

Reconstructing the New Woman and Lower-Class Identity: A Comparative Study of Fitzgerald And Mahfouz

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Abstract: The literary representation of gender and class has remained one of the most significant concerns in twentieth-century fiction, reflecting broader historical transformations associated with modernization, capitalism, colonialism, and cultural reform. Among the writers who profoundly explored these issues are F. Scott Fitzgerald and Naguib Mahfouz, whose novels portray societies undergoing rapid social change while simultaneously exposing persistent inequalities. Although Fitzgerald examines the contradictions of the American Dream through class mobility and female emancipation, Mahfouz investigates similar concerns within the socio-cultural realities of Egyptian society, emphasizing the interaction between tradition, religion, and modernity. This study comparatively examines the reconstruction of the "New Woman" and lower-class identity in selected works by Fitzgerald and Mahfouz, primarily *The Great Gatsby* and *Midaq Alley*. Drawing upon comparative literary analysis, feminist narratology, narratology, and socio-cultural criticism, the research investigates how narrative structure, focalization, characterization, and symbolic representation shape the relationship between gender and class. The study further evaluates how economic inequality influences female agency while demonstrating that social mobility often remains constrained despite aspirations for independence. Comparative findings reveal that although both authors operate within distinct cultural frameworks, they critique hierarchical social systems that marginalize women and economically disadvantaged communities. The research contributes to comparative literary studies by integrating feminist theoretical perspectives with class analysis, illustrating that the New Woman cannot be understood independently of economic conditions and social identity. The article further argues that literature serves as an interpretative medium through which competing notions of modernity, gender equality, and class consciousness are negotiated across diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: Comparative Literature; New Woman; Lower-Class Identity; Feminist Narratology; F. Scott Fitzgerald; Naguib Mahfouz; Social Class; Gender Studies; Modernity.

1. Introduction:

Background

The twentieth century witnessed profound transformations in social structures, economic organization, and cultural values. Industrial expansion, urbanization, educational reforms, and political modernization altered traditional understandings of class hierarchy and gender relations. Literature became one of the most influential spaces for documenting these transitions because fictional narratives could

simultaneously portray personal experiences and broader social realities. The emergence of the "New Woman" represented one of the defining intellectual developments of the period, reflecting women's increasing participation in education, employment, and public life while challenging patriarchal expectations. However, the concept of female emancipation was never detached from economic realities, as class status continued to shape women's opportunities, limitations, and identities (Kessler-Harris, 2001).

F. Scott Fitzgerald's fiction captures the contradictions of modern American capitalism, exposing how wealth, ambition, and social prestige influence personal relationships. His portrayal of women reflects both liberation and constraint, revealing that apparent freedom frequently remains dependent upon economic privilege. Critical scholarship has shown that Fitzgerald's evolving conception of the American Dream is inseparable from issues of class inequality and social aspiration (Callahan, 1996). Likewise, *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald* emphasizes that his female characters function not merely as romantic figures but as indicators of changing cultural values surrounding gender, consumption, and identity.

Naguib Mahfouz, writing within a markedly different cultural environment, examines modernization through the experiences of ordinary Egyptians. His novels reveal how poverty, religious traditions, colonial influence, and family structures shape individual choices. In *Midaq Alley*, lower-class communities become central to understanding social transformation, while female characters negotiate conflicting expectations between traditional domestic roles and emerging possibilities for independence (Takieddine-Amyuni, 1985). Mahfouz's fiction therefore offers a complementary perspective to Fitzgerald by illustrating how modernization assumes different forms within non-Western societies.

Although these writers originate from different historical and cultural contexts, both investigate the relationship between economic hierarchy and gender identity. Their narratives demonstrate that women's agency cannot be separated from questions of class mobility, while lower-class identity remains deeply connected to broader ideological struggles surrounding modernity and social justice.

Problem Statement

Existing scholarship frequently analyzes Fitzgerald through the framework of the American Dream and Mahfouz through postcolonial or Middle Eastern social criticism. Similarly, feminist studies often focus exclusively on female representation without integrating systematic analysis of class identity. Consequently, relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining how lower-class identity and the New Woman intersect across culturally distinct literary traditions. This separation obscures important comparative insights regarding the universal and culturally specific dimensions of gender inequality.

Furthermore, comparative literary studies frequently emphasize thematic similarities while overlooking differences in narrative strategy, focalization, and

ideological construction. The present study addresses these limitations by integrating feminist narratology, comparative literature, and socio-economic criticism into a unified analytical framework.

Research Relevance

The contemporary relevance of this investigation extends beyond literary criticism. Current debates surrounding gender equality, economic inequality, social mobility, and cultural modernization continue to influence political and academic discourse across the world. Literary texts remain valuable resources for understanding how historical societies negotiated these tensions.

The study also contributes to comparative literature by demonstrating that Western and Arab literary traditions share overlapping concerns regarding class inequality despite substantial cultural differences. Comparative interpretation therefore promotes greater understanding of transnational literary dialogue while avoiding simplistic assumptions of cultural uniformity (Shamsuddin & Abd Rahman, 2012).

Moreover, feminist scholarship increasingly recognizes that gender cannot be analyzed independently from economic citizenship and class relations. Kessler-Harris (2001) argues that women's pursuit of equality has historically depended upon access to economic participation rather than legal rights alone. This perspective provides an essential conceptual foundation for interpreting both Fitzgerald's and Mahfouz's female protagonists, whose experiences are continuously shaped by economic dependence and social status.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to accomplish four principal objectives.

First, it examines the literary reconstruction of the New Woman within Fitzgerald's and Mahfouz's fiction.

Second, it analyzes the representation of lower-class identity and its relationship with social mobility.

Third, it compares narrative techniques employed by both authors to construct gender and class consciousness.

Finally, it evaluates the broader implications of these representations for comparative literary criticism and feminist theory.

Scope and Significance

This research concentrates primarily on Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* together with *Trimalchio*, and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*, while incorporating critical interpretations contained within the selected scholarly references. Rather than attempting comprehensive coverage of each author's complete literary production, the study

focuses on representative texts illustrating intersections between gender, class, and modernity.

Its significance lies in synthesizing feminist literary criticism, narratology, comparative literature, and socio-cultural analysis within a single interpretative model. Such integration demonstrates that literary representations of women cannot be separated from economic structures, while class identity itself acquires meaning through narrative construction and ideological discourse.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Comparative literary scholarship has increasingly recognized that class and gender function as interconnected rather than isolated categories. Earlier criticism often privileged either feminist analysis or socio-economic interpretation, whereas contemporary approaches emphasize their mutual dependence. The selected literature collectively demonstrates that literary narratives construct identities through interactions among economic structures, cultural expectations, and narrative representation.

Callahan (1996) situates Fitzgerald's fiction within the evolving concept of the American Dream, arguing that economic ambition ultimately exposes structural inequalities rather than guaranteeing social fulfillment. His analysis illustrates that Fitzgerald repeatedly critiques capitalist ideals by portraying characters whose aspirations collapse under entrenched class divisions. This interpretation provides an important foundation for understanding lower-class identity because wealth in Fitzgerald's fiction operates simultaneously as economic power and cultural legitimacy.

The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald further expands this perspective by demonstrating that Fitzgerald's novels combine modernist experimentation with social criticism. Rather than presenting wealth merely as material success, Fitzgerald associates luxury with emotional instability, moral uncertainty, and fragile social identity. Female characters therefore become symbolic participants in broader conflicts surrounding modernity, consumption, and gender expectations.

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* presents Daisy Buchanan not simply as a romantic figure but as an embodiment of class privilege, while Myrtle Wilson represents aspirations emerging from lower social positions. These contrasting female identities illustrate how economic hierarchy determines access to freedom, respectability, and personal autonomy. The earlier version preserved in *Trimalchio* similarly reveals Fitzgerald's continued refinement of these thematic concerns.

From a different cultural perspective, Mahfouz constructs lower-class communities as complex social systems rather than passive victims of poverty. *Midaq Alley* depicts ordinary Egyptians confronting modernization through employment, migration, family obligation, and changing gender relations. Takieddine-Amyuni (1985) argues that Mahfouz's women negotiate conflicting cultural identities in response to modernization, illustrating that female agency develops within social constraints rather than outside them.

Rasheed Al-Enany's study of Mahfouz emphasizes that the author's search for meaning extends beyond individual psychology to encompass broader philosophical questions concerning identity, morality, and social transformation. Lower-class identity therefore functions not merely as economic classification but as an interpretative lens through which changing Egyptian society becomes visible.

The anonymous study *Najib Mahfuz's Midaq Alley: A Socio-Cultural Analysis* further reinforces the interpretation of *Midaq Alley* as a literary microcosm of Egyptian society. The work demonstrates that Mahfouz constructs the alley not merely as a physical location but as a symbolic social institution where economic deprivation, religious tradition, family authority, and aspirations for modernization coexist in constant tension. Lower-class identity is therefore represented as dynamic rather than static, shaped by social interactions and historical transformation. Women occupy a particularly complex position within this environment because they simultaneously experience economic dependence and emerging opportunities for self-determination.

Takieddine-Amyuni (1985) similarly argues that Arab women in Mahfouz's fiction are neither passive victims nor completely liberated figures. Instead, they embody transitional identities negotiating between inherited cultural norms and modern aspirations. Such an interpretation aligns closely with feminist literary criticism, where agency is understood as negotiation within structural limitations rather than complete independence.

Feminist theory provides another important dimension for understanding both Fitzgerald and Mahfouz. Tyson (2006) argues that literary texts reproduce and challenge patriarchal ideologies through characterization, symbolism, language, and narrative perspective. Rather than viewing female characters as isolated individuals, feminist criticism examines the institutional forces shaping gender identity. This perspective proves especially valuable in comparative analysis because patriarchal structures manifest

differently across cultural settings while often producing similar restrictions upon women's autonomy.

Booker (1996) likewise emphasizes that literary theory should investigate relationships between ideology, social class, and representation. His discussion of Marxist and feminist criticism illustrates that literature reflects broader systems of power while simultaneously questioning them. Applying this theoretical perspective reveals that Fitzgerald's critique of capitalism and Mahfouz's examination of social hierarchy converge despite substantial cultural differences.

The concept of the "New Woman" has historically remained inseparable from economic participation. Alice Kessler-Harris (2001) argues that women's struggle for equality in twentieth-century America depended not only upon legal recognition but also upon access to economic citizenship. Employment, financial independence, and public participation fundamentally reshaped female identity while exposing persistent structural inequalities. This framework provides an especially useful interpretative lens because Fitzgerald's female characters often experience apparent freedom without genuine economic autonomy. Similarly, Mahfouz's women confront the limitations imposed by poverty and social expectations, demonstrating that class continues to regulate opportunities for self-realization. Kessler-Harris's argument therefore bridges Western feminist history with broader comparative discussions concerning gender and class.

Historical investigations by Judith Walkowitz (1980) further demonstrate that women's social identities have long been mediated through class, morality, and state institutions. Her analysis of prostitution illustrates how female respectability is socially constructed through economic conditions rather than purely moral criteria. Although her historical focus differs from Fitzgerald and Mahfouz, the underlying relationship between gender and economic vulnerability remains directly relevant.

The reference Islam, Women and Revolution in Twentieth-Century Arab Thought introduces another critical dimension by emphasizing intellectual debates surrounding women's participation in Arab modernization. Rather than portraying feminism as a purely Western phenomenon, this scholarship illustrates how discussions concerning female education, employment, and social reform emerged within Arab intellectual traditions themselves. Consequently, Mahfouz's female characters should be interpreted within indigenous debates regarding

reform rather than exclusively through Western feminist paradigms.

The volume *Sustaining Gains: Reflections on Women in Science and Technology in 20th-Century United States* similarly illustrates that progress toward gender equality has historically remained uneven despite expanding educational opportunities. Women's participation in professional life frequently encountered structural barriers rooted in class, institutional discrimination, and cultural expectations. These broader historical observations strengthen comparative understanding of Fitzgerald's depiction of female ambition.

Narrative theory further enriches literary interpretation. Bal (2009) argues that narrative meaning emerges through relationships among narrator, focalizer, character, and reader rather than plot alone. Consequently, representations of class and gender cannot be separated from narrative structure. Fitzgerald frequently employs selective focalization that reveals emotional instability beneath glamorous social appearances, whereas Mahfouz adopts broader community-centered perspectives emphasizing collective social experience.

Horstkotte and Pedri (2011) demonstrate that focalization determines readers' perception of social identity by controlling access to knowledge and emotional perspective. Although their discussion addresses graphic narrative, the theoretical concept remains applicable to prose fiction because narrative perspective shapes interpretations of power, marginalization, and agency.

Mezei (1996) extends feminist narratology by arguing that narrative structures themselves encode gendered assumptions. Rather than focusing exclusively upon female characters, feminist narratology examines how storytelling privileges particular voices while marginalizing others. This insight proves especially significant when comparing Fitzgerald's psychologically individualized narration with Mahfouz's socially distributed narrative perspectives.

Case (1999) similarly contends that plot organization frequently reinforces or challenges conventional gender expectations. Female agency is therefore expressed not only through dialogue or characterization but also through narrative progression and resolution.

Mills and Mullany (2011) emphasize language as a mechanism through which gender identities are socially constructed. Their work illustrates that discourse reflects broader institutional power relations while simultaneously providing opportunities for resistance. Applying this linguistic perspective reveals

differences in how Fitzgerald's elegant modernist prose and Mahfouz's socially grounded realism construct female identity.

Finally, Shamsuddin and Abd Rahman (2012) argue that comparative literature should prioritize intellectual dialogue rather than cultural hierarchy. Their theoretical position supports the methodological approach adopted in this study, where Fitzgerald and Mahfouz are examined as parallel interpreters of modernization despite substantial historical and cultural differences.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates considerable scholarship on Fitzgerald's critique of the American Dream, Mahfouz's representation of Egyptian society, feminist narratology, comparative literature, and gender theory. However, relatively few studies synthesize these perspectives into a unified comparative framework emphasizing the interaction between lower-class identity and the New Woman. Existing research generally privileges either Western feminism or Middle Eastern social criticism without systematically investigating their points of convergence. Moreover, limited attention has been devoted to narrative techniques through which class and gender identities are simultaneously constructed. This study addresses these gaps by integrating feminist narratology, comparative literary analysis, and socio-economic criticism into a coherent interpretative model.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative comparative literary research design. Comparative literary analysis is particularly appropriate because the objective is not to establish historical influence between Fitzgerald and Mahfouz but to investigate how two distinct literary traditions engage comparable social concerns. The research therefore examines thematic relationships, narrative structures, characterization, and symbolic representation across culturally different texts.

Rather than employing quantitative measurement, qualitative interpretation allows close examination of literary language, ideological meaning, and narrative construction. Such an approach aligns with comparative literature, feminist criticism, and narratology, all of which prioritize textual interpretation over statistical analysis.

Research Framework

The analytical framework combines four complementary theoretical perspectives.

The first component is comparative literary analysis,

enabling systematic comparison between American and Egyptian literary representations of modernization, class, and gender (Shamsuddin & Abd Rahman, 2012).

The second component is feminist literary criticism, particularly Tyson's (2006) conception of literature as a site where patriarchal ideologies are reproduced and challenged. This framework examines female agency, social expectations, and gendered power relations.

The third component is feminist narratology, developed through Mezei (1996) and Case (1999), emphasizing that narrative structures influence representations of gender. Attention is therefore given not only to female characters but also to narrative voice, focalization, and plot organization.

The fourth component consists of socio-economic criticism, informed by Kessler-Harris (2001), Walkowitz (1980), and Callahan (1996). This perspective interprets class identity as an active determinant of social opportunity, cultural legitimacy, and gender relations.

Together these perspectives create an integrated analytical model capable of examining how narrative technique, social hierarchy, and gender ideology interact within literary texts.

Primary Texts

The principal literary texts examined include:

- The Great Gatsby (F. Scott Fitzgerald)
- Trimalchio: An Early Version of The Great Gatsby
- Midaq Alley (through the provided scholarly analyses)

These texts are supplemented exclusively by the critical references supplied for this study.

Data Collection

The study relies entirely upon textual data extracted from the selected literary works and accompanying scholarly criticism. No interviews, surveys, or empirical observations are employed. The references constitute the sole secondary sources informing theoretical interpretation.

Data collection focuses upon passages illustrating:

- representations of lower-class identity;
- construction of female agency;
- narrative perspective;
- symbolic treatment of wealth and poverty;
- relationships between modernization and social mobility.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds through several interconnected

stages.

The first stage identifies recurring themes concerning class mobility, economic inequality, and women's independence within Fitzgerald's and Mahfouz's narratives.

The second stage examines characterization, focusing upon how female protagonists and lower-class figures negotiate social expectations.

The third stage investigates narrative techniques—including focalization, symbolism, and plot development—to determine how literary form contributes to ideological meaning (Bal, 2009; Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011).

The fourth stage compares findings across both authors, identifying common concerns alongside culturally specific differences.

Finally, interpretations are situated within feminist literary criticism and comparative literature, demonstrating how literary narratives illuminate broader debates concerning modernization, economic citizenship, and social identity. Kessler-Harris (2001) is particularly significant at this stage because her conception of economic citizenship provides a conceptual bridge between Fitzgerald's American context and Mahfouz's depiction of lower-class Egyptian society. Her framework illustrates that women's social transformation remains fundamentally connected to economic participation rather than symbolic emancipation alone.

Reliability and Analytical Validity

Although qualitative literary research does not pursue statistical reliability, interpretative validity is strengthened through theoretical triangulation. Each conclusion is supported through multiple complementary frameworks rather than a single critical perspective. Comparative interpretation is further strengthened by restricting evidence exclusively to the provided references, thereby maintaining methodological consistency and avoiding unsupported external generalizations.

4. RESULTS

The comparative analysis demonstrates that Fitzgerald and Mahfouz reconstruct the concept of the New Woman through distinct cultural contexts while revealing comparable structural limitations imposed by class hierarchy. Rather than presenting female emancipation as a completed social achievement, both authors depict women's agency as contingent upon economic conditions, social expectations, and institutional power. Their narratives suggest that modernization creates opportunities for change without eliminating entrenched inequalities.

A primary finding is that economic class functions as the foundation upon which gender identity is negotiated. In *The Great Gatsby*, wealth symbolizes not only financial prosperity but also cultural legitimacy and access to social privilege. Female characters associated with wealth possess greater visibility and apparent autonomy, yet their choices remain constrained by expectations surrounding marriage, status, and economic security (Callahan, 1996). Fitzgerald therefore questions the assumption that modernity automatically produces gender equality.

Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* presents a parallel pattern from a different socio-cultural perspective. Women aspire to improved living conditions and personal independence, yet poverty, family obligations, and traditional social structures restrict available choices (Takieddine-Amyuni, 1985). Economic hardship shapes identity as profoundly as cultural tradition, demonstrating that modernization affects different social groups unevenly.

The analysis further indicates that lower-class identity is portrayed as dynamic rather than fixed. Fitzgerald's lower-class characters pursue upward mobility through ambition, relationships, or material acquisition, yet structural inequalities repeatedly undermine these aspirations. Similarly, Mahfouz's characters perceive modernization as a potential route toward social advancement, although institutional and economic barriers frequently prevent lasting transformation.

Narrative analysis reveals significant similarities despite stylistic differences. Fitzgerald employs selective focalization and symbolic imagery to expose contradictions beneath social glamour, whereas Mahfouz utilizes broader community-centered narration that situates individuals within collective social realities (Bal, 2009; Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011). Both approaches encourage readers to recognize that class identity is socially constructed rather than naturally determined.

Feminist narratological analysis also demonstrates that female voices occupy complex narrative positions. Women are neither portrayed as passive victims nor idealized heroines. Instead, they negotiate competing expectations concerning family, economic dependence, personal ambition, and cultural respectability (Mezei, 1996; Case, 1999). This complexity reflects Tyson's (2006) argument that literature simultaneously reproduces and critiques patriarchal ideology.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between economic citizenship and female identity. The comparative evidence strongly supports Kessler-Harris's (2001) argument that meaningful equality depends upon economic participation rather than

symbolic recognition alone. Across both literary traditions, women's opportunities expand only when accompanied by increased social and economic autonomy. Consequently, the New Woman emerges not simply as a cultural symbol but as a representation of broader struggles over citizenship, class, and modernity.

Overall, the findings indicate that Fitzgerald and Mahfouz converge in portraying modernization as an incomplete process. While social change challenges traditional hierarchies, neither economic inequality nor patriarchal structures disappear. Literature therefore becomes a critical medium through which competing visions of progress, equality, and identity are examined.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the value of comparative literary analysis for understanding the interconnectedness of gender and class across culturally distinct societies. Although Fitzgerald writes within the context of American capitalism and Mahfouz within twentieth-century Egypt, both authors reveal that economic structures fundamentally shape female agency. This convergence challenges assumptions that the New Woman represents a universally identical historical phenomenon. Instead, literary evidence demonstrates that female emancipation develops differently according to social, cultural, and economic conditions.

The study also reinforces feminist criticism's emphasis upon structural rather than purely individual explanations of inequality. Tyson (2006) argues that literary texts expose institutional power through characterization and narrative organization, a proposition strongly supported by both authors. Female characters encounter limitations originating not merely from personal circumstances but from broader systems governing wealth, marriage, family, and social respectability.

The comparative findings extend Kessler-Harris's (2001) concept of economic citizenship beyond the American historical context. Her argument that women's equality depends upon economic participation is equally applicable to Mahfouz's representation of lower-class Egyptian women, despite differences in historical setting. This suggests that economic citizenship possesses significant comparative value as an analytical concept linking diverse literary traditions. The repeated association between financial dependence and restricted autonomy across both authors demonstrates that class remains inseparable from gender identity.

Narrative analysis likewise contributes important theoretical implications. Bal (2009) and Mezei (1996) emphasize that storytelling techniques influence

ideological interpretation. Fitzgerald's selective narrative perspective encourages readers to question appearances and recognize hidden social contradictions, while Mahfouz's broader communal narration foregrounds collective experiences of poverty and modernization. These differing narrative strategies ultimately pursue similar critical objectives by exposing unequal social structures.

The study further contributes to comparative literature by supporting Shamsuddin and Abd Rahman's (2012) argument that cross-cultural comparison should emphasize dialogue rather than hierarchy. Fitzgerald and Mahfouz do not simply illustrate American and Egyptian realities; together they reveal broader human concerns regarding dignity, ambition, gender equality, and social justice. Their works demonstrate that literature transcends national boundaries while remaining deeply rooted in specific historical experiences.

Nevertheless, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis focuses primarily on representative texts rather than each author's complete literary corpus. Additional comparative investigation involving Fitzgerald's later novels or Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy could provide further insight into evolving representations of class and gender. Similarly, the present study relies exclusively upon textual interpretation and therefore does not incorporate historical archival research or reception studies.

Despite these limitations, the research demonstrates that integrating feminist narratology, socio-economic criticism, and comparative literature offers a productive framework for examining literary representations of modernization. Future scholarship may expand this interdisciplinary approach by comparing additional Western and Arab authors or by exploring intersections among gender, religion, colonialism, and economic globalization.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has comparatively examined the reconstruction of the New Woman and lower-class identity in the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Naguib Mahfouz through an integrated framework combining comparative literature, feminist criticism, narratology, and socio-economic analysis. The findings demonstrate that although both authors emerge from distinct historical and cultural traditions, they share a sustained concern with the relationship between gender, class, and modernization.

The research establishes that female identity cannot be understood independently of economic structures. Apparent social freedom remains constrained when

access to economic citizenship is unequal, a conclusion that closely aligns with Kessler-Harris's (2001) analysis of women's pursuit of economic equality. Fitzgerald critiques the illusion of unrestricted opportunity within American capitalism, while Mahfouz exposes comparable inequalities operating within Egyptian society. Both authors therefore portray modernization as a process characterized by aspiration, contradiction, and incomplete transformation.

The study also contributes methodologically by demonstrating the value of integrating feminist narratology with comparative literary criticism. Narrative perspective, characterization, symbolism, and focalization collectively shape representations of gender and class rather than merely illustrating predetermined social realities. Consequently, literary texts function not only as reflections of society but also as critical interventions into debates concerning identity, justice, and equality.

The article contributes to comparative literary scholarship by emphasizing dialogue between Western and Arab literary traditions without reducing either to simplistic cultural stereotypes. It further suggests that future comparative studies should continue investigating intersections among gender, economic inequality, and social mobility across broader geographical and historical contexts.

Ultimately, Fitzgerald and Mahfouz demonstrate that the pursuit of personal freedom remains inseparable from struggles over class identity and economic participation. Their works continue to offer valuable insights into the enduring complexities of modernization and human dignity.

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