

Suffering wives: Miller's Linda and Mahfouz's Amina

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Abstract

The theme of suffering female characters has been the interest of both the drama and the novel of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among those who are interested in the matter are the Noble Prize winners Arthur Miller and Naguib Mahfouz in *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *Palace Walk* (1956). Both of Miller's Linda and Mahfouz's Amina have greatly suffered at the hands of their tyrannical husbands Willy Loman and Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd-Elgaaad respectively. The main aim of this paper is to study the sources, forms, and consequences of the sufferings of both Miller's Linda and Mahfouz's Amina, and to place their sufferings against the current beliefs of the age in which they lived. The reason behind choosing these two characters is that they look like each other in many ways. First, they are reliable, trusted wives and mothers who are dedicated to the welfare of their families. Second, they face the same inherently patriarchal cultures and suffer the same misogyny. Third, they are different from other tragic wives like Shakespeare's Desdemona, who are created to meet Aristotle's tragic requirements.

Keywords

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The theme of suffering female characters has been the interest of both the drama and the novel of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During that period, as Gail Finney believes, "the first feminist movement was challenging the traditional view that women are fundamentally different from and subordinate to men" (Preface, ix). Among those who are interested in the matter are the Noble Prize winners Arthur Miller and Naguib Mahfouz in *Death of a Salesman* (1949)¹ and *Palace Walk* (1956).² Both of Miller's Linda and Mahfouz's Amina have greatly suffered at the hands of their tyrannical husbands Willy Loman and Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd-Elgaaad respectively. Willy himself acknowledges this fact when he tells his brother Ben that "the woman has suffered" (p. 125). This shows that Linda's suffering is the main key to understand her character. Truly, she has suffered Willy's "mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties" (p. 30). In like manner, Mahfouz's Amina is "docile, long-suffering, affectionate- it was how God made woman" (Enright, p. 45). She has "suffered unbearable torments" (p. 10) at the hands of her tyrannical husband Al-Sayyed Ahmad Abd-Elgaaad, who treated her merely as a maid servant who had no right even to discuss his corrupt behavior. The woman is not only belittled and scorned by her tyrannical husband, but also by her stepson Yasin, whose degraded view of women in general reflects the dilemma of the Arab woman at that time:

A woman. Yes, she is nothing but a woman. Every woman is a filthy curse. A woman doesn't know what virtue is, unless she's denied all opportunities for adultery. Even my stepmother, who's a fine woman - God only knows what she would be like if it weren't my father. (p. 81)

¹All references to Miller's play are from the Anglo Egyptian Bookshop Edition, Cairo, 1999.

² All references to Mahfouz's novel are from The American University Press Edition, Cairo, 1989.

The main aim of this paper is to study the sources, forms, and consequences of the sufferings of both Miller's Linda in *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Mahfouz's Amina in *Palace Walk* (1956), and to place their sufferings against the current beliefs of the age in which they lived. The reason behind choosing these two characters is that they look like each other in many ways. First, they are reliable, trusted wives and mothers who are dedicated to the welfare of their families. Second, they face the same inherently patriarchal cultures and suffer the same misogyny. Third, they are different from other tragic wives like Shakespeare's Desdemona, who are created to meet Aristotle's tragic heroines' requirements.

In Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Linda, a sixty-year-old wife, greatly loves, admires, and supports her sixty-three-year old husband in spite of his cruelty and barbarity towards her. This nature of the man has resulted from his failure to achieve dreams of success for himself and his family, especially his elder son Biff, whom he considers the victim of his own moral degradation. For when Biff was a high school student, now a thirty-four-year old wandering boy, he discovered his father's secret relationship with a whore. The result of the incident was disastrous to Biff as he lost faith in his father and everything in life and failed in his education. Linda, ignorant of the incident, greatly suffers to reconcile both father and son, but in vain. The incident greatly haunts and torments Willy's mind together with another incident. In the past, due to Linda's suggestion, Willy declined his brother's offer to find a new life in Alaska, preferring to live a steady, calm life as a salesman than starting a risky enterprise. Now he, after thirty-six years' work for his company, is fired from his job, and is not able to face everyday life financial needs. The tragedy amounts and Linda bitterly suffers to support and protect her dead-tired husband but, again, in vain. After many unsuccessful attempts to commit suicide, Willy finally puts an end to his life to compensate for his failure of achieving dreams of success for himself and his own family. This is because, he thinks, Biff will be provided with a sum of twenty thousand dollars in insurance money.

Palace Walk is the first book of Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy*, the other two being *Palace of Desire* and *Sugar Street*. The novel's Arabic title is "bayn al- qasrayn", literally "between the two palaces". The novel is named after a street in the district of Gamaliyya, Cairo, and covers a historical period of two years from 1917 to 1919. In the novel, Amina is a forty-year-old wife, much younger than Linda, and, like Linda, greatly suffers her husband's dictatorship and insults. Every night, she wakes up late to meet and serve her reveling husband, a forty-five-year-old successful shopkeeper, who used to come back home drunk, having enjoyed wine, women, and song. Amina is content with her lot, despite the fact that she spent twenty five years imprisoned at her husband's house, which she is not allowed to leave alone even for prayers at the nearby mosque, and even if she is properly veiled. To escape her present dilemma, Amina's interest is directed towards the house roof where she can smell some air of freedom, the oven room where she practices her sovereignty as a cook woman, and, more important, her family where she practices her role as a mother. There are five children. The play boy Yasin, the eldest, is not Amina's, but the son of a previous wife who rebelled against Al-Sayyed Ahmad's dictatorship. Yasin also marries a rebelled wife and the marriage collapses as the wife divorces him due to his taking after his father in his personal gratification. Fahmy is a university student who is engaged in the national struggle for change in spite of his father's objection. Kamal, the youngest member of the family, is still a schoolboy. There are two daughters: the serious, shrewd Khadija, already twenty when the novel begins; and skinny, beautiful Aisha, a sixteen-year-old romantic girl. Al-Sayyed Ahmad demands complete, blind submission from his family, and also demands complete adherence to Islamic principles and traditions, while he permits himself to stay out late at night to practice forbidden pleasures, especially enjoying wine, music and prostitutes. Amina represses her jealousy and grief and behaves almost ignorant of the whole matter, considering it a characteristic of true manhood. The novel explores this theme of dictatorship and its consequences of submission and suffering, especially the relationship between the husband and his family, the husband and his friends, the interrelationships of the family members, and the family affairs, especially the children's marriage. It ends with what seems to be a promise of success for the 1919 revolution against the British occupation, a revolt against submission in its political sense.

Bearing the foregoing background in mind, we meet three types of women represented in Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Mahfouz's *Palace Walk*. The first are the suffering, those who sacrifice their own freedom and convenience to secure their own husbands and children. Linda and Amina belong to this category. The second are the rebels, those who could not submit to and challenge their husbands' supreme authority, so they sacrifice their families' stability to gain their freedom. Al-Sayyed Ahmad's first wife and also Yasin's belong to this category. The last type of women represented in the two works are the whores, the prostitutes who are created to satisfy the husbands' sensual needs, and who act as rivals to the hard-working, homely, desexualized suffering wives. Willy's mistress and Al-Sayyed Ahmad's Jalila and Zubayda are of that type.

The sources of both Linda's and Amina's sufferings are completely different. That of Linda lies in the fact that "she more than loves" and "admires" (p. 12) her tyrannical, weak, dreamy, prideful, corrupt husband, who "never had an ounce of respect" for her, nor for anyone else in the play (p. 55). He usually belittles her, and whenever she worries about his affairs, he nervously answers her "with casual irritation" (p. 13). But to her, he is "the dearest man in the world" (p. 37), dearer than her sons, and even herself. Linda does not only greatly love her cruel and insulting husband, but never belittled him for being low, poor, and unattractive (p. 56). On the contrary, she adores and makes him the center of her life, in spite of being "a pathetic fool", "vulgarian" and "even barbaric" (Foster, p. 84). Thus, Linda's suffering stems from the fact that she adores her sixty-three-year-old disabled husband. As Linda herself puts it, "the man is exhausted" (p. 65). Truly, he is exhausted physically, as he is "tired to the death" (p. 13); mentally as he is lost in a torment of dreams and despairs, or as he himself confesses: "I have such strange thoughts" (p. 14); socially as "no one welcomes him" (p. 57); financially as he lost his income and is no longer able to earn his living (p. 57); and even morally as he betrayed his wife with the Boston woman (pp. 110-20). This exhaustion led the man to have his "mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams, and little cruelties" (p. 12), and consequently to Linda's suffering. In this respect, Miller summarizes Linda's situation as follows:

She regards Willy as being very brittle, very easily destroyed, and she's got to prop him up or he'll collapse. In a way, it's like someone who is dealing with a sick person. She's trying to keep bad news away from him lest he be destroyed by it. (Kullman, p. 6)

Miller's words refer to many facts concerning Linda's suffering. First, she regards her husband as a disabled son who does not only need medical care, but also kindness, warmth, and sacrifice. She is, in the words of James E. Walton, the "ever protective, ever forgiving, ever solicitous" (p. 56). She tries hard to protect him from all his acquaintances, friends, and even his sons, whom he treats pridefully and scornfully. She forgives his insults as if she were a heavenly angel incarnated in a human being. She solicits him to give him hope for a better future. All these fine virtues are best exemplified when the exhausted Willy goes to bed, asks Linda to sing to him, and Linda "hums a soft lullaby" to make her sick, exhausted husband sleep soundly (p. 68). This fact is absent to the minds of her sons, who are ignorant of the reasons why she is "sitting here and waiting for" (p. 57). By "waiting" she means suffering, an idea which is expressed by T. S. Eliot when he equates waiting with suffering in *Murder in the Cathedral* (p. 240).

But Linda's suffering is "most often jovial" (p. 12). This means that there is a free will in her suffering at the hands of her exhausted husband, who lives in a cruel business, materialistic world in which activity is "conditioned not by what is human, but by goods and cash" (Foster, 1961, p. 83). His life is a business failure because of his refusal to go with his brother to seek a fortune, thinking that "business is bad, it's murderous" (p. 65). He preferred to live humbly as a mere salesman, not to take a risky step towards achieving his dreams of success. That is why he failed in all aspects of his life, and his failure afflicted not only himself, but also the whole members of his family, especially his suffering wife Linda.

Unlike Linda's suffering which resulted from her own deep love and respect for her exhausted husband, Amina's originated from deep fear of her tyrannical husband, who regards his wife as less than a maid servant who deserves all kinds of contempt and abuse. Amina's suffering occupies the mind of Mahfouz, who projects it at the very beginning of his novel. He portrays Amina when she automatically wakes up late after midnight at a time when she should have been asleep to meet and serve her dictatorial, corrupt, drunken husband as follows:

Habit woke her at this hour. It was an old habit she had developed when young and it had stayed with her as she matured. She had learned it along with the other rules of married life. She woke up at midnight to await her husband's return from his evening entertainment. Then she would serve him until he went to sleep. She sat up in bed resolutely to overcome the temptation posed by sleep. After invoking the name of God, she slipped out from under the covers and onto the floor. (p. 1)

This opening extract tells many facts about Amina's suffering. First, it is unarticulated and silent. This means that Amina, unlike Linda, does not complain about the hardships in her life, nor does any other character in the novel speak directly about the woman's suffering. It is understood, deduced and seen. The main reason behind this is that no one in society recognizes the suffering of the woman who has no rights, only the right to suffer. Nor does she even have the right to articulate her suffering, and if she does, she would incur a great shame to herself, and perhaps severe punishment.

Second, Amina's suffering was a 'habit'. She has learned suffering since she was young. This is due to the social, political, cultural and economic conditions which prevailed not only in the Egypt of that time, but also throughout the whole Arab world. These conditions have connected husbands with dictatorship and wives with complete subservience.

Third, Amina's early Islamic education is responsible for her suffering, being the daughter of a Muslim cleric. Her father, "a religious scholar trained at al-Azharmosque university" taught her, of course, how to submit to her husband (p. 47). This early religious education is clear in her "invoking the name of God", her many Qur'anic recitations, and the various religious references she used throughout the whole novel. Moreover, as El-Enany observes, religion had a great effect on Mahfouz's family and he himself was religiously absorbed (p. 83).

Fourth, Amina's married life has "rules" not to be violated under all conditions. These rules include complete submission to her husband's will, carrying out all his orders, and not to question even his wrong conduct. Otherwise, she would be punished. This is clear when Amina politely questioned her husband's frequent nights out, he tyrannically grabbed her by the ear and shouted: "I'm the one who commands and forbids. I will not accept any criticism of my behavior. All I ask you is to obey me. Don't force me to discipline you" (p. 4). That is why Ibrahim El-Sheikh sees Amina's portrait as "an almost accurate representation of the late 19th and early 20th century Egyptian middle class womanly woman" (p. 96). By "womanly woman" El-Sheikh means, I think, a woman who is reliable, trusted, respected, and, more important, who blindly surrenders to her husband's will without any question. Clearly, she is the woman who suffers for the sake of her husband, her family, and her society. That is why El-Sheikh considers Amina's role as forming "the main pillar on which not only the family but also the social structure as such rests" (p. 95). This means that Amina does not have any individuality due to the fact that her husband, in the words of Miriam Cooke, "cannot imagine that a woman's function masks an individual" (p. 115). His conception of masculinity, Cooke believes, "is too rigid to accommodate interaction with women on the basis of equality" (p. 108). That is why she is belittled by her husband as a mere woman lacking in mind, not a complete partner in managing the family's affairs. This is clear when Amina dared not give an opinion concerning a suitor asking for her daughter's hand as she is "just a woman, and no woman has a fully developed mind" (p. 156). She left the whole matter to her dictatorial husband. It is he who accepts and rejects, commands and forbids. Even the poor girl dares

not give her opinion on her future husband, everything will be decided by her father, and she will be informed of the decision. The view of western woman during that period was the same:

Women at that time were condemned to trivial occupations. It is hardly surprising that women were not permitted to undertake challenging tasks in this period: Victorian physicians and anthropologists believed that female physiological functions delivered roughly 20 percent of women's creative energy from brain activity; that the frontal lobes of the female brain were lighter and less developed than male lobes; and that women were therefore less intelligent than men. (Finney, p. 2)

That is why Linda is interested in washing clothes (p. 36), mending stockings (p. 39), paying for the refrigerator, the washing machine, and the vacuum cleaner (p. 73-74). But the problem with Linda is that her husband, besides being physically, mentally, financially, morally and socially invalid, has "got no character" (p. 56). He is fat, ugly and unwelcomed by his friends due to his "false pride" and his jealousy of them due to their success (p. 97). In this, Linda is very different from Amina, who completely surrenders to her husband, who is respected, esteemed, and loved by his friends (p. 35). Besides having "strong personality and good looks" (p. 8), he is faithful, sensitive, discern, sincere, pure and having a heart "abounding in love for people, and a soul that was generous in its gallantry and help for others." These rare qualities, Mahfouz continues, made "people vied to enjoy the pleasures of his friendship" (p. 43). That is why Amina completely surrenders to him and even is immensely proud of him.

But Linda struggles hard in order not to let anyone make her husband "feel unwanted and low and blue" (p. 55). She shares his massive dreams and attacks her son for calling him crazy. She prefers him to her sons and even to herself and stubbornly stands by him. Moreover, Linda bolsters Willy's sense of self-importance. She takes off his shoes (p. 13), takes the jacket from him (p. 14), and is interested in the smallest details in his life: his glasses, handkerchief and saccharine (p. 75).

Another form of Linda's suffering is that she repeatedly lies to Willy to separate him from tragic reality. She is aware that he is fired from the company and "has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me that it's his pay" (p. 57), but leads him to believe that he adequately provides for her and the family (p. 72). He himself admits that he is "fat" and "very foolish to look at" (p. 37), but she assures him that he is popular as he is "the handsomest man in the world" (p. 37). She is sure that "he's been trying to kill himself" but dares not mention it lest he would be insulted: "I'm ashamed to. How can I mention it to him? ... How can I insult him that way?" (p. 59-60). Willy's friends and even his sons hate and unwelcome him as he is prideful, jealous, and insulting, but to her, he is "too accommodating" (p. 14) and "well liked" (p. 85). Clearly, Linda is deceiving her husband, making him think the thing which he is not. Here Lamya Ramadan sees Linda as a "sales woman, for she sells lies to Willy day and nights about his success which never existed" (p. 284). The following is his true reality as she herself recognizes it: "Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name is never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived" (p. 57). In short, Linda is trying to mythologize Willy, to make him god-like, or a legend to compensate him of the American dream which he has failed to achieve. But the woman is suffering alone. All other people belittled, unwelcomed, disrespected, and abandoned him, even his sons left him alone at the restaurant and went out with the two superficial women to amuse themselves (p. 121).

Linda's suffering may be regarded as a retribution for her responsibility of Willy's failure to achieve his dreams of success. This is because Ben offered Willy to find a new life in Alaska, and the latter agreed. But Linda declines the offer, considering this a sort of a dangerous adventure: "Why must everybody conquer the world?" (p. 85). To her, living a steady, calm life as a salesman is better than starting a risky enterprise. She convinces Willy that he has "got a beautiful job" and that he is "doing well enough" as a salesman (p. 85). But later on, he discovers that he is deceived. All what he has achieved as a salesman is a great failure, not only for himself, but for his family. He is unable to earn his

living and is sacked without pension and compensation. His two sons are also failures: one is a "philandering", the other is a "lazy" bum (p. 16). So, Linda is trying to purge her sin by undergoing the process of suffering for the sake of her husband, whom she discourages, in the words of Barry Gross, from "accepting the one opportunity which would allow him to fulfill his pioneer yearning" (p. 407). Gross even exaggerates saying that Linda "frustrates the pioneer in Willy because she fears it" lest he would dominate her (p. 407-8). This agrees with the view that Linda wanted Willy to be her puppet to control not only him, but also the whole family. That is why she directs him to go to "tell Howard you've simply got to work in New York?" (p. 14), asks Biff to respect his father or else "not to come here" (p. 55), and reproaches her two sons as "a pair of animals" for humiliating their father (p. 124). In short, she is trying to play the leader of the family, the manager of its affairs, while her husband is nothing but "a hard-working drummer", who is not respected, loved, and honored by anyone in society (p. 132).

As for Amina, her suffering had begun very early as she married before she was fourteen and gave birth to four children before she was twenty-five, a very early time to bear the responsibility for a big family. Now she is forty. Every night she automatically wakes up after midnight to meet and serve her playful husband, who, unlike Willy, is "so wealthy, strong and handsome" (p. 6). He used to come home late and drunk from his evening escapades, while the rest of the family, including the servant Om Hanafi, are enjoying deep sleep. When he arrives home, Amina helps him remove and arrange his clothes, and, like Linda, remove his shoes and socks (p. 8). After placing a basin by her husband's feet, she pours water for him to wash himself. Then he dries his head, face and hands while his wife carries the basin to the bath. This task is "the last of the many duties she performed in the big house". For twenty five years she continued to perform it with "an ardor undimmed by ennui", the reason for which she was called "the bee" by her neighborhood women (p. 9).

Amina, moreover, deeply fears her unsmiling, autocratic and abusive husband, who is used to get angry at home "for the most trivial reasons" (p. 131). Her husband "had shut off in pursuit of all the varieties of love and passion, like a wild bull" (p. 99). As Mahfouz puts it, "nothing was so like his lust as his body, since both were huge and powerful, qualities that bring to mind roughness and savagery" (p. 100). She usually calls him "sir", a title which denotes slavery affection. In this, she is totally different from Linda, who addresses her husband as 'dear' and 'darling', denoting a "motherly, rather than wifely, affection" (Tyson, p. 269). In return, her husband usually calls her "Amina", a mere woman without "a fully developed mind" (p. 156). When he speaks, she lowers her eyes in a kind of submission (p. 10). She dares not sit down beside him or even have a friendly speech with him. Here, as Lamia Ramadan observes, "Mahfouz is an undeniable feminist in disguise, for he explicitly showed how much Arab women could endure in terms of pain and humiliation from men like Sayed" (p. 287). To Rasheed El-Enany, Amina's relationship with her husband "characterized by total unquestioning acceptance of his authority, is itself the image of the stability of the value system that is the frame for this relationship" (p. 83).

Amina greatly suffered as her husband's moments of tenderness were "fleeting and accidental" (p. 10). Paradoxically, the only moments in which he is more gentle and tender to her were the moments of his return from his partying when he is drunk and talkative (p. 10). She used to enjoy these rare moments of drunken tenderness although she "never forgot to implore God to pardon his sin and forgive him" (p. 10).

Amina is forced to live inside the house walls and not to go out under all conditions: "since antiquity, houses have been for women and the outside world for men" (p. 340). She does not have any contact with the outside world "about which she knew almost nothing" (p. 13). This is exactly the same as the attitude of Linda, who willingly imprisons herself inside her husband's house and does not leave it at any occasion. She does not even attend Biff's dinner at the restaurant because she is totally connected to the house. This is in agreement with the prevailing beliefs that houses represented peace, safety, and shelter for a woman, while the outside world represented danger, toil, and doubt. In this respect, Finney quotes William R. Creg:

The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial... But he guards the woman from all this; within the house...need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. This is the true nature of home - it is the place of peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. (p. 3)

Amina is not even allowed to pray at the mosque. When she did it from behind her husband's back, she did it out of the desire to be free like all other creatures:

It was the pleasure of someone who had spent a quarter of a century imprisoned by the walls of her home, except for a limited number of visits to her mother in al-Khurunfush, where she would go a few times a year but in a carriage and chaperoned by her husband. Then she would not even have the courage to steal a look at the street. (p. 167)

But her desire to smell the air of freedom out of the walls of her prison-home cost her a very high price. She suffered the most shameful punishment to be received by an Egyptian wife during that time: the dismissal out of her husband's house into her parent's. D. J. Enright sees it a "question of pride, of preserving total authority" (p. 46). That is why the punishment falls on her head "like a fatal blow" (p. 195).

The most important consequence of both of Linda's and Amina's suffering is their desexualization. This means that their sexual attractions are completely reduced in favor of their homely duties. Linda is, as Lois Tyson sees her, "the devoted, sexless wife that good women were required to be in the patriarchal society of her time and place" (p. 268). Though not even sixty, Linda is no longer interested in dying her hair. Biff advises her "to dye it again" as he does not want to see her "looking old" (p. 54-55), the result of which Willy felt "terribly lonely" as "there's nobody to talk to". Here Gail Finney sees the respected woman's desexualization as a current matter of the time, and quotes William Acton: "As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please; and, but for the desire of maternity would far rather be relieved from his attention (p. 4).

That is why Willy throws himself into the arms of the Boston woman, who makes him "feel that he is an important salesman and a powerful man" (Ribkoff, p. 49). It is this disastrous incident that destroys Biff's faith in himself and his father, who turns into "phony little fake" in the eyes of his son (p. 121). Both of them became "so hateful to each other" (p. 54). Linda is not invited by her son to share the meal in the restaurant to act her homely activities. In this she is like Amina, who shares the belief that houses are for women and the outside world for men.

Amina, like Linda, is also completely desexualized. She is belittled and mocked at as a woman whose beauty and mind are incomplete. This disagrees with the taste of her husband, who was "infatuated with feminine beauty in all its flesh, coquetry and elegance" (p. 398). Besides, he used to select his lovers, prepare himself for the occasion and welcome his mistress "with a fragrant atmosphere, redolent of roses, incense, and musk" (p. 399). What is important is that Al-Sayyed Ahmad greatly adored beauty, which Amina lacks, because of its social function: "In his circle beauty and reputation went hand in hand, like an object and its shadow. Beauty was most often the magic wand that opened the door to reputation and noteworthy status (p. 399).

But Amina finds herself lacking in the beauty standards to which her husband yearns, and not able to compete with her husband's most famous entertainers. That is why she raises the white flag and finds her full sovereignty not in the bedroom, but in the ovenroom, exactly like Linda who finds her sovereignty in the kitchen. There, she was "the mother, wife, teacher, and artist everyone respected (p. 14). Her husband, who used to scold her for the most trivial reasons, if he did favor her with praise, would be for a "type of food she prepared and cooked to perfection" (p. 14). In this, Amina, like Linda,

belongs to the category which is composed of "sacred, pure mothers and frigid, chaste, respectable wives" not to that of the prostitutes, or women who are "warm, pulsating, seductive, but despised" (El-Saadawi, p. 166). This is in agreement with Mondal's opinion that Mahfouz's women are divided into two categories: the "ill repute" who satisfy the male characters with their sexual needs outside the house, and the "respectable" who provide them with their social needs inside the house, to which Amina belongs. That is why Amina is completely desexualized (Mondal, pp. 8-9). Again, this is the reason why Al-Sayyed Ahmad knows what a good, trusted, reliable wife and mother Amina is, and she is totally aware that true manhood involves tyranny, arrogance, and escapades.

Amina tended to be more hypocrite to avoid her husband's punishment. After his severe anger because of her objection to his repeated nights out, she learned to "adapt to everything, even living with the jinn, to escape the glare of his wrathful eye." She is forced to obey him "without reservation or condition", convincing herself that "true manhood, tyranny, and staying out till after midnight were common characteristics of a single entity" (pp. 4-5). Amina also dares not voice her inner thoughts to her husband, and negates her own true personality lest she would be punished: "My opinion is the same as yours, sir, I have no opinion of my own" (p. 156). So she has learned how to avoid her husband's anger and gain his rare praise by being more hypocrite, a more bitter consequence of suffering.

Amina, moreover, learned how not to be jealous, a major step in the process of her desexualization. This is again out of fears of being punished, for "a single evil was better than many". For her, jealousy

was no different from the other difficulties troubling her life. To accept them was an inevitable and binding decree. Her only means of combining them was, she found, to call on patience and rely on her inner strength, the one resource in the struggle against disagreeable things. (p. 6)

Amina's calling on patience is an evidence that she is forced not to become jealous. This is because she is non-competitive to other mistresses, who are created to satisfy men's lust. Moreover, Amina accepts the rumors of her husband's relationships with other women as a "characteristic of manliness, like late nights and tyranny" (p. 6). Even when she confided her grief to her mother about her husband's night escapades, she received the answer that urges her to be firm in her suffering: "his father had many wives. Thank our Lord that you remain his only wife" (p. 6). So, she must be patient, either willingly or forcefully.

Finding herself between the hammer of her husband's cruelty and the anvil of strict rules of the patriarchal society in which she suffers, Amina finds resort in the roof of her house, which represents to her a world of freedom and beauty. This roof, "with its inhabitants of chickens and pigeons and its arbour garden, was her beautiful, beloved world and her favorite place for relaxation out of the whole universe, about which she knew nothing" (p. 34). There, she used to "look at the sky, the limitless space, and the minarets of the Cairo's ancient mosques with devotion, fascination, thanksgiving, and hope" (p. 35). The dearest mosque to her was that of al-Husayn, at which she used to fix her eyes, regretting that "she was not allowed to visit the son of the Prophet of God's daughter, even though she lived only minutes away from his shrine" (p. 35).

In short, Amina suffers in fear of her rich, powerful, abusive, tyrannical husband, to whom she completely surrenders. She sacrifices all her rights of freedom, equality, honor, and respect to secure her husband, sons, family, and society. In this, her suffering represents "the past in its last secure days, the past as it will never happen again" (El-Enany, p. 83). She represents all our suffering, reliable, hard-working, and respected grandmothers, who had sold the dearest of their rights to purchase our dearest hopes. That is why she receives the fruits of her suffering: the achievement of the Egyptian dream of a prosperous husband, successful sons, a happy family and a stable society.

Linda, on the contrary, suffers in pity of her poor, weak, cruel, husband over whom she has complete ascendancy and supremacy. It is true that she struggled hard to support her husband financially. But at the end she fails to save his life. This is because he convinces himself that "his death can restore his

prominence in his family's eyes and retrieve for him his lost sense of honor" (Centola, p. 40). That is why she cannot understand the reason behind it:

Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it. Willy I made the last payment on the house today. Today dear. And there'll nobody home....We're free and clear....We're free clear. (p. 139)

What Linda cannot understand is that she wasted all her life in a false suffering. She cannot understand that making "the last payment on the house" and being "free and clear" are not her own responsibility, but that of her husband, whose "vision of success perpetuates crippling feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that drive him to destroy himself" (Ribkoff, p. 52). She should have helped him to achieve dreams of "self-reliance and individualism of spirit" which imply "self-sufficiency and personal creativity, not domination of others" (Foster, p. 86). Linda dominates Willy and hinders him from achieving these values during his life. That is why he tries to achieve them by committing suicide.

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