). He used to threaten them, in case not anyone of them does her job (as a prostitute) properly, he will expose her photos of illegal sex practice to the police and to the public. Hamida reveals her deep sorrows to her former fiancé Abbas: “You don’t know how unhappy I am...I was betrayed by a devil...he sends me into in to the streets after having robbed me of the most precious thing I had...how can I ever get away from him?... It’s a dirty crime ... I’m paying for it with my flesh and blood” (*Midaq Alley*, 228; ch. 32).

Hamida, therefore, submits herself to the pimp thinking that she can escape her world of poverty in hopes of finding love and wealth as well, whereas Zohra resists this notion strongly, instead, she decides to work and pursues her education to face life’s demands and male authority and patriarchy. However, it is true that Hamida will not yield easily, but her combative nature is limited to the sex object, which she represents in her world.

Despite her mingling with men from different categories, Zohra remains strong and brave by facing and resist their lust, harassment, and malaise that disappoint them. She has been advised to leave this pension Miramar “The truth is you shouldn’t be here. They won’t leave you in peace. Living here isn’t the right thing for a good girl like you”, (Miramar, 47, sec.1). Confidently she replies, “There are rats everywhere. Even in our village”, (Miramar, 47, sec. 1). She is jealously defending and attacking those who denigrate her 'honour', which in Arabic usage is synonymous with virginity. It reflects her strong personality and purity as being a young woman of peasant origin who so far rejects to accept any of the bullying men whom she does not love, in both the village and the city, “Am I to blame if I refuse such a man?”, (*Miramar*, 44, sec. 1). Their struggles are quite abstruse to the Western women, as Barbara Risman has noted that Alice

Fothergill points out, “women in all classes and races have lower status than men in those same categories.” Thus, feminist theorists “strive for a balance between the view of women having common experiences and acknowledging the very real differences in life chances for women of various backgrounds.” (qtd. 10).

Zohra, in *Miramar*, is equally as strong and self-willed as Hamida, however, they have differed in the way of their struggle to achieve their goals and desires towards better life free from male authority and patriarchy. More than Hamida, Zohra faces a crushing treatment in her life that begins in her village and persists in the city as in the attitude of Pension Miramar lodgers to her as Tolba sarcastically remarks about her: “Once a peasant always a peasant” (*Miramar*, 28). While other male characters have viewed her as sexual object as Sarhan El-Beheiry murmurs, “... She’s beautiful. And she’ll put up with my whims, my other love affairs. How could a girl from her background do anything else?” (*Miramar*, 63, sec. 2). She remains indomitable and strong to the scoffs of Sarhan’s courting and hypocrisy. She appreciates the importance of improving her education to keep up with Sarhan El-Beheiry, and therefore spends her little wages on her education, “Learning to read and write is a wonderful idea. As for Sarhan ... We’re all the children of Adam and Eve”, (*Miramar*, 39, sec. 1). Zahra has to care for herself all the time against all those lodgers who are longing to seduce her with the exception of the old Wafdist and the psychologically unbalanced socialist, Amer Wagdi, who both shows concern and affection for her, though the girl, however, “proves more than a match for all her attackers put together. Thus Egypt emerges as strong and self-reliant; as poor but dignified ...” (El-Enany, 114-115).

As opposed to Hamida, she remains a sign of moral health and hope for the future. Her real and sincere friend is the aged Amer Wagdi who assures her that he will be her defender and advisor whenever she needs him. The novel is concluded with his lengthy beautiful quotation from the Quran, which serves as his expression of love and blessing to wish Zohra a good luck in her new life.

Mahfouz, in his *Palace Walk*, discloses the unequal power relations between male and female, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women’s rights. He recounts vital and distressing events such as marriages, polygamy, hedonism, divorce. Women and men in the *Palace Walk* confirm gender stereotypes as they act in accordance with their social roles, which are often segregated along gender lines. The social roles that they perform are

associated with different expectations and require different skills. Consequently, Mahfouz presents Amina as a product of the patriarchal society in which she has been submerged. Further, he presents her character to expose Egyptian society and the mentality of the average Egyptian male. As being a patriarchal and conservative husband, al-Sayyid Ahmad neither allows his wife nor his daughters to leave the building considering that, “Since antiquity, houses have been for women and the outside world for men...” (*Palace Walk*, 334; ch. 50), while some other families (in the novel) have not objected their women to go out in public, as Mohammad Iffat’s family does. His daughter, Zaynab, (who has enjoyed her full freedom in her father’s household), has been married to Yasin, the elder son of his friend al-Sayyid Ahmad, where this freedom, however, remains unthinkable in the Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad household. He “was extreme in his insistence on retaining traditional standards for his family”, while other men see “nothing wrong with their wives going out to visit or shop” (*Palace Walk*, 219; ch. 35). When Zaynab has succeeded to convince her husband, Yasin, for an evening walk to the town, her father in law reacts negatively and considers it as a major scandal and dishonor to the family. Zaynab has been astonished by this reaction as she observes sarcastically, “I’ve never seen a house like yours where what’s licit is forbidden. ...” (*Palace Walk*, 317; ch. 47). She realizes that her liberties before marriage has vanished in al-Jawad family where the suppressive situation is very prevalent, therefore, she finds “her character had been infected with the virus of submission to his well...” (*Palace Walk*, 313; ch. 46), but she will not put up with absolutely everything.

As woman, Zaynab precisely wants changes in her position. She persists in daily evening walk along with her husband, which unsurprisingly leads the opposition to her traditional mother in law, Amina, who spends her entire life inside the house with fully submissiveness and obedience to her husband, al-Sayyid Ahmad.

Later, Yasin’s behaviour becomes intolerable. He frequently used to spend his nights out follows a life of lust. He resembles his father in his good looks, tastes for music, women, and alcohol, and spends much time and money as he can afford on fine clothes, drink, and prostitutes. Therefore, these characteristics of her husband irritate her badly and worse when she finds him with another woman. These illegal incidents cause rupture in their marital relationship, more than ever, Zaynab demands a divorce as her reaction to these atrocious behaviors. On the contrary, Amina, however, is shocked by Zaynab’s decision and she is “unable to imagine women being

any different from her or men from her husband. She saw nothing strange in the enjoyment Yasin derived from his freedom” (*Palace Walk*, 335; ch. 50). Indeed, in Amina’s opinion, Zaynab is “arrogating to herself masculine prerogatives” (*Palace Walk*, 311; ch. 46), which contrasts with the character of Amina who is “a woman who had spent her life shut up inside her house, a woman who had paid with her health and well-being for an innocent visit to al-Husayn, the glory of the Prophet’s family—not to Kishkish Bey {a place for entertainment}” (*Palace Walk*, 311, ch. 46). Hence, Zaynab’s decision and insistence to divorce her husband resembles that of Zohra’s rejection her relatives’ offer to take her back to her village, “I am not going back. Not even if the dead themselves come out of their graves”, (*Miramar*, 42, sec.1). But it does not mean that Zohra dislike her village, however, she abominates the style of living and its depression, “I love the land and the village, but I hate that misery. Here is where love is. Education. Cleanliness. And hope”, (*Miramar*, 43, sec. 1).

For that reason, Zaynab represents an emergent female resistance to cultural anticipations for women. Her marriage becomes the initial point of resistance as Amina asks herself, “How can she claim rights for herself that no other woman has ever claimed?” (*Palace Walk*, 391; ch. 58). In other words, Amina feels that girls of today are different from that of yesterday as Yasin assures, “Girls today no longer have the ability to get along with people” (396; ch. 59), looking at Mrs. Amina then he asks, “Where are the ladies of yesteryear?” (*Palace Walk*, 396; ch. 59).

Conclusion:

Mahfouz has brought out to his readers the precise image of Middle Eastern women who are longing to free themselves from the bonds of patriarchy along with the rules of society that are attached to these. More to the point, several of misinterpretations of religion are often turned into laws in the Middle East, which make life quite difficult for women. Consequently, Mahfouz, through his novels, has attempted to address social realities of inequalities, which have happened and persist to happen in Egypt as well as in some other Arab countries.

Whenever women attempt to move away slightly from the prescribed ways of behaviour, they are condemned and seen as unwomanly, “All women have one thing in common. They’re cuddly little animals without brains or religion, and the only way to keep them from going wild is

to leather them everyday”, (*Miramar*, 44, sec. 1). But women are not docile and passive subjects. They have tried to challenge the dictates of patriarchies and the restrictions that have been imprisoned them within the walls of domesticity, and have resisted against such confinements. Mahfouz has given them both physical strength and mental ability that are equivalent to men’s. In this way, and by their actions, Mahfouz’s female characters are responding to the neo-liberal paradigm of globalization. In other words, Mahfouz has created these three young female characters to show that women can rebel like men, do their own wish, and to be self-governing as men do, as Zohra asserts, “We’re all the children of Adam and Eve”, (*Miramar*, 39, sec. 1).

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