

***A Critical Study of Mahfouz's Representation of the Oppressed 'Intellectual'  
During the 'Nasserite Experiment'***

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**Abstract**

An intellectual can be defined as "someone able to speak the truth, a courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too big and imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task. The real or "true" intellectual is therefore always an outsider, living in self-imposed exile, and on the margins of society. He or she speaks to, as well as for, a public, necessarily in public, and is properly on the side of the dispossessed, the un-represented and the forgotten" (Said, 1996). One must examine such a definition critically, especially within the context of the deformed outcome of the intellectual's dilemma during the Nasserite experiment. Under Nasser's Egypt, the intellectuals have been seriously marginalized as a result of lack of trust which Nasser primarily depended on for his regime's sustainability. The unsurpassed oppressive tactics of discipline some of the intellectuals faced led to an internalization of oppression, and thus a blurring of the Saidian concept of a 'true' intellectual. This study examines selected primary works of Mahfouz including *The Thief and the Dogs*, *The Beggar*, *Adrift on the Nile*, and *Miramar*, focusing on the depiction of the intellectual, illustrated in different character portrayals in the sixties, exemplifying the different reactions of the selected characters to the 'crisis' and the dissimilar transformations each has endured to adapt or reject such oppression. One must note that the above-mentioned oppression was not solely derived from the state, but also includes societal oppression, majority leading to the intellectual's self-imposed exile.

Keywords: Nasserite era, intellectuals' crisis, Egypt, oppression, representations of the intellectual

## **Section I: Introduction**

Originally, the typical definition of the ‘intellectual’ that comes to mind can be quite rigid, associated with a certain profession (such as either being writer, journalist or an academic professor). Reading Mahfouz’s literature makes one question the rigidity of ‘the intellectual’ definition that was familiar through theory or ‘common sense’ and classification of intellectuals. The different portrayals of the ‘intellectual’ in Mahfouz shed light that there is no rigid definition for the intellectual, and so there were different transformations to the ‘crisis’ presented, not solely limited to self-imposed exile. If one studies these pieces of fiction as rooting from a socio-political reality, one can argue that the lack of a rigid definition for ‘the intellectual’ could have allowed Heikal and other defenders of the Nasserite experiment to simply redefine and justify the ‘crisis’ by incorporating some of the Free Officers within the definition of the ‘intellectual’.

Hence, my research question that was meant to be investigated revolved around how Mahfouz depict the ‘intellectual’ in the selected four novels? and how did the ‘intellectual’ adapt/ reject to the ‘crisis’? The first section of the paper intends to contextualize the novels, as I find it almost impossible to understand literature without clearly fathoming the state in which they were written in. The second section then moves to discuss novel by novel, starting with *The Thief and the Dogs*, followed by *The Beggar*, then *Adrift by the Nile* and finally ending with Mahfouz’s *Miramar*. The final section attempts to draw reflections on Mahfouz’s intellectual representation as a possible reading of socio-politics under an oppressive Nasserite context.

### **i) Selectivity of Novels**

My ground for selecting these specific four novels is that they all lie within the sixties era where the Nasserite experience started unfolding clearly. Additionally, the protagonists in these novels epitomize varying models of intellectuals whether they are rejectionists, reformists, supporters or opportunists. However, majority of which ended up being exiled. This paper intends to focus on the concept of exile (mostly self-imposed as a retort to either society or authority’s tyranny) on intellectuals during the Nasserite era through surveying these selected novels. I am merely striving to highlight specific trends of reactions of intellectuals within the Nasserite iron-fisted, dictatorial context. Nevertheless, to be more accurate, one should have looked at a broader variety of novels to be able to reach a clearer trend. The choice of Mahfouz as an author, specifically was personal, purely in view of the nature of his works, he leaned more towards social history, rather than simply an ideological or dogmatic novelist.

### **ii) Contextualizing the ‘Intellectual Crisis’ of the Nasserite Era**

When Arab intellectuals ironically theorize about other Arab intellectuals, many critique them due to their ivory-tower-state-isolation. What I intend to discuss is the ‘intellectuals crisis’ of the Nasserite Era is to give a briefing about the context of the intellectual crisis in the Nasserite era and study Mahfouz’s depiction of such aforementioned crisis in his four selected works.

To begin with, the intellectuals’ crisis started with the takeover of the free officers in 1954 and from that moment onwards, the crisis was exaggerated further with a variety

of other factors. This section of the paper intends to shed light on the debate of the factors that caused the so-called ‘crisis’, bearing in mind that this entire paper does not argue for or against the crisis but rather highlights some of the causes in some of the time period’s literature and then emphasizes the effect of such a ‘crisis’ on the ‘intellectual’ as depicted by Mahfouz in the selected four novels mentioned above.

Hammuda talks about three significant factors (in his opinion) that have caused the crisis for the intellectuals. The first was relevant to the army’s retreat back to the barracks. This has also been mentioned in Heikal’s collection of articles about the intellectuals’ crisis published in al-Ahram, that was then collected in a book published in 1961. The intellectuals, according to Hammuda, had a were extremely anxious with the involvement of the army in civil society. The dilemma then was that the intellectuals perceived the army as being entirely non pertinent to the public posts they have managed to swamp after the 1952 revolution (Hammuda, 1985). The problem with such Nasserite context that exaggerated their crisis was that whenever the intellectuals voiced their dismay with the current situation, they would be thrown by the authorities in prison, get tortured or be sidelined by refusing to publish their works or through censorship. An example for censorship was Sun’allah Ibrahim’s *Tilka al-Ra’iha* and Yusef ‘Idris’s *al-‘Askari al-Aswad* whereby they were subjected to heavy censorship before they were allowed to come out (Idriss, 1991). Syndicates and unions were co-opted, universities lost the independence (because the elected deans were subbed for appointed ones), promotions were given to people of trust, syllabi were reconstructed to match regime’s interests, student activism was channeled in YO, journalists automatically made members of ASU, intellects such as Shuhdi Attiya Al-Shafei died off extreme torture (Idriss, 1991). Matters were made worse by the martial laws that were foisted and the abrogation of parties in 1953 and 1954 (Idriss, 1991). The second factor is pertinent to reinstating parliamentary life and resorting political pluralism (Hammuda, 1985). Various demonstrations broke out calling for canceling martial laws and calling on the army to restore parliamentary life in March 1954. These demonstrations were taken by activists, lawyers, syndicates, university professors.. etc., however, there was no result and the army remained in power. The final factor is the most famous one characterizing Nasser’s era, which is the prioritization of people of trust over people of experience (Hammuda, 1985).

Hammouda adds that there were other factors that aggravated the intellectuals crisis as well. These included mal-execution of the ideas that the intellectuals claimed that the free officers borrowed from them initially; not only is the situation limited to mal-execution of such ideas, but also extends to paying such a high price for it (Hammuda, 1985). Hammouda states that this ‘high price’ included the loss of Sudan and consenting to Britain’s right to military intervention (Idriss, 38). An additional factor cited by Idriss was that the intellectuals were not pleased with the lack of ideology of the free officers, which frustrated specifically the ‘ideological’ intellectuals the most (Hammuda, 1985).

As priory mentioned, the extreme measures taken against intellectuals were not tolerated. These included imprisonment, isolation, exile and inhumane torture.. etc. all of which were methods to silence the intellectuals until they internalize such oppression and stop critiquing the regime. One of the major dilemma’s many intellectuals faced which sparked up debate heavy during and post the Nasserite era was the ‘who tortured’ question. Many intellectuals faced major internal trouble

coming to terms with the idea the Nasser, the symbol of national unity, the prophet and the liberator was the same one who ordered to torture them. Hence, an extensive debate sparked up over whether it was Nasser who gave those torture orders and whether he knew about them or whether they were orders given by Salah Nasr, 'Abdul Hakim 'Amir and other center of powers during the Nasserite era without Nasser's knowledge (Idriss, 53).

Finally, one of the biggest factor of the intellectuals' crisis was the Naksa (1967 war) whereby it was the main war that symbolized and exemplified the seriousness of the Nasserite regime's inadequacies and hence severely depressed many intellectuals who still had aspirations in the regime, which led many of them to resort to isolation, as most clearly reflected in Mahfouz's *Adrift on the Nile*, which will be discussed further below.

## **Section II: Mahfouz's Literature**

All four novels are not isolated from one another, rather they are the product of this oppressive reality manifested on intellectuals. Difference is in the routes they choose. The reason, again, literature is appropriate when specifically discussion such a sensitive topic such as the intellectuals crisis is that literature is an extremely significant as it is a tool to shed lighten the internal crisis of the intellectuals, due to extreme oppression that they faced, while still staying within the bounds of regime censorship. These four works are vital to use as they surveyed the crisis through fiction, however them being fiction does not undermine their significance. If this was not true, works like Son'allah's *Tilka al-Ra'eha* (تلک الرائحة) would not have been censored. However, one must note any connections I draw between the novels and the realities of Nasser are solely my reading of the novels and do not represent Mahfouz's explicit stance. The four works of Mahfouz discussed below are specifically selected as they all belong to the same era, hence have a role of acting as primary sources of an era. All of which are Mahfouz's depiction of how some intellectuals have undergone this aforementioned dilemma. To elaborate, these works shed light on how different models intellectuals adapted to it, or rejected it.

### **Najib Mahfuz's *The Thief and the Dogs***

There are two types of intellectuals that Mahfouz represents in his short novel. One of which is Sa'id Mehran, the 'thief'. Mehran is portrayed as the poor student who transformed into a 'thief' stealing money and legitimizing it through a Robin Hood cause. Ra'ouf was his teacher, who was a Marxist intellectual, and a former leader of the student movement, who supported the 1952 revolution. Sa'id was caught stealing and got imprisoned. Coming out of prison, Sa'id's life gets shaken up by various infidelities, whether it being by his wife and friend or the worst, by his teacher, Ra'ouf. Sa'id pays a visit to Ra'ouf, only to his dismay, he finds out that Ra'ouf has metamorphosed into a famous 'intellectual' journalist who sold all his Marxist values in return for a luxurious car and a castle by the Nile. Said has faced many challenges in his life, but the main one was concerned with Ra'ouf's transformation. Ra'ouf selling out his values was the biggest of which as it was a betrayal of Sa'id's own doctrine and stripped Sa'id's life meaning. It delegitimized and shook Sa'id's core beliefs. Raouf's portrayal is very significant as he symbolically represents the class of opportunist intellectuals that arose with the 1952 revolution and was seen to betray the working class (Ra'ouf could be seen as the extension of Sarhan in Miramar). the opportunist, who used to speak for social justice but with the rise of 52 and the

destruction of the bourgeoisie, a new inefficient and corrupt bureaucratic cadre was created.

A reading of Sa'eed's relationship with Ra'ouf can also reflect the intellectual-working class dilemma. One then can see how if certain intellectuals get co-optation, it will adversely affect some of the working class if they perceive those intellectuals as the role model. As I read Miramar as well, the intellectuals-working class relationship is portrayed similarly, but ends differently with the independence of Zohra (whom I see representing the working class) from Sarhan (again the co-opted intellectual who can be seen as the extension of Ra'ouf Elwan in *The Thief and the Dogs*).

Hence, it is not about an individual struggle between Ra'ouf and Sa'eed but rather can be seen as a socio-political struggle between working class versus the segment of opportunist so-called 'intellectuals' and the that failed to bring the working class their dream. The struggle of Sai'd can also be seen as a Robin Hood anarchic struggle against an oppressive authority that promised the working class a dream but was seen to fail to bring it to them. Sa'eed referred explicitly to his anarchic belief when asked what can one need in this nation, and he replied by simply stating a book and a gun (Mahfouz, 1961). The gun symbolizes the violent revolutionary spirit and the book could be a representation of a (socialist or anarchic) ideology (or can generally refer to knowledge); hence one can use violence to attain social justice.

It is important to highlight that he represents only a segment on the intellectuals in an ideological stance. Ra'ouf is depicted as one of the so-called 'intellectuals' who were after their vested interest, and benefited from the system. This is exceptionally noteworthy as it sheds light on the inefficiencies and the corruptness of the 'revolutionary' system. It is important to link these transformations to various intellectuals who were extremely supportive of 1952 revolution but had to adapt by the 1960s, when the revolution failed to bring about its core values such as social equality in this case. Basically, Ra'ouf could be seen as one route some of the intellectuals took to adapt with what 1952 brought them.

### **Najib Mahfuz's *The Beggar***

Set in a post-1952 Nasserite Egypt, the novel surrounds around Umar Hamzawy, the protagonist that is astray in an existential crisis. Umar, Mustafa, Bothayna and Uthman are the three intellectuals that Mahfouz sheds light on their life transformation to adapt or continuity to reject. To start with, Umar is shown as the bourgeoisie intellectual who is a poet but decides to give it up and instead becomes a lawyer. The novel surrounds around the phase of Umar's life where he becomes a 'beggar' as he begs people, God and everything in the universe to find a sign for his life meaning. Umar attempts to find his reason for existence through various methods that start with love, sex, agnosticism, and then finally end with self-imposed isolation. One of the main prevalent themes that Mahfouz endeavors to illustrate is societal misunderstanding. Umar is feels stranded by how firstly society judges him, but also frustrated by then how the closest people to him do not comprehend what he is going through and thus fail to provide him with concrete answers.

'Umar exemplifies the type of intellectual that feels superior to the society and hence is not ably to share his dilemma with people around him (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 5). His isolation stems primarily, not from his feeling of superiority but rather from the fact that he attempted to share his agony multiple times with his family and close friends

but they did not end up understanding. The result was his relationship with people was one characterized by a feeling of superiority and contempt. This relationship is similar to Sa'eed's (*The Thief and the Dogs*) relationship with society whereby it is characterized by hostility, revenge and basically a society that Sa'eed perceives as decadent. This is also stemming from a lack of understanding from the society to his situation, and hence lack of help.

To further elaborate on society's misunderstanding as projected by Mahfouz, 'Umar is projected to have had three faces: the revolutionary socialist, the bourgeoisie, and the poet. Quitting the first two represent a certain type of intellectual who could not fight the system anymore. Being bourgeoisie is not a facet of the society one can strive to change, but rather is a characteristic. On the other hand, quitting being a revolutionary intellectual as a result of seeing what the oppressive context has done to his friend, 'Uthman is different. It signifies quitting on a belief when one fails to change due to limitations of a context. It is a method of adaptation. He instead switched to existentialist ideals, which have no limit imposed by society or state (so long as he practices it alone, rather than involve people in it it should not then be perceived as a threat). Quitting on poetry was also significant because it sheds light on Mahfouz's portrayed incompatibility between art and science, as perceived by the society- a theme that is common and prevalent in other works of Mahfouz as well. This is further elaborated in 'Umar's discussion with Buthayna about doing both poetry and engineering. The incompatibility here is not meant to reveal Mahfouz's opinion or 'Umar's personal vision but is rather an indication of society's perception of doing both simultaneously as inherently contradicting. 'Umar's crisis is not solely resulting, as vivid in this prior example, from an oppressive state, but rather an oppressive society that goes hand in hand with the oppressive state. This is shown when even the closest people such as his wife, or his friend Mustafa throw in sarcastic comments or like the doctor when he referred to his existentialist problem as a 'bourgeoisie illness.'

Additionally, Mahfouz creates Mustafa al-Menawy as quite the interesting character. One can see him as the extension of Ra'ouf 'Elwan (*The Thief and the Dogs*). Mustafa represents another intellectual's transformation who mutates and metamorphoses from being the fine artist he used to be into a trivial entertainer, and justifies it by stating to 'Umar (just like Ra'ouf told , and Sa'eed in *The Thief and the Dogs*) that now they have a socialist governments and their role as vanguard is now over. Mustafa's philosophy of 'useless entertainment' or as he calls it, 'popcorn entertainment' is very significant as it reflects the contradiction between again preaching for revolution as an ideal vs. the actual transformation of this revolution ideal as reality and the gap between them. Mustafa stated that the context of the time required such 'useless entertainment'. This was also emphasized by Ra'ouf. Ra'ouf previously justified his changed current choices to Sa'eed (*The Thief and the Dogs*) by stating "the time was different now", comparing to pre-revolution time.

Additionally, 'Uthman Khalil, the activist, is the one intellectual portrayed to stay with the same ideals, even though he was the only one to be imprisoned. 'Uthman's reference to 'scientific socialism' as "the magical solution" is extremely important as it can reflect the extreme disappointment some of the intellectuals have undergone when

seeing that the regime did not effectively meet their expectations for social justice (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 26). Here it is relevant to seeing the 1952 as representative of an ideal and when seen implemented, there was an extreme disappointment and frustration with the results, reflecting the contradiction between the 'dream' that was associated with Nasser and the 'reality' of the regime as portrayed by Mahfouz (AlZayyat, 1989)

Finally, it is important to note that in both *The Thief and the Dogs* and in *The Beggar*, they start and end by prison. The thief/ Robin Hood's end can actually be interpreted as more optimistic than the beggar's. Robin Hood (Sa'eed) ends his life simply by dying, which could have symbolized that death is the only way to attain freedom. On the other hand, 'Umar is forced to go back to his conventional life where no one understands him, which is much darker and more pessimistic than Sa'eed's death. Not to mention the darker element of 'Uthman, who ends up returning, again, to prison. The aforementioned can all be interpreted as an antithesis to the intellectuals' existence, symbolizing freedom restraints characterize the Nasserite era.

### **Najib Mahfuz's *Adrift on the Nile***

This novel is set on a boat filled with absentee intellectuals, whereby they chose to 'self-imposed exile' by absenting themselves as their life lost meaning when they felt they were not needed anymore neither by the society nor by the state. These intellectuals reject all the society's core values and thus the opted for self-imposed exile whereby they created an alternate society of almost absenteeism. The main link between every intellectual on the boat is their intellectual quarantine, where one can interpret this quarantine, specifically vivid in 'Anis.'

This self-imposed isolation is a main facet of the intellectual dilemma characterizing the 'Nasserite experiment'. Samara Bahgat, the young journalist (who can be seen as the extension of Uthman in *The Beggar*) gives the only shred of hope, whereby she is the only serious active intellectual of them (excluding 'Anis), whereby she acts as she preaches. Samara is the only one who still has faith in that one day her writing can aid changing Egypt's situation and thus attempts to convince them of their indispensable need in the society. 'Anis is the only intellectual portrayed by Mahfouz in *Adrift by the Nile* who quarantines himself due to his inability to cope with the inquiries that arise to him in the couple of hours he is sober in. Most of the time Anis is absent-minded, though unlike the others, he is constantly relating the post-revolutionary 1952 Egypt's situation of Egypt to the revolution's preached core values such as equality thus he is constantly struggling, unlike the others who are comfortable being absent. For that reason, Anis is the only one who was able to be brought back by Samara.

When one looks at the intellectuals' state of mind in *Adrift on the Nile* as a whole, one can argue that the intellectuals' opted for self-isolation as they felt responsible for the state the country was in. Nonetheless, one can also add that this state of self-imposed isolation or exile as Said refers to, was also a result of the intellectuals feeling unneeded by the state and hence marginalized by the state. This is especially true if one links it with the regime's policy of prioritizing people of trust over people of experience.

### **Najib Mahfuz's *Miramar***

Mahfouz is most direct in this novel with his representation to the intellectuals' dilemma during Nasser. The beauty of *Miramar* is that it sheds light on not merely one type of intellectuals, but a variety of types while highlighting the relationship of some of these intellectuals with Zohra. The portrayal of the marginalization of the intellectual in *Miramar* is the clearest whereby it is extremely evident that most of these intellectuals were a mere surplus to the society, thus they were not needed anymore. 'Amer' is the only 'pure' intellectual. His existence is vital as he has witnessed the history in the making; however, 'Amer' is portrayed as isolated, silent, emotional, sufi and wise. Finally, though Zohra, originally a village girl who ran away from home in resistance to her parents marrying her off to an old man, she is still very significant. Zohra symbolizes Egypt. She is very determined to work hard, learn to read and write and develop. Though, Zohra falls into Sarhan's trap (an opportunist 'defender' of workers' rights and general director of the textile factory who embodies inefficiencies and corruption in the public system who rose with the new bureaucratic cadre created by 52), she does not give up and is still hopeful.

### **Section III: Conclusion: Reflections on Mahfouz's Intellectual Representation as a Possible Reading of Socio-politics under an Oppressive Nasserite Era**

There are a variety of reasons to study literature. The most interesting of which is to read it as a sociopolitical work. Literature, especially, in the Egypt where the context is extremely oppressive and it is unlikely that one can free write his thoughts without external or self-censorship. The idea behind selecting these specific four novels is that they act as primary accounts as they are written during the era. The paper intends to solely examine the representation of the intellectual to better understand the emotional state the intellectuals had to go through and hence, the isolation that some imposed on themselves or that was imposed on them by the society or the state. The importance of the novel to study such a topic can even be, at times, more enlightening than to study non-fiction because fiction has room to disguise certain ideas through a variety of tools such as symbolism. The fact that I employ fiction here does not imply that those works do not have any truth in them. What the selected literature would do is that it would shed light on the link between the protagonists (the intellectual) and the authority (power authority).

### Common Themes and Intertextuality of the Different 'Intellectual' Models in Mahfouz's Novels

#### *i) Breaking the Law and Anarchism - Individual versus Societal Perceived Gain:*

On another hand, the Saidian concept of intertextuality is perfectly applicable to the chosen novels. One finds that the characters do not solely mimic the 'reality' but also mimic one another. One finds that the characters of opportunists are quite similar to one another for instance. In the broader picture, the isolation theme hangs all the characters of the novels together, and the reactions of each of the characters are similar to a large extent.

One can see a common characteristic between both intellectuals Sa'eed (*The Thief and the Dogs*) and 'Uthman (*The Beggar*), which is that both were working for society rather than individual gain. One can see Sa'eed as the extension of 'Uthman. Both 'break the law', although differently, both do so due to the state's failure to meet

what their social justice rhetoric reflected and both work for humanity. Sa'eed situating what he does within the Robin hood cause, while 'Uthman justified his approach as he perceived it as doing good for humanity.

*ii) Action vs. Thought-oriented Intellectual and Ivory Tower Theorizing*

An additional major common theme that is signified by Sa'eed and Ra'ouf's relationship is the theme of action versus thought. This is crystal clear in Ra'ouf's 'intellectual' model as he symbolized thought with no action, unlike Sa'eed who might not fall under the typical "intellectual definition" but he represented both thought and action. Sa'eed here broadens the typical 'intellectual' definition that one is familiar with through different theoretical frameworks. Although some can perceive him as a regular thief, Mahfouz's depiction of him was heroic, as he is not the typical intellectual that ended up isolating himself due to the failure of the state to bring about the people's dream, but rather Sa'eed opted to take action himself and bring about justice, not solely for him, but for the rest of the people as well.

On another note, the intertextuality element in both characters of Ra'ouf (*The Thief and the Dogs*) and Sarhan (*Miramar*). Both are the typical intellectual models that ended up adapting to the 1952 revolution by transforming into opportunists. A clear distinct line was drawn between their thought and action. Both preached for socialist values, but realistically, Ra'ouf for instance ended up living in a mansion, while Sarhan ended up exploiting his relationship with the authority brought by his membership in the socialist party for self-vested interests.

*iii) The Search Accompanied By Lack of Societal Understanding*

Both Sa'eed (*The Thief and the Dogs*) and 'Umar (*The Beggar*) are in search. Sa'eed is in search for justice that has not been attained opts for stealing to attain it. Additionally, 'Umar for meaning to his existence or the 'ultimate truth' and he opts for various routes starting with sex and ending with self-imposed isolation. This can be interpreted as a reaction to failure to attain justice due to his failed experience with activism or witnessing 'Uthman spending his life in prison. Both Sa'eed and 'Umar have similar endings. Sa'eed gives in to dying, while 'Umar return to his prior 'real life', by force of the police, where it could be perceived as intellectual death as it signifies the return to both a society and state that do not comprehend or accept such an existentialist crisis.

*iv) Half-mad-half-dead Intellectual*

There is a common theme between 'Umar (*The Beggar*) and 'Anis (*Adrift on the Nile*) which is that the intellectual crisis created a half-mad-half-dead intellectual. Though each took different routes to adapt with it. 'Anis resisted it by the end and returned to his role (by the help of Samara, who brought him back from his intellectual self-imposed isolation state) while 'Umar could not and only returned to his life by force (which can be interpreted due to him having no one understanding him from his friends or family nor of course from within the society).

*v) Absurdity of Life and Fate*

The prevalent theme of absurdity is seen in all selected novels of Mahfouz. Specifically, in *The Thief and the Dogs*, it is highlighted when Sa'eed shoots different innocent people that were not meant to be shot originally. It is also seen in *Adrift on the Nile* where the poor village girl was killed by accident, reflecting the carelessness

of the Adrift on the Nile's intellectuals and as I read it showing the negative effects of the crisis on the working class. The village girl's death signifies the high price of intellectual ivory towers or absenteeism. 'Abdu (the servant that worked for the group of intellectuals of *Adrift on the Nile* on their boat), whom I read as a representation of the working class. Here, one can infer that the working class was the intellectuals' wakeup call from the ivory tower isolation. Also, 'Abdu's ending represented again the call for independence of the working class from the intellectuals' failures. 'Abdu was the intellectuals' link to reality. He brings back the intellectuals to reality by telling them news every now and then about the society. This negative effect of the intellectuals on the working class is also highlighted in the relationship between Zohra and Sarhan in Miramar, though here Zohra finally liberates herself, which one can discern as a call for the working class to liberate itself from the intellectuals.

#### *vi) Intellectual Isolation*

Intellectual isolation is the prevalent theme in all selected novels. This was not solely a result of state oppression but also societal oppression or misunderstanding of what the intellectuals went through. This intellectual isolationism pushed some characters to either 'self-imposed exile' (as Said calls it) as presented in 'Umar or absenteeism in *Adrift on the Nile* gang of intellectuals. This absenteeism was done through overdosing on drugs which again builds on the notion of the state's failure leading to the creation of 'delinquents', whether by the creation of a people who constantly have to stay high (and that is not limited to solely the intellectuals cadre) or by the creation of people who steal to attain justice themselves, because the system is failing to procure it. Specifically, 'Anis (*Adrift on the Nile*) can also be seen as the extension of Umar (*The Beggar*'s protagonist), as both delved into self-imposed exile, but had different endings due to the existence of Samara (*Aridft on the Nile*) that managed to pull out 'Anis from his intellectual isolationism.

To conclude, as quoted by Idriss, Mahfouz, when asked to evaluate the 1952 revolution's contribution to literature, he stated that "the revolution did not benefit literature. Let us be objective and consider what was done during the revolution: the Ministry of Culture, the Supreme Council of Letters and Arts, the Writers' Society, the Story Club, institutes for theatrical, musical, and cinematic arts, theaters, literary prizes... In spite of all that, no one can claim that the last twenty years witnessed a literary flourishing that could stand any comparison with that in the aftermath of the 1919 Revolution. Why is that so? The answer is very simple: the crisis of freedom!" (**Idriss**, 1991, p. 62).

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