

**The Representation of Woman in Egypt's Turbulent
Sixties: A Reading of Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar***

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Abstract:

The present study addresses the representation of woman in Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar*. The study examines the condition of woman through the lenses of social feminism. This theory, an off-shoot of mainstream feminism, concentrates on the subjection of woman by patriarchy and capitalism. The main goal of social feminism is to end both the economic and cultural sources that oppress woman. The primary purpose of the study is to discuss how Mahfouz brings to light the dilemma of the peasant protagonist Zohra in the novel. *Miramar* is set in 1967, during the Egyptian's war against Israel to restore Sinai territory. Egypt's defeat has scattered Egypt's international standing, burdened its economy and declared the evanescence of Arab socialism. This novel is an intense political and social critic of the sixties in Egypt. The present study addresses the difficulty confronting a single woman, of peasant origins, to achieve financial independence and maintain her reputation unblemished after 1952 Egyptian revolution.

Keywords: Capitalism, Revolution, Feminism, Patriarchy, Socialism

تسليط الضوء على المرأة في ظل الاضطرابات المصرية في الستينيات:

دراسة لرواية نجيب محفوظ (ميرامار)

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المستخلص:

هذه الدراسة تسلط الضوء على المرأة في رواية ميرامار لنجيب محفوظ. تعتمد الدراسة على النظرية النسوية الاجتماعية لتحليل حالة المرأة في ظل النظام الأبوي والنظام الرأسمالي. الهدف الرئيسي للنسوية الاجتماعية هو إنهاء الأسباب الاقتصادية والثقافية التي تضطهد المرأة. الغرض الأساسي من الدراسة هو مناقشة كيف قدم محفوظ معضلة بطلان الرواية، زهرة. تدور أحداث الرواية خلال الحرب المصرية ضد إسرائيل عام 1967 لاستعادة أراضي سيناء. هزيمة مصر في حرب 1967 بعثرت مكانة مصر الدولية واثقلت كاهل اقتصادها وأعلنت تلاشي الاشتراكية العربية. تعتبر هذه الرواية في الواقع نقدا سياسيا واجتماعيا لأحداث الستينيات في مصر. يركز البحث على شخصية زهرة في الرواية، حيث قررت هذه الفلاحنة العزباء الاستقلال ماديا. ولكن ماذا يكلفها هذا القرار وما مدى صعوبة ان تكون امرأة عزباء شجاعة وقوية في مصر بعد ثورة 1952.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرأسمالية، الثورة، النسوية، الأبوية، الاشتراكية

The Representation of Woman in Egypt's Turbulent Sixties: A Reading of Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar*

For centuries Egyptian women, especially villagers, were regarded inferior to men. Many women were prohibited from leaving home and talking to men without the consent of their families, because the morals of women were constantly questioned. Forced marriages of young girls to elderly men were commonly practiced (Al Shabibi, 2016). Roger Allen in his book *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* states that:

When a girl is born, they all give a smile of resignation. When she grows up, they put her in a prison and train her in the art of living, to smile, to curtsy, to put a perfume and look delicate, to dissimulate, and to get married. The women had better be greedy for love, very greedy... but there should be no feelings, sentiment, thought or love shown in public or else they'll kill her. (1995, p.100)

Women in this system of gender disparity had experienced numerous forms of disadvantages. They were excluded from social, political, and economic status of power. On the other hand, men made all the decisions in both family unit and the society. They held every position of power and authority possible. They were considered superior in all ways. The lack of law for women's rights was one of the central chains that formed an obstacle towards women's freedom and rights.

In addition to gender disparity, class distinction was prevailing among Egyptians,

the powerful and the powerless. Henceforth, those social classes of great deal of power were viewed as the elites who endeavored to reinforce their own authority over the lower classes in the hierarchy. This resembles the two basic class divisions in Marxism: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Women of the lower class in Egypt did not work in public sphere, instead, they participate in common labor activities such as cooking, raising poultry and sewing. (Elowe Macleod, 1996, p.40-1)

Futhermore, Female illiteracy was very popular in Egypt during that time. The poor/lower and working classes "could not afford the private education

for their women, but these women enjoy a less secluded life simply because their unpaid help is needed by their husbands who are small merchants, shopkeepers or even labourers" (Golley, 2011, p. 30). However, women from upper class were used to get a private education due to their rigid isolation from the other classes in society, especially that public schools were considered not fit for respected women. As a result, private education was always available for women from privileged backgrounds in Egypt. The upper classes granted private education for their women in foreign languages because their future husbands, who were in the company of royal family and privileged Europeans, wanted their women to appeal to the royal and the European counterparts. Thus, education became the most essential factor which motivated the upper-class women (bourgeois and aristocratic women) to express their views and raise their affairs (Golley, 2011).

Egypt in the fifties and early sixties embraced the socialist approach under Gamal Abdel Nasser's leadership, who had a new phase of socialist reforms and modernization. Nasser inclined toward socialism and associated Western capitalism with the imperialism that had controlled and exploited his country. In his book, *The Philosophy of Revolution*, Nasser claims that after social revolutions, there should not be deterioration, selfishness, hatred and suspicion, people must respect and love each other (Abdel Nasser, 1956). Interestingly, Women played an active role in the 1952 independence movement, yet male nationalists soon overtook the political sphere, and women's issues were relegated to the periphery. Women were betrayed, despite of the considerable role that they played in the struggle for independence and national liberation. They got minor rights compared to men. What has been difficult for woman to sustain is that "after independence is achieved, men prefer to return to 'normal', they

take up the old role pattern and the double standard again goes into operation, something which reveals a painful contrast between principles of freedom and equality and the docile acceptance of traditional female submission" (Golley, 2011, p. 33).

Significantly, Arabic literature has shed light on society's oppression of women. In the center of their fictional works, many novelists have addressed female identity, women's role in society and family, female body, and women's exploitation. Naguib Mahfouz, as a central figure in Arab literature, addressed womanhood within the context of Egyptian society. Though Mahfouz's fiction is substantially Egyptian, his topics remain universal. For his prolific skills as a writer, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature (1988). Mahfouz's writings deal with the most negative aspects of society, which cause the crisis of human being and lead to corruption in their lives. His works are regarded as credible records of the lives of the middle and lower classes of Egyptian society. In short, Mahfouz is a remarkable social critic who scrutinizes his society and its problematic traditions and customs. His works are frequently set in the urban quarters of Cairo, while his characters are mostly ordinary people striving to confront the modernization of society and the temptation of Western values (Al Shabibi, 2016).

Mahfouz fought social injustice through his novels that address issues of poverty and gender inequality. As an avowed socialist, Mahfouz admires Marxism's promise of social equality, its principles, and its comprehensive human vision. Mahfouz's protagonists mostly suffer from destitution, the immediate and most obvious phenomenon of class discrimination. In the interface between bourgeois and the deprived figures, Mahfouz's novels bring to the surface the hidden politico-cultural layers of the Egyptian culture.

Mahfouz's female protagonists are always in the process of embracing a strong identity, they attempt to show their individuality and confidence by confirming themselves in their community. Woman's self-assertion is an eminent topic in feminist philosophy. It implies self-consciousness and self-rule for woman, who becomes victim of inferiority and subordination imposed on her by patriarchal society. This is clear in Mahfouz's last novel *Miramar* (1967). The characters and the plot of the novel prove that Mahfouz is a social feminist. During the mid of the twentieth century, the Arab world was still regarded to be patriarchy. Marriage issues were arranged by men. Women were not given any chance to choose their partners. Family system was introduced as way to institutionalize the persecution of woman. The productive role of woman was limited to her family and to the man to whom she is subordinate (Macdonald, 1997). *Miramar* addresses the patriarchal system that denies women the chance to free themselves from the social constraints and oppression. Zohra, a young peasant and the protagonist of *Miramar*, has left her village to escape an arranged marriage by her grandfather to an older man for a greedily desired dowry: "her grandfather wanted to marry her to an old man, who probably needed her as a nurse" (Mahfouz, 1978). However, Zohra confidently breaks the standards of male-controlled society. She does not only reject to obey her grandfather and marry the man, but also escapes from her village to Alexandria.

Significantly, Mahfouz authored more than thirty-five novels and a dozen collections of short stories, the vast majority of which take place not only in Cairo but actually in the Cairene neighborhood of Gamaliyya. *Miramar* is the only work set in Alexandria. In its characters and climate, Alexandria appears more Mediterranean than the Middle Eastern. It is described in *Miramar* as "Lady of the Dew. Bloom of white

nimbus. Bosom of radiance, wet with the sky water. Core of nostalgia steeped in honey and tears" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 1). Alexandria symbolizes liberty from the restraints of a patriarchal society. However, Mahfouz's choice of a pension, Miramar, to locate the events of his novel symbolizes a microcosm of the Egyptian society. The pension is possessed by a Greek lady, Mariana. Zohra decides to work in Mariana and she seems to learn very quickly: "she is strong and intelligent, understands everything once I tell her", says the owner of the pension (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 24).

Alexandria has been considered as the beginning point of the colonization in Egypt, since Alexander has defeated Egypt and found Alexandria in 332 B.C. Primarily, Alexander was inhabited by the Greek for a long period up to the 1952 revolution and they called it their home since the 1800s. Mariana's opinion of Alexandria "but we created it" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 8). Mariana meant by "we" the Greek, her people, who lived in Alexandria and built it. This announcement by Mariana comes as a response to Amer Wagdi, a lodge of Miramar and the first narrator of the novel. Amer Wagdi says that the city "had to be claimed by its people"(Mahfouz, 1978, p.8). This conversation draws on the Egyptian revolution that calls to liberate Egyptians from the British colonization. Wagdi exemplifies the intense principles of nationalization and liberty from the West's intervention; whilst Mariana represents the integrated Western element that entrenched in the society, claiming its land to be its own (Smith, 1973).

The lives of five men and two women intersect in Miramar pension. The five guests are Amer Wagdi, Tulba Marzuq, Sarhan Al-Beheiry, Hosni Allam and Mansur Bahi. These five characters are all attracted to the pension's maid, Zohra. Amer Wagdi arrives to Miramar pension first and is followed by the rest of the tenants. *Miramar* is told

from four male guests' viewpoints, starting with Wagdi to Allam, Bahi, and eventually Al-Beheiry. Whist the fifth tenant, Tulba, is not given the narrative voice. Each of the first four sections tells the same event, but from the perspectives of the tenant who narrates the story. Zohra is the novel's protagonist and yet she is denied the opportunity to tell her own story. This narration of the novel from the perspectives of four men, while marginalizing the voice of woman, reflect the minor role given to women in Egypt, through the sixties (Mahmoud, 2014).

Society does not grant women an opportunity to pursue their goals in relation to what they want to do in life. As Zohra elopes from her oppressive family, she finds herself entangles in the web of bourgeois deceptions and enticements at the Miramar's lodge. The main goal of social feminism is to overcome the historical account of women's exploitation in both patriarchy and capitalism. Consequently, Zohra challenges the patriarchy and classism that denies her self-independence, reflecting all Egyptian women's hope for freedom. Indeed, from the onset of the novel, Zohra's action demonstrates that she does not want to be dominated by others even in simple things such as her appearance. To clarify, once Zohra arrives to Alexandria, she purchases a new short gown instead of the traditional long and wide one "gallabiyah", which can be seen as assign of rebellion against the social norms and the step for self-awakening (Mahfouz, 1978).

The sixties are actually a decade of confusion, a decade of considerable massive projects and the cancellation of political diversity.

The construction of the High Dam and the destruction of the spirit of opposition; the reclamation of thousands of feddans and the catastrophic detachment of the Sinai Peninsula from

Egyptian territory in the defeat of 1967; intense censorship and the emergence of evasive jargon among the intellectuals, distortion of social values and the workers' and students' upheavals. Egypt adopted cruel laws that restricted the right of people and made Nasser the sole power that dominated Egypt. (Issa ed, 1980, p. 40).

Naguib Mahfouz in an interview illustrates that the main error in Gamal Abdel-Nasser regime (1952-1970) is dictatorship. According to Mahfouz, dictatorship is main reason for the political crisis. Zohra is not the only one who looks for a refuge at Miramar pension during political and social upheavals, but the other five guests do the same thing. Amer Wagdi, is a retired political journalist. He was an activist in the previous Wafd Party. Wagdi is a supporter of Gamal Abdel Nasser's government and happy and hopeful concerning the attempts to build a new society. He is mightily affected by the story of Zohra and later takes the role of her father "I felt a surge of paternal tenderness toward the girl" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 22). Wagdi becomes Zohra's mentor and inspiration. His attempts to share his wisdom with Zohra represents the past endeavors to inform the future. He describes her at the first time he has seen her "I met a pair of eyes that belongs to a pretty face, a suntanned face, framed in the black scarf of a fellaha, with features full of character and an expectant look that went instantly to the heart" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 21).

Woman's work has been one of the central concerns of social feminist theory. In the early 1900s, socialist feminists sought a deeper comprehension of how social reproductive work became women's job and called for an end to objectivation in the family and monogamous marriage (Bebel, 1910). They criticized the rigorous division that existed between the public workplace and the private family. For socialist feminism, the

oppression of women is the extension of capitalist exploitation of the proletariat and will disappear with the advent of a socialist community and the integration of women into public spheres (Armstrong, 2020). Amer Wagdi states that when Mariana invites Zohra to sit with them as they gather around the radio and hear Umm kulthum, she tells them her story. She illustrates "my brother-in-law wanted to take advantage of my situation, so I framed my piece of land on my own" (Mahfouz, 1978, p.25). For socialist feminism, nothing but profitable work can warranty women's independence. Through work woman passes the distances that separates her from male authority. She retrieves her transcendence and ensures her position as a subject through effective productivity (De Beauvoir, 1949, p. 773). Zohra affronts the custody of her patriarchal system, that seizes women, a system in which the agent of the social control curbs the independence of woman, as Zohra's asserts "I can stand up to them like a man, if it's called for"(Mahfouz,1978, p. 25). Villages are well known for their harsh rules and conservativeness as Tulba Marzaq asserts to Mariana: "you Know what villages are like. How they worship the grandfathers and their terrible conservatism"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 25). When Tubla tells Zohra that "They will say that you run a way because you had a lover, or something of the sort" (Mahfouz, 1978, p.25), she gives him an angry look and her face darkened like a Nile flood. She points her forefinger and middle finger at him and declares "I'd stick these into the eyes of anyone who dared to say anything like that" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 25).

Zohra's self-assertation is raised again when she rebels against the patriarchal system which connects her to the village. When Zohra' sister and brother-in-law come to the pension, Zohra stands proudly and says "I am not going back, not even if the dead themselves come out of their graves" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 42). She does not let her brother-in-law to

complete his talk "it is none of your business. I have a good job her, and I earn my living by honest work" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 42).

Anyway, one of the important issues of socialist feminist is sexual violence toward women. A lot of women, in some form or another, experience sexual harassment. Sexual violence increases during periods of social crisis. While living in Miramar Pension, Zohra has been seen as a sexual object; men attempt to seduce her several times. In spite of his elderly age, Tulba tries to seduce Zohra. Tulba's wealth and lands have been seized during the Revolution of 1952 "the Revolution has stolen the property of a few and the liberty of all"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 35). He currently lodges in Miramar trying to be away from the official attention and offence of the administration. He conceals his dissent to the existing powerful and their political authority. He asks Zohra "to message him" (Mahfouz, 1978, p.27). This offends Zohra, who mentions "I never heard such things, I went into his room in good faith and there he was lying on his face almost naked"(Mahfouz 28). Zohra declines and he rebukes Zohra's action "scornfully" as being obviously offended, "you know she is fellaha, once a peasant, always a peasant ,....she's a wildcat....she's a savage"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 28). Zohra, however, regards him an idiot old man.

Hosny Allam, a young man, also makes sexual approaches to Zohra. The character of Allam is depicted as a young sensualist of the rich class from Tanta's families. He does not have sympathy for the emergence of the new social classes of the peasants becoming officers and pursuing their higher education. Allam is described as "a gentleman with no education, a hazardous hundred feddans" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 55). Hosny Allam tries to seduce Zohra many times, he thinks "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?" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 63). He blocks Zohra's way whilst she is out of the washroom, attempting "to take her into his arms, but stop short at her frigid look" (Mahfouz, 1987, p. 64). Zohra does not care about his bad behavior and runs away. As a result, Allam mocks her: "there are dozens like you at the big house in Tanta, you fool. Or do you think my education is lacking something too, you yokel" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 64). This is the situation with the Arab women when they defend their honor, they will be referred to savages. Men regard them as "cuddly little animals without brains or religion, and the only way to keep them from going wild is to leather them every day" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 44).

In spite of Zohra's mingling with men from various social and political groups, she stays brave and strong against their harassment and lust. Zohra has been advised to leave the *Miramar* pension by Wadgi "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" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 47). However, she replies with confidence that "there are rats everywhere, even in our village" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 47). She defends her liberty and attacks those who denigrate her.

Unfortunately, Zohra was forced to escape to the city. She once comments "I love the land and the village, but I hate that misery" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 43). She is pleased to be in the city as mentioned in her word "here is the Love, Education. Cleanness. And Hope" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 4). However, in the city, the upper class and the middle class show the negative attitudes and prejudice toward the poor; this is clear with the protagonist Zohra. She falls in love with a guest from the middle class, Sarhan, and speedily yields to his love.

Social feminist theory sheds light on the topic of love. According to the French social feminist Simone De Beauvoir, love is a universal human emotion that has the capacity to bring the highest status of fulfillment, joy and freedom as well as exploitation, grave misery and dependency. Love brings joy and fulfillment when man and woman maintain their individually and self-respect, and acknowledge the differences between them. Additionally, they must also recognize each other's as equals. This is what De Beauvoir calls authentic love. In contrast, when woman anticipates things from the man she loves and discovers him flawed, she will let down. Woman expects man to estimate the sacrifices she makes. Thus, when a love affair fails, it has a devastating effect on her. De Beauvoir thinks that this is the case because woman usually relies on the love of man to validate herself (1949).

Authentic love and inauthentic love can be applied directly to the novel. Sarhan Al- Beheiry's greed can be labelled as unauthentic lover. He initially seems by far the most assured lodger of the others. Al-Beheiry represents the Egyptian's revolution (1952), as the lodgers see him: "I can see that for them I represent the Revolution"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 144). He is a representative of the workers, but with a comfortable managerial position as the deputy head accountant in a textile firm. He lives for a long time with the semi-professional dancer and hooker Safeya, whom he abandons when he develops the intense desire for the lovely Zohra, moving into Miramar in order to pursue her. When he meets Zohra, he directly remembers his village Zayadiyya. By referring to the life's rural ways, Sarhan believes that he will easily seduce Zohra: "what a sweet fellaha, absolutely delicious, there she goes, pulling my vitals after her"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 130). He describes her as "a flower or a song, a melody of black hair, dark skin, and delectable eyes"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 141).

Unfortunately, Sarhan considers Zohra as a very easy conquest and keeps the track of her everywhere attempting to please his desire and have a sleep with her: "I grab her by the arm and kiss the curve of her cheek, she hardly resists" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 143). However, Sarhan echoes the voice of capitalist exploiting of weaker classes. Despite Zohra is considerably in love with Sarhan, but she refuses to be readily seduced till he marries her. That is what Al-Beheiry dislikes as he states: "if only she came from an important family or had education or money"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 144). According to the ideal of the new socialist society, this match between Sarhan and Zohra would be very perfect, that one of the main important principles of the Egyptian revolution is to end the old class system. But. Al-Beheiry believes that marrying a peasant will undermine his social standing. He states that he loves Zohra, but he cannot marry her.

Zohra is much aware of the big social gap between her and Al-Beheiry. As a result, she hires teacher to teach her reading and writing to be "worthier" of marrying to Al-Beheiry. She states "learning to read and write is a wonderful idea" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 39). She adds, "I won't stay illiterate all my life" (Mahfouz, 1978, p.154). Like many other institutions of society, educational systems provided unequal opportunities for woman. When woman faces limited opportunities for education, her capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence is limited. While schooling was considered the most normal thing in the world for boys, the daughters of poor families had to work, while the daughters of bourgeois circles got better education. Only few girls of the lower class were able to read and write. The school curriculum is also alluded by feminists, in that it introduces sexist hypothesis and sexual division of labor (Feminism & Socialism, 1997, p. 90). Interestingly, education is one of the major reforms of the Egyptian revolution. The social charter of Gamal Abdel Nasser was

calling for the free schooling for all classes. The principles of Arabism, socialism, national consciousness and liberty are infused into the curricula of education. As the regime becomes increasingly authoritarian, the truth of suppression becomes increasingly obvious.

Zohra is one of the few who indeed looks for her future on her own terms. Consequently, she "asked a permission to stay away for an hour in the afternoon. To take a lesson"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 38). She does not submit to illiteracy, but, "she's made up her mind" and hires the teacher who will give her private lessons, so that she learns to read and write (Mahfouz, 1978, p.38). She estimates the importance of enhancing her education to marry Sarhan, and spends her little salary on education, affirming "we're all the children of Adam and Eve"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 39), in spite of the lodger's attempt to discourage Zohra from going to school. Mariana, the owner of the pension, reacts to the decision of Zohra, "I didn't object, but I'm afraid she's going to spend all her wages on it" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 39). The lodgers have "learned of her decision and discussed it at length. No one laughed at her, at least not to her face" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 40). They are till now guards of the severe traditional belief that women are born for only domestic servitude. This is clear in the attitude of the lodgers of Miramar towards Zohra. Armed with determination and virtue, Zohra successfully strives for her education. She wants to liberate herself from the oppressive future that waits for her and determines to work and encounter the demands of life.

By inspecting the male-female interaction in *Miramar*, the female characters frequently appear strong towards the threatening and challenging of the patriarchal society. For instance, Safeya, has met the betrayal of Al-Beheiry with rage. She screams "you think you can throw me over like that? I've fed you and clothed you and now you want to turn

away from me, you pig!"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 150). They begin fighting till the interference of the others, whilst Zohra menaces and decides to call the police. Though Gamal Abdel-Nasser adopts a socialist approach to vanish class distinction among Egyptians, yet Safaya mocks Zohra's work "a servant. How dear you.....?"(Mahfouz,1978, p. 151), but Zohra slaps Safaya across her mouth before she can finish. Also, man-woman relationships in *Miramar* and in the other books of Mahfouz, as Haim Gordon states, "reveal Nasser's decision upon formal egalitarianism in Egypt did not lead to a daily equality between men and women. Nor did it lead men to respect women" (Gorden, 1978, p. 67).

Although, Zohra is intensely in love with Al-Beheiry, she deliberately refuses the tricks of Al-Beheiry. It seems that Al-Beheiry creates excuses so that a match between him and Zohra will not happen. He proclaims that marriage will cause a lot of difficulties for him, with his family and job too. He only seeks his own personal redemption in vain. Therefore, he turns his interests to Aleya. He points out: "I find myself comparing the two of them, simplicity and ignorance, beauty and poverty on the other 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. (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 156) Surhan, behind Zohra's back, has proposed to the teacher Aleya. But, "Aleya knew nothing about Zohra's real motive for taking lessons and Zohra had no notion that her teacher had stolen her man"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 161). Aleya is considered as the other product of the Egyptian revolution, representing the new career-oriented and the secular middle-class woman. Aleya's education and her career prospects signalize the continuation commitment of the regime to promote the rights of women at least. Aleya's parents own a fair-sized tenement house in Karmouz. She impresses Al-Beheiry as a woman who will

participate to the upward social mobility. When Zohra finds out, she has been hurt and depressed because of Sarhan's betrayal, "what can I do? I have no claim on you. You filthy swine. To hell with you"(Mahfouz, 1978, p. 165), and she slaps him and spits on his face. Zohra does not only end her relationship but also reveal the deception of Sarhan to Aleya's parents. They break off the engagement of their daughter. It is Al-Beheiry who, for, Mahfouz, represents the betrayal of the principles of Nasser's revolution. Amer Wagdi described the situation: "I look at Zohra, what a monstrous thing! The game was up and the villain had gone unpunished. I was gripped by an anger I hadn't felt since the bitter days of political struggle" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 49).

Some critics have expressed the view that the protagonist Zohra may symbolize Egypt. Zohra's beauty exemplifies the attractiveness of the colonial great powers towards Egypt and their intense will to won it. The resistance of Zohra to the utilization exemplifies the unbreakable spirit of the Egyptian individual. In his book, Roger has regarded Zohra as "an obvious symbol of an ideal Egyptian society. can be seen as stepping with determination into the future"(1995, p.116). Zohra becomes more attractive when defending her dignity and honor and succeeds to stay pure. Yet, Zohra is very splenetic and peevish at the end of *Miramar*, but powerful and wiser, ready to encounter the traps of the world. She resolves to enhance her circumstances, "I'm leaving tomorrow...I'm going to a better place" (Mahfouz, 1978, p. 180). She decides to marry the owner of the bookshop who is of her own class. Zohra becomes the voice of modern women who attempt to strengthen and liberate themselves from the imprisoning elements such as poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment

Mahfouz in his novel has given the readers a dismal vision of modern Egypt, except for Zohra's indication of hopefulness that enables

her to grasp a bright future. Therefore, Zohra may be read as the great future of the new Egyptian society. Al- Beheiry's shady dealings and corruption are discovered, the government revealed his cheating to embezzle shipments and funds from his company. Consequently, he feels shamed and lost and then commits suicide. The truth that he puts an end to his life remains mysterious till the end of *Miramar*. The Syrian reviewer Riyadh Ismat is disappointed by the murkiness of *Miramar*. He praises the characters' portrayal and structures in the novel, but criticizes Mahfouz for his negativity. He states: "where is the revolutionary Egyptian? Where are the elements that have constituted the new socialist Egypt? We can see only the dark side" (1967, p. 60) Mahfouz himself concurs, mentioning that *Miramar* is really an intense political and social critic of the sixties in Egypt.

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