



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINIST READING OF TEN NOVELS BY
NAGUIB MAHFOUZ**

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Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

In this research, psychoanalytic feminists' contestations based on Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's theories will be underlined. The postulations of the psychoanalytic feminists will form three main themes of this research. These three themes are Women Defying the Patriarchy and The Patriarchy Regulating Women and The Manifestation of the Regulation of Women. These themes will help us illuminate the notion of women's threatening presence in Mahfouz's novels and the patriarchy's resisting the danger.

Women's power to destabilise the structures of the patriarchal society will be expounded by referring to Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Hélèn Cixous and Jessica Benjamin's hypotheses. It will be mentioned that through their connection to death, the reproductive ability, their jouissance, women are able to

threaten the symbolic law. They even try to reach their intersubjectivity and become a woman which the symbolic world attempts to hinder. They can also make men dependent on them and make them feel impotent.

Facing women's vigour, patriarchy's fear will also be highlighted and it will be explained that it endeavours to suppress women by assuming different roles for them such as satisfiers, virgin and whore figures, derelict and sacrificed. The symbolic world even tries to turn women to objects of exchange and desire, silence them and change them to phallic beings. This thesis will present the extend that Mahfouz's female characters can endanger the stability of the patriarchal world of his novel and how his male characters attempt to counter his women.

In this research, men's objectification and controlling women through gaze will be elaborated and it will be mentioned that in order to resist men's voyeuristic pleasure veiling is advocated and the critics' ideas supporting and rejecting it will be discussed in general and in Egypt. Patriarchy's attaching value to virgins and girls deflowered outside marriage being devalued will also be discussed. The notion of prostitution will also be highlighted in order to show that women might go astray in their pursuit of independence and individuality. The hardship and torment that prostitutes encounter in the industry will also be expounded. These concepts along with rape will be explored in Naguib Mahfouz's novels.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KAJIAN PSIKOANALITIK FEMINIS DARI PEMBACAAN SEPULUH
NOVEL OLEH NAGUIB MAHFOUZ**

Oleh

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Kajian ini bertujuan membangkitkan isu feminis berdasarkan teori Sigmund Freud dan Jacques Lacan. Postulasi atau pun anggapan psikoanalitik feminis akan membentuk tiga tema dalam kajian ini. Tema-tema berkenaan adalah wanita mencabar isu pengutamaan lelaki, bagaimana lelaki mengawal hak asasi wanita dan manifestasi terhadap pengawalan hak asasi wanita. Tema dua tersebut akan membantu dalam melihat konsep kehadiran wanita yang dianggap mencabar kuasa lelaki seperti yang digambarkan di dalam novel Mahfouz.

Kuasa wanita untuk menyahstabilkan masyarakat yang mementingkan lelaki akan diperjelaskan berdasarkan hipotesis-hipotesis yang diperolehi daripada Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Helen Xixous dan Jessica Benjamin. Kajian ini juga akan menjelaskan bahawa melalui hubungan mereka dengan alam barzakh dan kemampuan mereka untuk melahirkan zuriat, wanita berkebolehan untuk mencabar undang-undang simbolik yang bersikap prejudis terhadap mereka malah cuba untuk mencapai intersubjektiviti dan mula menunjukkan ciri-ciri kewanitaan yang cuba dihidarkan oleh undang-undang simbolik. Wanita juga berupaya untuk mengurangkan kuasa lelaki sehingga membuatkan lelaki merasakan mereka bergantung hidup kepada wanita.

Kajian ini akan mengutarakan ketakutan yang menguasai para lelaki apabila berdepan dengan kuasa wanita. Turut diutarakan ialah usaha kaum lelaki untuk menjatuhkan imej wanita dengan memberikan pelbagai watak kepada mereka seperti pemuas nafsu, perawan dan pelacur serta insan yang diketepikan dan dijadikan bahan korban. Malah, dunia simbolik cuba untuk menutup mulut wanita daripada bersuara dan menjadikan mereka sebagai objek diingini yang boleh ditukar serta dijualbeli. Tesis ini akan mengutarakan sejauh mana watak-watak wanita di dalam novel-novel Mahfouz boleh membahayakan stabilasi dunia lelaki dan bagaimanakah watak-watak lelaki di dalam novel-novel tersebut berusaha untuk menangani kuasa wanita.

Dalam kajian ini, objektiviti lelaki serta pengawalan wanita melalui pandangan mata akan diperjelaskan. Kajian ini akan mengutarakan isu pemakaian tudung yang dimestikan terhadap semua wanita serta pandangan daripada pengkritik-pengkritik yang menyokong dan menolak undang-undang ini. Turut diutarakan ialah isu

perawan yang berniat untuk menjatuhkan maruah para wanita yang kehilangan dara sebelum malam pertama perkahwinan mereka serta isu pelacuran yang dikatakan mampu membuatkan wanita kehilangan arah dalam usaha mereka untuk berdikari. Pahitmanis hidup sebagai pelacur turut digambarkan. Konsep-konsep berikut beserta isu rogol yang terdapat dalam novel-novel Naguib Mahfouz akan dilihat secara mendalam.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

In the late 1960s, feminism was first brought into the spotlight, and it challenged society's perception of femininity and gender. Theorists like H  l  ne Cixous, Kate Millet and Juliet Mitchell endeavoured to explore the world of women from psychological, sexual and racial points of view. They all have held a common point of view that feminism could be the source of power for women whereby they could be seen as subjective beings, not merely as part of men's world, lacking their own individuality. Various such tendencies can be found in feminism, therefore, 'feminisms' could be considered a more appropriate term than 'feminism'. There are different types of feminisms such as academic feminism, cultural feminism, lesbian feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism. Although these types of feminisms seem divergent in their respective ideological stances, they are similar in giving prominence to the fact that women's contribution to social and cultural life is ignored, and that they also emphasise men's disguised superiority and control in the structures of society (May 18).

Psychoanalytic feminism, with the help of psychological theories, challenges the concept of women being considered second to men. Two of the scientists whose theories have been referred to and elaborated on are Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Freud's theory of Oedipus Complex and Lacan's ideas on Imaginary world and Symbolic world have been widely used to understand the development of the personality of women in social constructions. Psychoanalytic feminism theories are

also utilised in literature to analyse the author's reflection on women in a particular social construction and era.

Considering the literature produced in Arab countries, female characters have never been absent and Egypt is not an exception. Naguib Mahfouz, who became the first Arab writer to win the Nobel Prize in 1988, has portrayed elaborate pictures of women in his novels. Using theories proposed by psychoanalytic feminists, one can unravel Mahfouz's development of his female characters in his novels. Mahfouz gives the accounts of the lives of women in Cairo of the 1950s, which were bound by social customs and Islamic conventions. A reader could detect Mahfouz's female characters' struggles to find their own individuality and status. Mahfouz provides the opportunity to witness how some of his female protagonists fail in their journey to subjectivity and how some are successful.

Statement of the Problem

Reading ten of Naguib Mahfouz's novels, one becomes aware of the vigour that the writer associates with the female figures and male characters' fear of this power. Additionally, Mahfouz does not leave the reader oblivious towards the patriarchy's struggle to diminish women's power. Mahfouz even portrays the patriarchy maintaining its control over women. Therefore the need rises to make inquiries about women's source of power and men's fear of them. The research should also be done in order to find out the reason for the patriarchy's confronting women. I will also try to know about the symbolic law's attempt to maintain its stability. In order to find answers to these questions Mahfouz's texts should be analysed from the psychoanalytic feminist approach.

Unfortunately, not much analysis from the psychoanalytic feminist lens is conducted on Mahfouz's female characters. His novels are mainly discussed from historical, political and social points of view. Maneham Milson and Matti Moosa, for instance, have studied Mahfouz's novels from historical and social points of view and they assert that Mahfouz wrote historical novels in order to explore the concept of national identity (Moosa 225). Milson believes that in the novel *Midaq Alley* and *The Beginning and the End*, Mahfouz tried to highlight the social and political problems of Egypt (58). Anton Shamma has studied the styles of writing which Mahfouz has adopted in, *The Autumn Quail* and *Miramar*. He claims that Mahfouz used existentialism and stream of consciousness in these novels as he believed that the society was not ready to hear the truth (21). Moreover, Milson scrutinised Mahfouz's novels from the historical point of view and asserts that Mahfouz uses Egypt's revolution in 1952 in order to develop the stories of his novels. For instance in *The Thief and the Dogs*, Mahfouz portrayed the disillusionment with the revolution. In *The Beginning and the End* too, Mahfouz wrote about people like Nasser and Sadat, the two presidents of the country (22). Samia Mehrez too, believes that without Mahfouz's novels, Egypt's political, social, religious and intellectual status would remain obscure (20).

As it could be seen, none of the critics mentioned above analysed Mahfouz's novels from psychoanalytic feminist approach in order to highlight the construction of male and female identities. None has endeavoured to underscore women's presence within the context of his novels and none has attempted to find out if the patriarchy fears women. Therefore, a research should be conducted in order to study Mahfouz's novels from psychoanalytic approach and divulge these unexplored areas

in them. In order to do so the theories of the psychoanalytic feminists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Jessica Benjamin and Judith Butler should be explored. Most of the postulations of these theorists provide answers to the questions about women's ability to threaten the security. For instance, Kristeva believes that through motherhood, women can threaten the stability of the patriarchal structures (Walker 53). Irigaray postulates that one can become a woman by changing subjugation to affirmation (*J'aim a toi* 75). Benjamin asserts that by intersubjectivity, women could be subjects of desire. Moreover, these theorists highlight the phallic law's suppression of women in the form of their reduction to objects of exchange and desire and also silencing them. By proposing the Phallic Economy of Castration, Irigaray claims that women are exchanged among men in order to ensure the extension of their power. By referring to the same theory, she proves women's silence in the patriarchy which is because as the valued party, men are subjects of the discourse. Butler too, sees women's vigour in their ability to make men dependent on themselves as they always need women to reflect their power (Butler 234). In addition, the symbolic world tries to maintain its control over women by turning them to men's objects of voyeuristic pleasure (Homer 30), construct identities of prostitutes (Phoenix 38) and deflower them (Palmer 222). Therefore, the three main themes of this research are women defying the patriarchy, men's attempt to confront them and their attempt to subjugate them.

Hence, in this research, the following sets of research questions, in regards to the three main themes, will be addressed:

1. Do women of Mahfouz's novels have the ability to endanger the security of the patriarchal world? Is it because of their productive ability? Is it because their connection to the mother is still strong?
2. Does the patriarchal world of Mahfouz's novels confront women's threatening presence? Is this confrontation manifested through excluding, sacrificing or silencing women?
3. How does Mahfouz depict his male characters' suppression of women through their voyeuristic pleasure? How does the patriarchy render women to prostitutes? How are women deflowered in the masculine world?

Objectives of the Study

In order to answer the three questions stated in the statement of the problem, I will endeavour to expound on the psychoanalytic theorists whose postulations can uncover Mahfouz's female characters' ability to impair the authority associated with the patriarchy. Therefore, I attempt to underscore hypotheses of psychoanalytic feminists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Judith Butler and Jessica Benjamin who based their theories on Freud's Oedipus complex and Jacques Lacan's theory of Imaginary and Symbolic worlds and Phallus. I will also find out if these theories highlight the patriarchy's reaction towards the vigour associated with women's presence in men's world and if yes how is this reaction manifested. The masculine world's attempt to maintain its control over women will be studied

too. I will also study feminism in Egypt to find out if different kinds of feminisms exist in Egypt. Nawal El-Saadawi's efforts will also be studied to show why she is considered one of Egypt's prominent feminists. Gender relations in Islam will also be scrutinised. Mahfouz as a controversial writer will be introduced and his styles of writing and his concern for social issues and class discrimination will be elaborated.

I will display Mahfouz's women's aptitude to defy the symbolic law by referring to the psychoanalytic theorists' speculations and highlighting them in the novels. I will also present Mahfouz's depiction of the patriarchy's attempt to impede women's emancipation.

I will explore men's control over women through their intention to objectify them through their gaze in Mahfouz's novels. Moreover, I will discuss veiling as an attempt to hinder the objectification of women and I will try to highlight the controversy associated with it in Egypt. My objective is also to underscore the patriarchy's extension of its suppression of women by constructing identities of prostitutes and deflowering them.

Scope of the Study

The novels were chosen for this research are written by Naguib Mahfouz, an Egyptian writer who won the Nobel Prize in 1988. The novels under study are *Midaq Alley* (1947), *The Beginning and the End* (1951), *The Thief and the Dogs*

(1961), *Autumn Quail* (1962), *The Beggar* (1965), *Miramar* (1967), *Mirrors* (1972), *The Wedding Song* (1981), *Respected Sir* (1988), and *The Search* (1987).

In these novels, Mahfouz unravels the subconscious of his male and female characters so masterfully that the psychoanalytic feminist approach was perceived as the best approach to study the construction of identities in his novels. Psychoanalytic feminists are concerned with issues like women's objectification, exclusion, sacrifice and silence and these are the issues, which Mahfouz too deals with in all of his ten novels. Therefore, women's suppression will be foregrounded in Mahfouz's novels and the reasons for women's subjugation in the patriarchy will be presented by adhering to the psychoanalytic feminists.

Although *The Cairo Trilogy* is one of Mahfouz's most famous novels and *Children of Gebelawi* is one of his most controversial works, these two works were not chosen to be scrutinised from the psychoanalytic approach. The reason for the exclusion of these novels was that in *The Cairo Trilogy*, Mahfouz criticises the Egyptian society submerged in poverty, hypocrisy and opportunism (Mehrez 20) and he is not concerned with female identities struggling in the patriarchal world. In *Children of Gebelawi*, he portrays the lives of successive heroes who are struggling for meaning, knowledge and social justice. In this novel, too, he does not deal women's issues like sacrifice, silence and subjugation.

In this study, notions such as Islam's view of women and gender relations from Islamic point of view will be covered. For instance it will be shown that because of three misconceptions, women are considered inferior to women in Islam. By

referring to findings of Anne Sofie Raold, a Norwegian Muslim convert, it will be shown that these three assumptions are false. It will also be shown that men refer to Islam in order to exploit women while according to Islam men and women have equal rights. However, because this is not a theological study of women's status, this aspect is not studied extensively.

Conceptual Framework

As the three main objectives of the study are to highlight women's challenging the patriarchal order, the masculine world confronting men and its maintenance of the suppression of women, the approach chosen is feminism within the framework of psychoanalysis. Therefore it is necessary to study the theories proposed by the psychoanalytic feminists like Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous and Jessica Benjamin in order to highlight the three themes in Mahfouz's novels. Kristeva and Cixous' notions of maternity, Kristeva's theory on women's connection to the semiotic, Benjamin's Intersubjectivity, Irigaray's notion of Becoming a woman emphasise women's power of defying the patriarchal order. On the other hand, Irigaray's phallic economy of castration, Cixous' theory of women's exclusion and Lacan's theory of the phallus could explain the patriarchal world's attempt to resist women's vigour. The patriarchy's extension of women's suppression could also be explained through Lacan's theory of phallus and Irigaray's notion of virginity. These theories help the researcher to analyse the text of the novels by studying the female characters' interaction with the male characters within the confines of the masculine world. In the following parts, feminism and psychoanalysis will be explained and the theories of the afore mentioned psychoanalytic feminists will be briefly introduced.

Feminism

Feminism as a socio-political theory is concerned with women's oppression and their subordination to men. It aims at liberating women of all the oppression and exploitation they suffer in a patriarchal world. Suffering oppression and prejudices in the world of patriarchy is not exclusive to women of a particular area and time rather it is a "shared psychology" (Delmar 10), which has brought women together to form a community and defy the domineering forces of the society. As Delmar states: "One of the most distinctive practices of modern feminism has been the "consciousness-raising"(12) and women have strived to make other women aware of their oppression through campaigns and writings. They have also displayed "an active desire to change women's position in society" (27). According to Delmar, feminism is created for women and "women are its subjects, its enunciators, the creator of its theory, of its practice and its language" (27). Adhering to Delmar's definition of feminism, the following parts focus on women's contribution to the construction of feminist theories and their efforts to reflect their feminist perceptions in their literary works.

The First Wave of Feminism

Feminism dates back to the eighteenth century when, in European countries the dominant system was Feudalism and men and women had to work on farms. After the introduction of industrialisation, men were considered main bread winners and

women's life was limited to home. Hence, with the introduction of industrialisation, specific roles were considered for men and women.

In 1840, the world Anti-Slavery convention was held in London but two American abolitionists, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were not allowed to be present in the meetings; instead they were asked to witness the meeting behind a screen. However, abolitionist orator William Lloyd Garrison refused to join the men in the meeting and he sat with the two women. After this incident, the first women's rights organisation meeting was held in New York in Stanton's house in 1848. The members highlighted the women's suffrage and asked for women's right to vote. Women of the middle class formed movements to help the poor and reform the prostitutes but they showed disagreement with the government's acts to reform prostitutes. As Susan Watkins mentions in her book *Twentieth Century Women Novelists*, when the Contagious Diseases Acts was approved women held a campaign to cancel it. The acts legalised the medical examination for sexually transmitted diseases and their treatment in prostitutes but women who believed that the same rules of sexual purity should be applied to men held a campaign (11). As Susan Watkins points out, involvement in these activities made women more conscious about their rights and roles in society (10).

Working in "consciousness-raising" groups gave women the chance to realise that they are not able to overcome their feelings of "insecurity, inadequacy and worthlessness" without having solid relationships with other women (Seilder 28).

Victor J. Seilder believes that solid relationships with other women could be reached by women who realise the fact that they are not the only ones who have negative and

destructive feelings about themselves; they are all brought up to feel negative about themselves. In 1870s and 1880s WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) was formed which fought for social purity and eliminating obscene literature which encompassed unacceptable literary portrayals of women. They also fought for women's right to vote. Some women tried to improve the condition of the working class by outlawing child labour, establishing minimum wage and maximum working hours. Later, slavery was abolished in the United States in 1863 and protective labour legislation for women and children was achieved in the 20th century.

Contrary to America, in England, temperance could not gain momentum but working-class reforms were supported. In 1857, the bill to give the right of divorce to women was amended. In 1884, parliament gave women the right to their own earnings and abolished the imprisonment of women who denied their husband his conjugal rights. In 1869-1870, wealthy women were allowed to vote and work in the school boards. Later, John Mill, who was a liberal, introduced a women's suffrage bill into parliament but all his efforts were in vain. In 1869, Bertand Russel's mother spoke in a suffrage meeting but Queen Victoria was so outraged that declared that Russel's mother, Lady Amberly, should be horse whipped.

According to Scott Coltrane and Randall Collins, in America, abolitionists turned to feminism. Some women like Susan B. Anthony joined feminist movements through participating in the temperance movement. In 1869, the state of Wyoming in the United States gave the right to vote to women attract them to settle in that state because of the thin population. In 1869, Wyoming was the first state whose women could vote. After the civil war, black people were promised a chance to vote too